

MEMORANDUM

August 4, 2010

TO: School Board Members

FROM: Terry B. Grier, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: END OF COURSE EXAMS, 2009–2010 IMPLEMENTATION FEEDBACK

CONTACT: Carla Stevens, 713-556-6700

Attached is the End of Course Exams, 2009–2010 Implementation Feedback. The purpose of this report is to describe the process of End of Course exams within the Houston Independent School District.

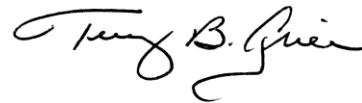
Some of this year's key findings are as follows:

Some individuals experienced issues with implementation of EOC assessments. Fifty percent of responses indicated that there was not enough equipment available during set up for testing. This was the leading issue with implementation according to these data.

If individuals did experience implementation problems, most of the time those problems were resolved to the client's satisfaction. Eighty-three percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that implementation problems were resolved to their satisfaction.

For the item "I would like to see the following changes in training made," most respondents (40.0 percent) would like more open labs for training.

Finding an ideal window for EOC testing is relevant to future administrations. Most respondents chose the second week of May (50.8 percent), followed by the first week of May (38.5 percent) as the ideal window for EOC exams.



TBG

Attachment

cc: Superintendent Direct Reports

RESEARCH

Educational Program Report



End-of-Course Exams, 2009–2010 Implementation Feedback



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Houston Independent School District

Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center
4400 West 18th Street
Houston, Texas 77092-8501

Website: www.houstonisd.org

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

END OF COURSE EXAMS, 2009–2010

IMPLEMENTATION FEEDBACK

Program Description

In Texas in 2007, the state Senate enacted Senate Bill 1031. The bill called for the development of an end-of-course assessment (EOC) for secondary-level courses in algebra I, algebra II, geometry, biology, chemistry, physics, English I, English II, English III, world geography, world history and United States history. The focus is on core high school courses. End-of-course assessments are to become part of the graduation requirements in Texas beginning with the freshman class of 2011–2012.

Additionally, end-of-course assessments for higher-level courses include a series of questions designed to measure an individual’s college readiness. Each EOC assessment will be worth 15% of the student’s final grade for that course. Thus, impacting grade promotion. The assessments are not grade specific, as previous standardized testing in Texas has been. Instead, after a student completes specific coursework, the student takes an assessment associated with that specific coursework. EOC assessments focus on knowledge and skills necessary for student success and preparedness for future academic courses. The process incorporates lower-level course questions within the EOC assessments to determine a student’s readiness for more advanced coursework.

Field-testing for each subject matter assessment has been conducted by the Texas Education Agency since 2007. Houston Independent School District (HISD) prepared for the shift to EOC assessments this year by conducting a district-specific preliminary testing process. This process allowed test administrators to troubleshoot potential issues and develop an appropriate implementation process for the 2011-2012 implementation year.

Key Findings

- Some individuals experienced issues with implementation of EOC assessments. Fifty percent of responses indicated that there was not enough equipment available during set up for testing. This was the leading issue with implementation according to these data.
- If individuals did experience implementation problems, most of the time those problems were resolved to the client’s satisfaction. Eighty-three percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that implementation problems were resolved to their satisfaction.
- For the item “I would like to see the following changes in training made,” most respondents (40.0 percent) would like more open labs for training.
- Finding an ideal window for EOC testing is relevant to future administrations. Most respondents chose the second week of May (50.8 percent), followed by the first week of May (38.5 percent) as the ideal window for EOC exams.

Recommendations

It is recommended that continued evaluation and process monitoring of the EOC assessments be conducted in order to best implement the process in 2011–2012. This will allow HISD administrators an opportunity to smoothly transition into this new testing procedure by developing a process that meets the needs of testing coordinators, teachers, and students.

END OF COURSE EXAMS, 2009–2010 IMPLEMENTATION FEEDBACK

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Purpose of the Evaluation Report

The evaluation presented descriptive data regarding the experiences of test administrators and principals implementing the HISD EOC assessment process.

Research Question

What are the perceptions and experiences of individuals who implemented the HISD End-of-Course assessments during the 2009–2010 school year?

Method

A nineteen-item electronic survey was deployed via SurveyMonkey software to a non-probability sample of HISD staff participating in EOC administration. A total of 66 individuals participated in the survey after the spring 2010 completion of EOC administration. The survey was designed to capture information regarding satisfaction of the process, and options for improving the testing process in 2010–2011. This data will provide feedback from administrators, principals, test administrators, test coordinators and others working with the new EOC exams.

Results

Results from the electronic survey are presented by survey item to incorporate response-linked information. Items were designed to provide feedback to those implementing the EOC assessments so that improvements to the process can be developed before full implementation is required by TEA.

What is your role in testing?

There were 66 unduplicated respondents to item 1. The highest number of respondents reported to be test coordinators (N=41). Results are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Role in Testing, 2009–2010

	N	Percent
Test Coordinator	41	62.1
Test Administrator	6	9.1
Principal	14	21.2
Other	5	7.6
	66	100.0

Item 2 was for tracking purposes only. Therefore, results are not reported due to confidentiality issues. Items 3, 4, and 5 are estimates given by principals, test administrators, test coordinators, and other individuals who participated in the EOC exams. Some schools had more than one respondent, as each individual school could have many participants in the process.

Approximately how many hours did the campus testing coordinator spend preparing for the EOC testing?

On average, the testing coordinator spent 27.5 hours in preparation for the EOC testing process. The responses ranged from 2.0 hours to 160.0 hours of individual preparation.

Approximately how many hours did the campus testing coordinator spend preparing for EOC testing?

On average, a testing coordinator spent 3.3 hours training for EOC testing this year. The range of hours an individual spent in training for EOC testing was from 0.5 hours to 15 hours as reported by the survey respondents.

Approximately how many hours did the campus testing coordinator spend administering EOC testing?

On average, testing coordinators reported spending 25.6 hours in the administration process, and the range of hours spanned 1 hour to 160 hours per individual.

What were implementation problems at the campus level?

Some individuals experienced issues with implementation of EOC exams. Over 25 percent indicated no issues with implementation, while 13.8 percent of respondents indicated “not enough time to test all students”, and 19.0 percent indicated “not enough time to adjust to the new processes.” Additionally, “not enough training for staff” was 15.5 percent of responses and “other issues” was 22.4 percent of responses. However, 50.0 percent of responses indicated that there was not enough equipment available during set up for testing. This was the leading issue according to the data presented in **Figure 1**.

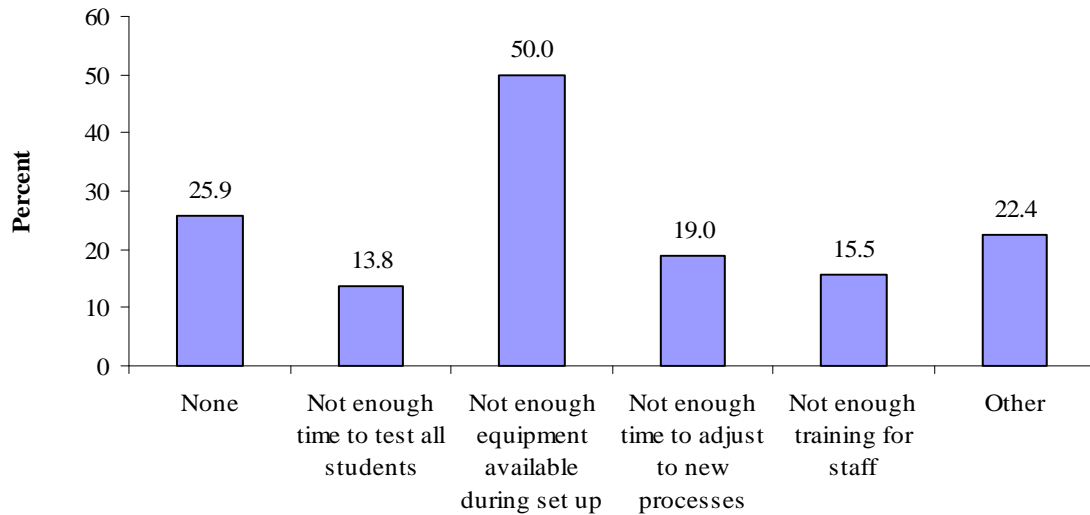


Figure 1: Implementation problems at the campus level, 2009–2010.

Were implementation problems resolved to the individual’s satisfaction?

It is evident that if individuals experienced implementation problems, most respondents reported the problems were resolved to the client’s satisfaction. **Figure 2** presents data regarding resolutions of implementation problems. Eighty-three percent (83.6 percent) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that implementation problems were resolved.

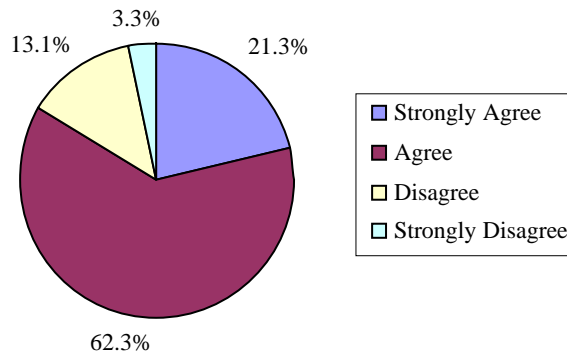


Figure 2: Satisfaction with resolution of implementation problems, 2009–2010.

What changes need to be made in the training process?

This item addressed what changes could be made during EOC testing to improve the administration process. Most respondents (40.4 percent) would like to have more open labs for EOC training for testing coordinators (**Figure 3**).

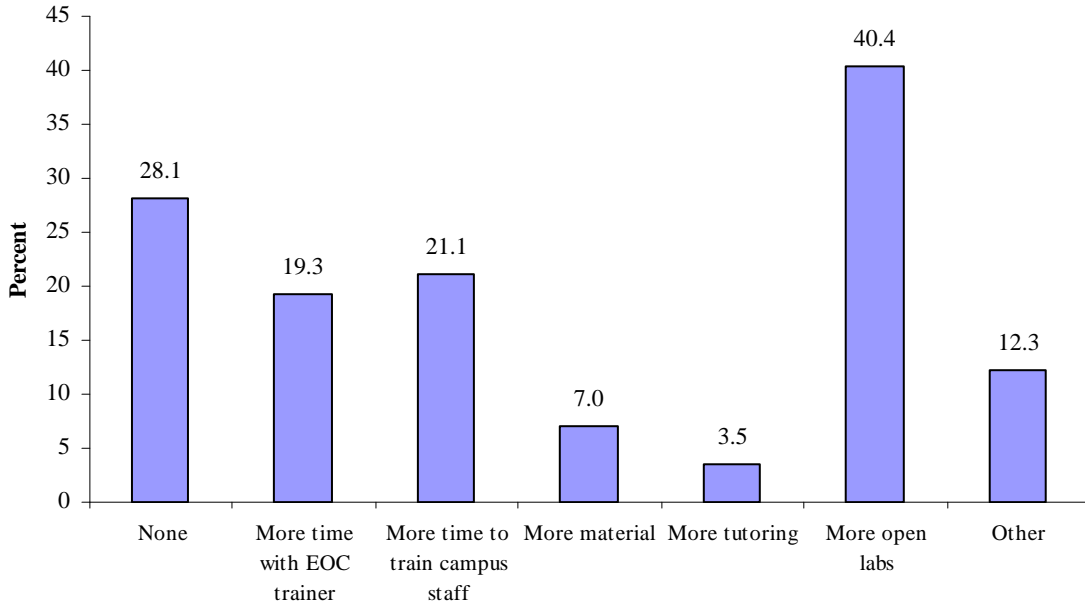


Figure 3: Suggested changes for training, 2009–2010.

What were some of the issues experienced during the testing process?

Different from campus-level issues, item 9 captured issues experienced by testing personnel during the actual testing process. **Table 2** presents this information. Respondents reported facility/equipment and scheduling issues most often. Forty-three people had facility/equipment issues (strongly agree N= 24, agree N=19). Thirty-two respondents had technical support issues (strongly agree N=15, agree N=17).

Table 2: Issues Experienced During Testing, 2009–2010

	Number of Participants				Total Responses
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
I had test administration issues.	9	12	21	18	61
I had scheduling issues.	10	20	16	16	62
I had technical support issues.	15	17	14	15	61
I had training issues.	2	7	25	24	58
I had facility/equipment availability issues.	24	19	11	8	62
I had security issues.	2	5	24	28	59

How would you rate the over-all technical support that your campus received?

Item 10 asks about technical support received at the campus level during EOC testing. Twenty-five percent of individuals reported that technical support was excellent and 47 percent reported it was adequate. Technical support for EOC testing in 2009–2010 seems to have been properly addressed. **Figure 4** presents this information.

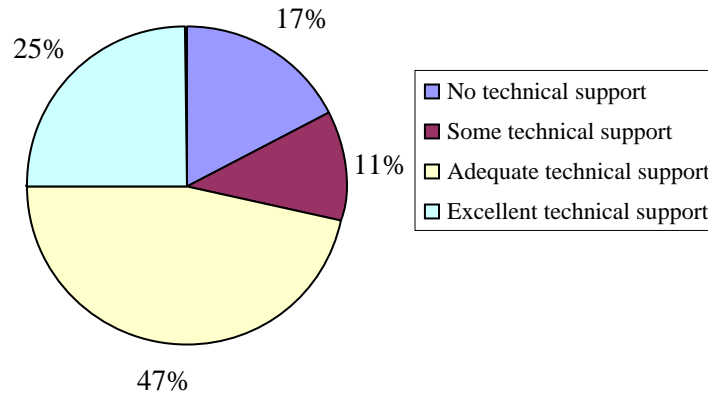


Figure 4: Over-all campus technical support, 2009–2010.

How would you rate the level of commitment shown by students?

Sixty-four participants responded to item 11. Most respondents (71.9 percent) indicated that the level of commitment shown by students was moderate, high, or very high. Only 28.2 percent of respondents rated students low or very low. **Figure 5** presents these results.

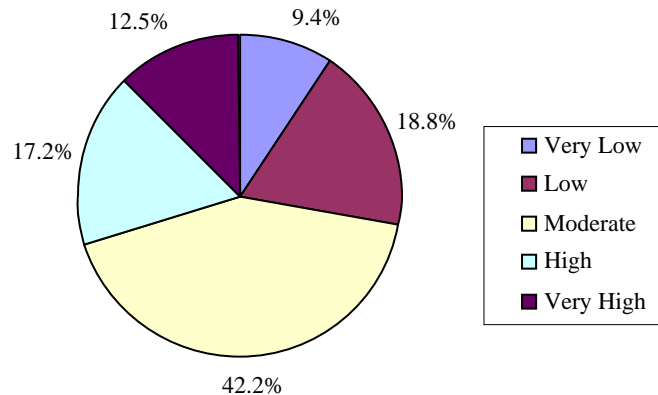


Figure 5: Student commitment levels, 2009–2010.

What are some steps we, as a district, can take next year to improve student participation?

Item 12 was an open-ended question that asked participants about steps that the district could take to improve student participation in EOC exams. **Table 3** is a sample of these responses. Not all campuses had participation problems. These comments focus on those that reported an issue. Many responses focused on having enough computers and technology infrastructure for the testing process. Others

reported that the test “did not count.” However, this aspect of testing will change as the switch in assessments is made from TAKS to EOC exams. Additionally, some comments focused on finals week and other scheduling issues. These issues should be phased out as EOC exams replace other testing practices in the district.

Table 3: Suggested steps for improvement for EOC, 2009–2010

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give campuses more computers. • Ensure that there is at least one working computer lab in each school. • Do not schedule five straight weeks of testing. • Technology infrastructure is a problem. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide updated computers and more staff training. • Change testing window as to not interfere with the test window of other end-of-year exams. • Provide more online testing for students so they become more comfortable computer testing. |
|---|--|

What was the average amount of time students spent on any given assessment?

Item 13 asked about how much time students spent completing any given assessment. Most respondents (57.1 percent) reported that students took two to three hours to complete an assessment. Most respondents reported that students were done within three hours (87.3 percent). Only 4.8 percent of respondents indicated four or more hours. **Figure 6** below presents this information.

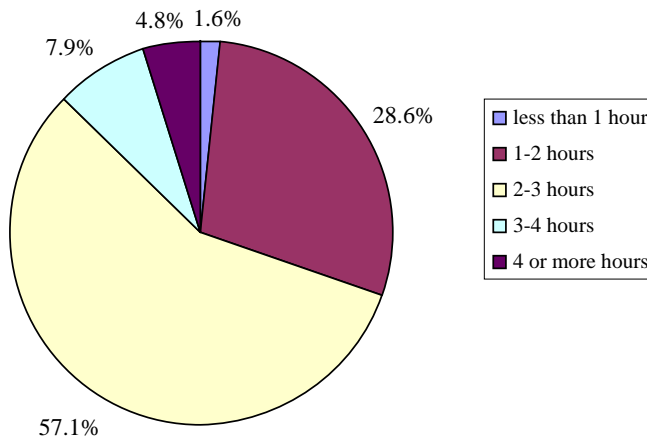


Figure 6: Average amount of time per assessment, 2009–2010.

Which course took longer for students to complete?

Many respondents (35.3 percent) reported that the assessments all took about the same amount of time. Following that, 43.1 percent reported that algebra I took longer for students to complete. Respondents could choose more than one category to report on. As a result, the reported percentages add up to more than 100 percent. **Figure 7** presents these data.

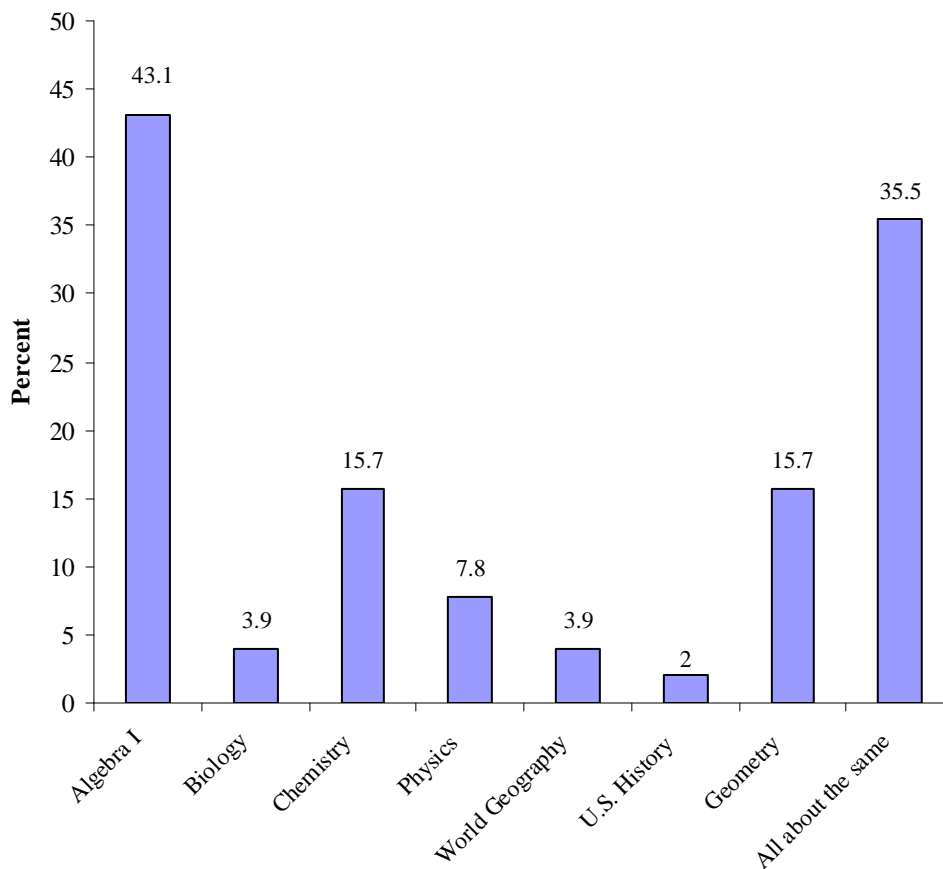


Figure 7: Specific courses taking longer to complete, 2009–2010.

What test preparation activities can better prepare students for EOC testing?

HISD staff reported test preparation activities that could better prepare students for EOC testing. Respondents could choose all options they considered appropriate, so percentages will total more than 100 percent. Most respondents reported that more computer time (28.2 percent) would be an activity that would prepare students for EOC testing. Next, 26.2 percent indicated more specific classroom instruction would be useful, followed by 24.3 percent indicating access to tutorials would be beneficial. **Table 4** presents these data.

Table 4: Options for test preparation, 2009–2010

	N	Percent
More computer time	29	28.2
More specific classroom instruction	27	26.2
Access to tutorials	25	24.3
Other	16	15.5
After-school programs	6	5.8
Total	103	100.0

How can school personnel be better prepared for EOC testing in the future?

EOC exam administration can improve in future years by preparing school personnel. Respondents were asked to choose all options that they considered appropriate for preparing school personnel. Respondents could choose more than one option, so the total percentage will be more than 100 percent. Most respondents (73.8 percent) reported that more computers would be one option. Next, 45.9 percent indicated more teacher training was needed. Better technical support (19.7), more test coordinator training (16.4 percent), and other options (11.5) were sited less often than the need for computers and teacher training. **Figure 8** below presents this information.

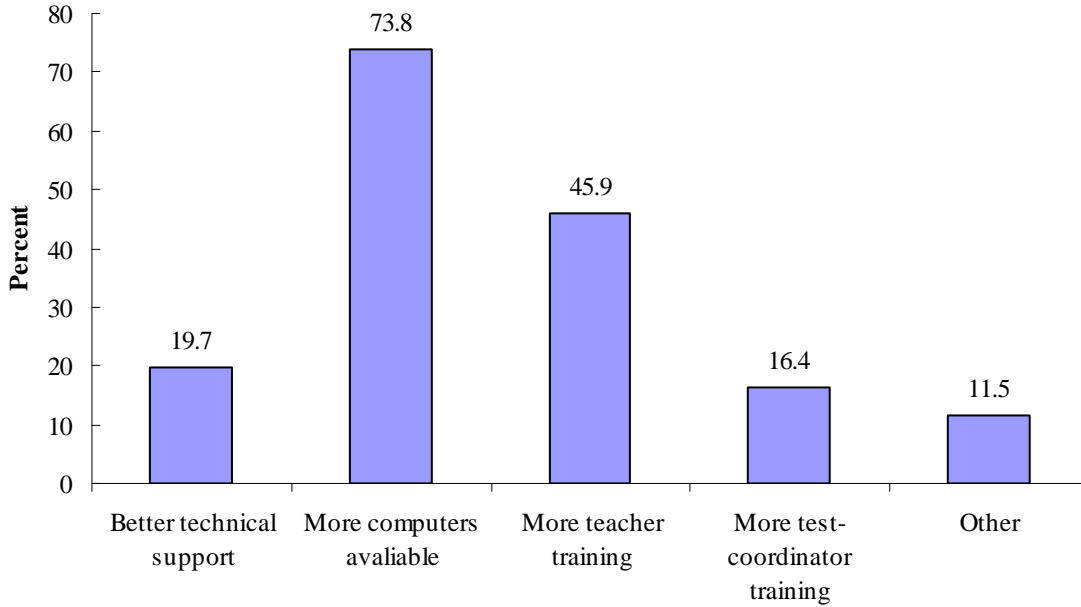


Figure 8: EOC testing preparation needs, 2009–2010.

Do you prefer the students to be pre-entered into the software by subject or by teacher?

This item asked those participating in test administration if they preferred students to be pre-entered into software by subject or by teacher. Most respondents (61.3 percent) preferred subject instead of teacher (38.7 percent).

What is the ideal window of time for EOC testing to occur?

Finding an ideal window for EOC testing is relevant to future administrations. Again, respondents could choose more than one option, allowing the total percentage to equal more than 100 percent. Most respondents chose the second week of May (50.8 percent), followed by the first week of May (38.5 percent) as the ideal window for conducting EOC exams. **Figure 9** presents these data.

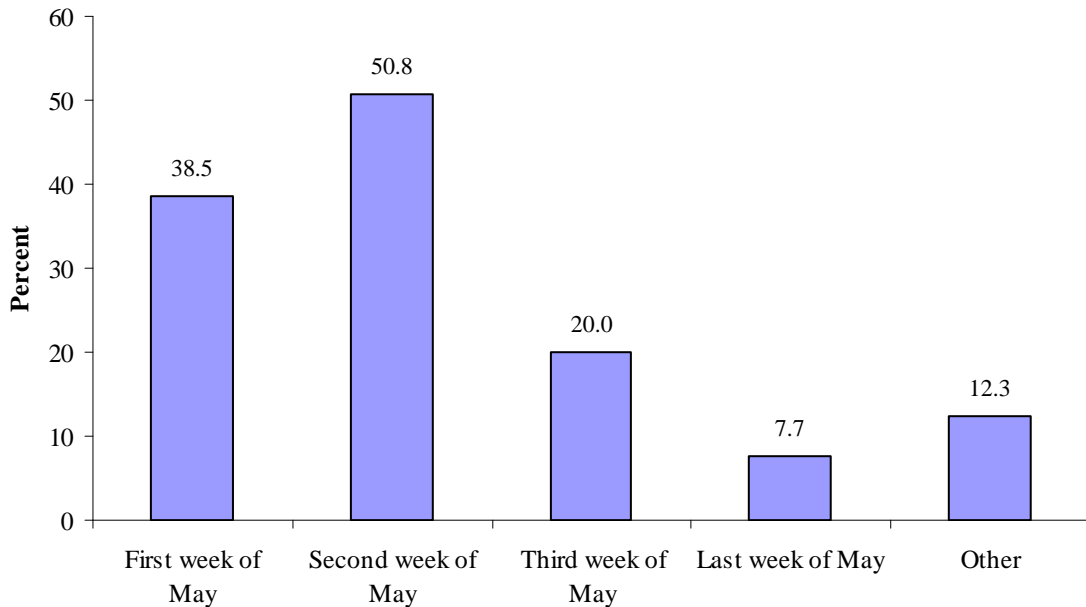


Figure 9: Ideal window for EOC testing, 2009–2010.

If you were given the option, would you prefer to test online or on paper?

Item 19 asked respondents if they preferred online testing or paper testing. If given an option, most respondents preferred online testing (64.1 percent) to paper testing (35.9 percent). However, when respondents chose “paper testing” as an option, some respondents reported that technical issues and too few computers as reasons for preferring paper.

Discussion

This evaluation presented descriptive data from a non-probability sample of those participating in EOC testing. The experiences and perceptions of test administrators implementing the HISD EOC assessment process were recorded. HISD is actively preparing the district to shift to EOC assessments as required by the state. This year, by conducting a district-level EOC testing administration of all available operational tests, issues related to EOC assessment preparation were revealed. This evaluation allowed for changes and adjustments to the process to be implemented prior to the full implementation in 2011–2012. Administrators can use this information to create appropriate testing schedules, understand technical issues, make more computers available to students, and generally understand the process of implementation as experienced by the testing coordinators/ administrators.

Recommendations

It is recommended that continued evaluation and process monitoring of the EOC assessments be conducted in order to best implement the process in 2011–2012. This will allow HISD administrators an opportunity to smoothly transition into this new testing procedure by developing a process that meets the needs of testing coordinators, teachers, and students.