

Assessment

High Stakes Computer Testing Reaches Tipping Point

- By Dian Schaffhauser
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For the first time ever, most states will be giving their end-of-year, high-stakes tests in elementary and middle school via technology other than pencil and paper. According to a new report by **EdTech Strategies**, only 15 percent of the 800-plus tests being offered to students in grades 3-8 this year will be available in printed format.

Douglas Levin, president of EdTech and author of the report, "**Pencils Down: The Shift to Online & Computer-Based Testing**," noted that while the adoption of the Common Core State Standards and its "associated tests" from PARCC and Smarter Balanced contributed to the shift to digital testing, that was "neither the root cause of the shift nor even the dominant driver." The more likely reasons are the "compelling advantages" of computer-based testing: efficiency of test delivery, faster turnaround of scores, better security, enhanced accessibility, increased student engagement and more opportunities to gauge student understanding of the content.

Levin warned that with the dominance of computerized testing in the current school, we can expect to see three major issues crop up:

- Major technology-related test administration problems;
- Security challenges; and
- Calls to address "equity of access" related to digital equipment and content.

"With many advantages over traditional approaches, the shift to online testing from paper-and-pencil based formats has been well underway in the U.S. for over a decade," said Levin in a prepared statement. "The 2015-16 school year, however, marks the tipping point in technology's adoption for assessment in public elementary and middle schools nationwide."

The five-page report is available for download free [on the EdTech Strategies Web site](#).

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