PURPOSE

The purpose of the High School Interim assessments is simple: to support and improve high school instruction throughout the Chicago Public Schools. Interim assessments are designed to impact teaching and learning at the classroom level by helping teachers gauge student strengths and weaknesses relative to common learning standards, and by providing them with tools to predict and enhance student performance on end-of-year EPAS\(^1\) summative tests.

It is important for you, the educator, to understand that the High School Interims exist only to help you achieve your goals: they will not be used to evaluate teacher or school performance in any way. They are not part of CPS’ accountability framework or performance policy, and they will not appear on any scorecards. We emphasize this not because we want to communicate that these tests are not important—they are—or that you should not take them seriously—you should. Rather, we emphasize this because we want you to embrace and engage deeply with these assessments as instructional tools, instead of rejecting them because you fear they will be interpreted as a reflection of your professional performance or used against you in any way—they will not.

From the beginning, the development of the High School Interims has been a joint effort among schools, networks, and central office. In order to ensure that these assessments are as useful as possible, we partnered with teachers, principals, and network staff from across the district to form an instructional committee that met several times this fall to collaboratively design their format and specify their content. In order to give educators ample time to review these assessments, predict how students will perform on them, and guide instructional planning accordingly, we will release the final versions of all of the third quarter interim assessments to teachers, principals and networks by the end of January 2012—more than a month before they will be administered, beginning on March 13, 2012.

Although these assessments may not be perfect the first time around, we are confident and hopeful that, because we have created them together, they will be better than any other district-wide, high school interim assessments in the history of CPS. We are honored by your partnership in developing these assessments, and we welcome and encourage your feedback to make them even stronger in the future.

Sincerely,

Michael Deuser
CPS Director of Student Assessment

Matthew Pietrafetta
Founder, Academic Approach

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\(^1\) EPAS (Educational Planning and Assessment System) refers to the EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT tests.
TEST DESIGN

Development Process & Partners
We designed the High School Interims with two end goals in mind: to help students perform better not only on summative EPAS tests, including the ACT, but to help them raise their GPAs by improving their broader performance in the classroom. We could not have designed tests good enough to achieve these goals without partnership from the groups detailed below.

Design Committee. Because we know that assessment cannot succeed without both input and buy-in from a broad range of educators, we included in the High School Interims design process teachers, principals and network staff associated with schools of all different achievement levels, and from every geographic corner of Chicago.

Educators and staff from the following schools and networks were members of the design committee that developed the parameters for these assessments:

Schools:
- Banner HS
- Brooks HS
- Clemente HS
- Dyett HS
- Hubbard HS
- Kelvyn Park HS
- Kennedy HS
- Kenwood HS
- Lane Tech HS
- Mather HS
- Morgan Park HS
- Payton HS
- Prosser HS
- Senn HS
- Simpson HS
- Washington HS

Networks:
- Alternative Schools
- Far South Side HS
- North/Northwest Side HS
- Office of School Improvement
- South Side HS
- Southwest Side HS
- West Side HS

We thank all of the educators who took time out of their busy schedules to help craft these assessments.

Vendor Partner. The educators and students of Chicago Public Schools deserve to work with the very best private sector partners in the field of student assessment, and that’s why we selected Academic Approach, LLC as our vendor to develop the items for our upcoming High School Interims. Since its founding just over a decade ago, Academic Approach has opened offices in Chicago, Boston, and New York City, and has worked with some of the finest private schools in the country, including Groton School in Massachusetts, Taft School in Connecticut, and Chicago’s Francis Parker School. More recently, Academic Approach has expanded its reach to partner with some of the best urban schools in Chicago, including the Noble Street Charter Schools, Urban Prep Academies, Hales Franciscan High School, and Westinghouse High School. The philosophy of Academic Approach is not to teach to the test, but to teach beyond the test by helping students and teachers focus on essential skills for college readiness.
**Test Format**

*EPAS-Like Format.* The High School Interims will consist entirely of multiple-choice items designed to resemble those that appear on the EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT (EPAS) assessments. These multiple-choice items will be new items that have been written specifically for these tests.

Like EPAS, the High School Interims are divided into four sections based on subject matter. Each section of the High School Interims will contain the same number of questions it does on the actual PLAN. Each section of the High School Interims is designed to be completed in 40 minutes\(^2\), the time available during a standard class period, plus a small cushion. The sections are broken down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
<th>Testing Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Standards Assessed.* All items are primarily designed to assess ACT’s College Readiness Standards (CRS). In each section of the High School Interims, the number of items assessing each CRS strand will be roughly proportional to the number of items associated with each such strand on the actual ACT. We are assessing CRS strands in this way because doing so makes these assessments highly predictive of student performance on actual EPAS tests, and because it helps teachers and students zero in on the skills most essential to success on the ACT (i.e. “power standards”).

This choice of test structure does *not* mean that teachers should narrow the scope of their curriculum, or that instruction should be limited to CRS power standards: a comprehensive education includes *all* of the skills associated with the College Readiness Standards, plus a great deal more. Nevertheless, we feel an obligation to help teachers understand the structure of the tests that will ultimately be used to hold them accountable. We also believe that gaining familiarity with the format and structure of EPAS tests in a low-stakes environment will give students a better chance to show what they really know and can do when they ultimately take “live” versions of these assessments.

Below, for your reference, is a complete list of the CRS strands, which are the skills assessed by EPAS and the High School Interims in each section (i.e. subject area):

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\(^2\) In the actual PLAN, not all sections are designed to be completed in 40 minutes. On PLAN Form 31A, which CPS sophomores took during the 2010-2011 school year, test-takers received 30 minutes for English, 40 minutes for Mathematics, 20 minutes for Reading, and 25 minutes for Science.
### ACT College Readiness Standards – Strands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conventions of Punctuation (COP)</td>
<td>• Generalizations and Conclusions (GEN)</td>
<td>• Basic Operations and Applications (BOA)</td>
<td>• Evaluation of Models, Inferences, and Experimental Results (EMI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conventions of Usage (COU)</td>
<td>• Main Ideas and Author’s Approach (MID)</td>
<td>• Graphical Representations (GRE)</td>
<td>• Interpretation of Data (IOD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organization, Unity, and Coherence (OUC)</td>
<td>• Meanings of Words (MOW)</td>
<td>• Measurement (MEA)</td>
<td>• Scientific Investigation (SIN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sentence Structure and Formation (SST)</td>
<td>• Sequential, Comparative, and Cause-Effect Relationships (REL)</td>
<td>• Numbers: Concepts and Properties (NCP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus (TOD)</td>
<td>• Supporting Details (SUP)</td>
<td>• Properties of Plane Figures (PPF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Word Choice in Terms of Style, Tone, Clarity, and Economy (WCH)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Probability, Statistics and Data Analysis (PSD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Banded by College Readiness Standards (CRS) Score Ranges.**

ACT breaks down each CRS strand into six bands that comprise the scoring scale for the EPAS tests: 13-15, 16-19, 20-23, 24-27, 28-32, and 33-36. These CRS “bands”—or score ranges—segment each strand (skill area) assessed by the CRS into several different levels of complexity; higher bands are associated with higher levels of sophistication. In Mathematics, for example, the 13-15 band for the strand Basic Operations and Applications (BOA) is associated with the skill descriptor “Perform one-operation computation with whole numbers and decimals”; the 16-19 band is associated with “Solve routine one-step arithmetic problems using whole numbers, fractions, and decimals...”; and the 20-23 band is associated with “Solve routine two-step or three-step arithmetic problems involving concepts such as rate and proportion, tax added, percentage off,
computing with a given average,” and so on. The bands associated with each strand of the CRS are cumulative, i.e., a student scoring in the 24-27 range on an EPAS test will likely be able to demonstrate the skills associated with the 13-15, 16-19, and 20-23 score ranges as well³.

To allow teachers maximum flexibility in assessing their students at a complexity level they find appropriate, the High School Interims are also broken down into score bands. Each section (English, Reading, Mathematics, and Science) of the High School Interims is available in six different score bands:

- 13-15
- 13-19
- 16-23
- 20-27
- 24-32
- 28-36

For information and guidance on selecting an appropriate score band, please refer to the Test Logistics → Administration Guidelines → Choosing a Score Band section below.

**Alignment to CRS and Common Core.**

Although these assessments are designed to assess CRS and resemble the format and structure of EPAS tests, every item that appears on the High School Interims will be aligned to both CRS and Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Each item is “double taxonomized” in this way to help teachers make connections between the CRS and CCSS as CPS and the nation transition to Common Core. When test blueprints are distributed (at the same time with the tests themselves), they will contain both the CRS and CCSS standard(s) associated with each item number for every test version. In addition, results reports (which will be made available via CIM, CPS’ online assessment portal) from these assessments will help educators visualize student performance by either set of standards.

The High School Interims do not cover all of the CCSS, and we recognize that the CCSS ask students to demonstrate skills and knowledge in a way that simply cannot be captured through multiple-choice testing. Still, many CCSS (or portions thereof) can be well assessed using multiple choice, and there is a great deal of overlap between CRS and CCSS. This should encourage teachers who have planned their curricula according to CRS, and help inform the transition towards CCSS.

TEST LOGISTICS

Testing Schedule & Requirements

The High School Interim assessments will be administered during both the third and fourth quarters of the 2011-2012 school year, as specified below. The testing windows for the summative EPAS post-tests (EXPLORE and PLAN for 9th and 10th graders, respectively, and the PSAE for 11th graders) are also included below for your reference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Grades Tested</th>
<th>Testing Window (Tracks E &amp; R)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HS Interim Assessments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Interims – 3rd Quarter (required)</td>
<td>9 – 11</td>
<td>March 12 – March 23, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Interims – 4th Quarter (optional)</td>
<td>9 – 11</td>
<td>May 14 – May 21, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HS Accountability Assessments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired EXPLORE Post-Test (required)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>June 4 – June 8, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired PLAN Post-Test (required)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>June 4 – June 8, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSAE (required)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>April 24 – 25, 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Testing Platform

CIM (Curriculum and Instructional Management; https://cim.cps.k12.il.us/Authentication.aspx), CPS’ online assessment portal, will be the primary platform for administering the High School Interim assessments and viewing their results. Detailed instructions for how to access and administer the assessments in CIM will be distributed in February, pursuant to the final report of a soon-to-be-convened operations committee composed of teachers, principals, and network staff.

In the meantime, you can prepare by logging into CIM to make sure that you have access and familiarizing yourself with the interface. Web-based training for CIM is online at http://impact.cps.k12.il.us/cim_wbt.asp.

Administration Guidelines and Recommendations

Choosing a Score Band.

As educators, the ultimate decision about how which test bands to administer to which students is yours. Central office will not mandate a particular band for particular grade levels, classrooms, or students. However, we offer the following guidance those who find it helpful.
Before choosing a particular score band, teachers should think about how they want to administer the assessment and use its results. Generally speaking, a teacher has two “how” options to consider—one hand, she might wish to administer the same score band to all of the students in her class; on the other, she might wish to give different bands to different students, depending on their level of knowledge and sophistication. Each “how” option is associated with pros and cons:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administration Option</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Option #1: Same test band for all students | ▪ Easier to administer  
▪ Same yardstick for all students—overall percentages correct will be comparable  
▪ Valid strand comparison—all students will have had the same proportion of questions in each strand  
▪ Whole-class item analysis—all students will have received same items in same order | ▪ Some students may be assessed far above or far below their level, making the test either overwhelming or unchallenging  
▪ Diagnostic information about specific skill strengths and deficiencies may be less accurate for students whose overall skill levels are poorly matched with the administered band |
| Option #2: Different bands for different students | ▪ Individual students can be assessed at a level consistent with their present knowledge or ability, or “pushed” to a level slightly beyond  
▪ More accurate diagnostic information about the specific skill strengths/deficiencies of individual students | ▪ Harder to administer  
▪ Impossible to do whole-class item analysis  
▪ Overall and strand-level results are not comparable among students |

For those who choose to administer to whole class (Option #1), please interpret the “Most Recent EPAS Scaled Score” ranges below as average subject-level scaled scores. For those who choose to administer different bands to different students (Option #2), please interpret these ranges as student-specific, individual scaled scores in the relevant subject area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Recent EPAS Scaled Score</th>
<th>“At Level” Test Band Recommendation</th>
<th>“Push” Test Band Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-14</td>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>13-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-16</td>
<td>13-19</td>
<td>16-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>16-23</td>
<td>20-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>20-27</td>
<td>24-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-28</td>
<td>24-32</td>
<td>28-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-36</td>
<td>28-36</td>
<td>28-36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The “At Level” test band recommendations in the middle column above are likely to be consistent with the current skill levels of your students. Those who wish to “push” their students by challenging them with test content slightly beyond their current level should consider the “Push” test band recommendations in the right-hand column.

**Accommodations.** No alternate test versions are available for English language learners (ELLs), or students with disabilities (SWDs). However, both ELLs and SWDs should receive appropriate testing accommodations. To the maximum extent possible, ELLs and SWDs should receive the same accommodations that they would on the “live” administrations of the EXPLORE, PLAN or ACT.

**Support**

For questions regarding the content or logistics of the High School Interims, please contact Linda Abdul (lmabdul@cps.k12.il.us; 773-553-2424).

For technical questions and support requests relating to CIM (an IMPACT module) or to technology issues in general, please call the IT Service Desk at 773-553-3925 (773-553-EXCL).

For inquiries regarding student assessment in general, please email assessment@cps.k12.il.us; call 773-553-2430, or visit http://research.cps.k12.il.us/cps/accountweb/Assessment.

**USING THE TEST TO DRIVE INSTRUCTION**

The High School Interims are best used in the context of a Data-Driven Instruction (DDI) cycle, which includes six components:

1. Plan
2. Teach
3. Predict
4. Assess
5. Analyze
6. Re-teach

Interim assessments should play a pivotal role in Steps 3 – 6.

**Predict, Assess, Analyze, Re-teach.** After reviewing the content of the High School Interims, which will be distributed via the CEDO newsletter by the end of January, teachers should use the attached DDI form (courtesy of the Office of School Improvement) at least three weeks prior to the beginning of the testing
window to predict the performance of their students on each test item. This form is a tool to help teachers reflect on the demands of the assessment in relation to the curriculum they have taught to date, and can provide a valuable opportunity to modify and/or supplement instruction. After the assessments have been administered, teachers will compare actual testing outcomes to their predictions, and use this information to inform their re-teaching strategy.

Additional information and tools relating to the use of High School Interim assessments to drive instruction will be forthcoming.