Digitalizing and Modernizing EQAO Assessments

Ensuring Technical Readiness

As part of EQAO's 2020–2021 field tests, the agency adopted a two-part approach to ensuring technical readiness. **First,** the agency worked closely with school board information technology (IT) leads as well as government and IT security partners to establish and maintain technical readiness assurances that are aimed at providing a successful and secure assessment experience for students and educators. **Second,** EQAO aligns with Government of Ontario Information and Technology Standards (GO-ITS) for ensuring the security and privacy of student data.

01

Technical Readiness Assurances

Over the course of the 2020–2021 school year, EQAO consulted with school board IT leads at the monthly meetings of the Ontario Association of School Business Officials' ICT (Information and Communication Technology) group and Comité collaboratif des TIC (Technologies de l'information et de la communication) to share technical readiness requirements and to gather feedback from members. EQAO also held 39 webinars with IT staff specifically to walk through technical readiness requirements and processes to support online administration.

Technical consultations and sharing of knowledge are an ongoing part of EQAO's digitalized assessment program. In addition, EQAO has implemented a technical support model, which includes the following:

a three-tier support centre for educators and board personnel, with defined service levels and escalation processes, should technical issues arise;
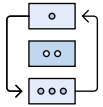
defined IT Incident and Requests protocols and Triage Steps;

user-friendly resources (guides, webinars, knowledge records) for educators and board staff;

validation by boards and schools of network readiness and security, through the completion of mandatory technical readiness checklists in the e-assessment system, prior to the administration of the tests; and

functionality in the e-assessment system that allows board IT staff to monitor the participation of schools within their board.

02 Data Security and Privacy

EQAO has also adapted its approach to data security and privacy. Prior to the rollout of the e-assessment system, the agency worked with security and privacy specialists to conduct security assessments (e.g., threat risk assessments, penetration testing) and privacy impact assessments to mitigate vulnerabilities and risks. As part of the online administration of EQAO assessments, the agency and its security partners have also defined response protocols in the event that a cybersecurity incident occurs. These assessments and protocols ensure that student data—especially private information— are protected in alignment with GO-ITS.