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Education Department Issues Intent to Award Assessment Contract *Current Contractor to Administer High School Exit Exam For One More Year*

The Department of Education & Early Development has announced an Intent to Award a contract to Data Recognition Corporation of Minnesota to develop and administer new assessment tests for Alaska public school students. The assessments covered under the contract will include grades 3 through 9 plus the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam.

However, the state's assessment contractor since 1998, CTB/McGraw-Hill, will continue to administer the high school exit exam for another year. Data Recognition Corporation, under its new contract, will begin administering the high school exam in **October 2005**. Data Recognition will administer assessments in grades 3 through 9 beginning with the **spring 2005** administration.

"This is wonderful news for Alaska," said Education & Early Development Commissioner Roger Sampson. "Our new statewide assessment system contractor offers many new benefits for Alaska's students, teachers, school administrators and the State of Alaska. And it provides these additional benefits at less cost to the state. It's a win-win situation for us all."

The six year contract will cost the state \$5 million each year.

The new contractor, which administers state assessments for the state of Louisiana, will offer the following benefits:

- Administration of assessments to students later in the school year to provide more accurate assessment of student knowledge and skills learned at grade level.
- Student reports delivered by web to school districts to expedite return of results.
- Quicker results to students, schools and parents, by May 15 for grades 3 through 9 and by April 25 for seniors who take the high school exam, and by early May for all others who take the high school exam.
- Sole ownership of all test questions for the State of Alaska, which will make changing contractors next time a seamless process. Currently, the state holds a mixture of co-ownership, sole ownership and no ownership of test questions with CTB/McGraw-Hill. "The lack of clear ownership of the test questions puts our state at a disadvantage in dealing with a test contractor," said Sampson. "Ownership puts Alaska in the driver's seat when it's time to test the marketplace for a better, quicker, more accurate and less expensive test contract."
- Two versions of the grades 3 through 9 assessments (there is currently only one version).
- Five versions of the high school exam.
- A parent friendly web site to develop understanding about student assessments.
- Practice tests at all grade levels.
- Easy to manage on-line student data for school districts, including student enrollment verification and a student precoding system.
- Better warehousing of data to improve tracking students who have passed or not passed the high school exit exam.
- Reporting of alternate assessment results.

- A scale to follow individual student developmental (growth scale) on assessments.
- An Assessment Policy Council to monitor and advise the Department of Education & Early Development on amendments to No Child Left Behind laws and regulations.
- Periodic studies to assure continued alignment between student academic standards and assessments.

A review committee of five people examined five proposals from bidders, and reached unanimous agreement to award the contract to Data Recognition Corporation. Committee members included: Mark Lewis, contract officer for the Department of Education & Early Development (EED); Erik McCormick, EED, Data Manager; Les Morse, EED Director of Assessment and Accountability; Nick Stayrook, Executive Director, Program Planning and Evaluation for Fairbanks North-Star Borough School District; Richard Smiley, EED Education Administrator; Jack Walsh, Director of Personnel and Student Services, Kodiak Borough School District; Gary Whitely, Assistant Superintendent, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District.

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