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December 9, 2005

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Louisiana Graduation Options and Exit Testing for Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita Evacuees

This letter is intended to clarify some issues related to Louisiana testing and diploma options for Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita evacuees from Louisiana currently enrolled in Texas public schools. The content of this letter is based on information provided by Louisiana Department of Education officials. Louisiana has also provided the attached flyer to be distributed to juniors and seniors from Louisiana explaining their options and outlining the process involved.

What are the graduation options?

Affected students may continue to work toward a Texas high school diploma or may earn a Louisiana diploma, through enrollment and completion of Louisiana's Distance Diploma program.

How will students enroll in the Distance Diploma program?

High school counselors are asked to assist students in enrolling in the Distance Diploma program via the Louisiana Department of Education web site at www.louisianaschools.net.

Who will be allowed to participate in Louisiana exit level testing?

Students are eligible if they are former Louisiana public school students displaced due to Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Rita, and they plan to graduate this year (2005-2006) or next year (2006-2007). Displaced students who have completed course requirements but need to retake the Graduation Exit Examination (GEE) are also eligible.

How will the GEE be administered?

Louisiana is offering administration of their GEE test only online. Students will need to register online at www.louisianaschools.net by clicking on "Distance Diploma" and then "Online GEE Registration."

When is the online testing scheduled to occur?

Students will be assigned a password to access the online test(s). GEE online testing will be available January 23-27, 2006. The preferred test schedule for the GEE is as follows:

- Monday, January 23rd – Mathematics
- Tuesday, January 24th – English Language Arts (Sessions 1 and 2)
- Wednesday, January 25th – English Language Arts (Sessions 3 and 4)
- Thursday, January 26th - Science
- Friday, January 27th – Social Studies

If schools are unable to meet this preferred schedule, they will need to contact the Louisiana Department of Education. Additional opportunities to test will occur one week in March and one week in June 2006, although exact dates have not yet been determined.

Where will testing occur and who will be responsible for test administration arrangements?

The test administrator will be provided with a downloadable roster of eligible students, and counselors will be advised via a downloadable roster about the test(s) each student is required to take. Testing will take place on the campuses at which students are currently enrolled. Louisiana does not have funds to pay for transporting students elsewhere (e.g., Educational Service Centers) for test administration. A Texas school official will need to administer the tests in a school computer lab or other appropriate setting.

Prior to testing, a school official will need to download a User Guide that will include directions for setting up the testing computers and downloading the secure web browser at each computer used for testing.

The basic requirements of the campus administering the GEE online are setting up computers with the secure browser downloaded and available to students who registered for the exam, identifying a school official to proctor the exam, and notifying students who are enrolled that the online option is available to them. An online tutorial for students to take prior to the test to familiarize them with the format will be available via www.louisianapass.org. Students can sign up by using the initial password *tiger* and practice using the same features as in the GEE.

The GEE is not a timed test; however, *suggested* times for taking each session are indicated in **Attachment A**.

When/how will students and Louisiana schools receive results?

Test results will be available for downloading within a month after the completion of testing. When students sign up for the GEE, they will receive instructions on how to receive their scores.

Louisiana schools will receive a record of GEE online scores, and Louisiana diplomas will be sent to each student's current school.

Who do you call about questions regarding the Louisiana diploma program and testing requirements?

The GEE online system is designed so that school counselors can work directly with the Louisiana Department of Education. **Questions from districts, students, and parents may be answered by calling the Louisiana Department of Education at the following toll-free information number:**

877-453-2721

A Frequently Asked Questions document will also be available online at www.louisianaschools.net under "Distance Diploma."

Please understand that the additional responsibilities described in this letter that districts and schools are being asked to assume come from the state of Louisiana. We know that your staff are already burdened with many other duties and tasks. We appreciate the work you are doing to support the needs of Louisiana's hurricane evacuees at the same time that you continue to ensure that Texas students achieve high levels of success. We will continue to work with Louisiana officials to do whatever is possible to ease this additional workload.

Sincerely,

Susan Barnes
Associate Commissioner for Standards and Programs

Attachments

cc: District Test Coordinators
ESC Executive Directors

Attachment A

The GEE is **not** a timed test. However, suggested times for taking each session of the exam are as follows:

| | <u>Suggested Time</u> |
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| <u>English Language Arts</u> | |
| Session 1 (Writing) | 90 minutes |
| Session 2 (Using Information Resources) | 40 minutes |
| Session 3 (Reading and Responding) | 90 minutes |
| Session 4 (Proofreading) | 20 minutes |
| <u>Mathematics</u> | |
| Session 1 (No Calculator) | 75 minutes |
| Session 2 (Calculator) | 75 minutes |
| Session 3 (Calculator) | 60 minutes |
| <u>Science</u> | |
| Session 1 (Multiple-Choice Questions) | 90 minutes |
| Session 2 (Short-Answer Questions) | 30 minutes |
| Session 3 (Science Task) | 60 minutes |
| <u>Social Studies</u> | |
| Session 1 (Multiple-Choice Questions) | 90 minutes |
| Session 2 (Constructed-Response Questions) | 60 minutes |