

A STUDY OF THE STATE-WIDE TESTING PROGRAMS IN FLORIDA

Harry E. Anderson, Jr.¹
University of Georgia

Introduction

The present study was designed to identify and survey state-wide testing programs carried out in the state of Florida. The study was restricted, for the most part, to those programs that are conducted on a fairly regular, or scheduled, basis by state agencies. Local programs, such as those conducted by individual schools, whether or not they are conducted on a scheduled basis, were not included in the study.

The purpose of the study was to determine various characteristics of the testing programs that would be of interest in the planning, establishment, and conduct of large scale testing programs as well as analyzing program information in terms of large scale data systems. Of primary concern was the program administration, types of tests and test information, facets of test administration, types and uses of results, and cost factors. These study requirements were established in coordination with a Steering Committee, by the Deputy Superintendent in the Florida State Department of Education, which served to monitor and provide guidance for the study.

Methodology

The primary method of study was that of structured interviews. The interviews were structured by means of a questionnaire developed in the early phases of the study.

Initial contacts were made with each of the eight Division Heads in the Florida State Department of Education as well as other key personnel, such as those in the Data Systems office. These contacts were crucial for identifying testing activities in the division together with two other

¹This study was conducted while the author was a consultant with the Florida State Department of Education. Appreciation is owed to many people for cooperation in the completion of the study, especially to Mr. Henry P. Aldredge who was a most valuable assistant in gathering and analyzing data.

major testing programs conducted outside of the Department, the Ninth and Twelfth Grade Testing Programs.

The second phase of the study consisted of intensive interviews with test program directors in accordance with information obtained from the Division Heads. The program analyses are based on data taken from the 1963-64 academic year.

Scheduled Testing Programs in the Florida State Department of Education

Two scheduled testing programs were identified in the State Department of Education. One of the scheduled testing programs is the General Scholarship Loans Program (GSLP) and the second is the State High School Equivalency Testing Program (SHSETP). These programs are handled on a scheduled basis, though the scheduled period for the latter program will differ from testing center to testing center.

The Florida General Scholarship Loan Program. The GSLP actually consists of two scholarship loan programs that are administered through the Division of Teacher Education, Certification, and Accreditation by the Coordinator, Scholarship Services. There is a loan program involving some \$540,000 appropriated annually for teaching scholarship loans, and another program with an annual appropriation of about \$150,000 for nursing scholarship loans. Approximately \$40,000 is budgeted annually at the state level for the conduct and administration of the program together with \$4,000 for materials and shipping, and \$1,050 for scoring.

The GSLP was initiated in 1953 by a legislative act, similar programs have existed in Florida since 1920. The administration of the current program requires ten people at the state level and about 130 people at the county level; the latter persons are appointed by the 67 county Superintendents throughout the state. The present size of the program is indicated, also, by the 8-to-10 thousand students in grades 10 through 16 tested annually as applicants for scholarship loans.

The test used as the criterion for selection of applicants for both scholarship loan programs is the Florida State Scholarship Examination (Form ID) published by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). The examination is a special, restricted form of the School and College Ability Test (SCAT) with part and total score reliabilities reported between .90 to .97. The test is administered at the county

level, in a two-hour testing session with about 70 minutes of actual testing time, on the Tuesday closest to the 20th of October.

Completed answer sheets are sent to ETS for scoring and, after about two weeks, punched cards with verbal, quantitative, and total raw scores are returned to the Coordinator, Scholarship Services. Listings are made by county and by state running high to low based on the total raw score. There is no distribution of results outside of the Department. The Coordinator selects teacher scholarship loan winners as the highest total scorers on the county listings based on county allotments, while the nursing scholarship loan winners are identified as the highest total scorers on the state listing.

The State High School Equivalency Testing Program. The SHSETP was begun in 1946 at the suggestion of the American Council on Education (ACE). The purpose of the program is to provide a means whereby adults over 20 years of age may have an opportunity for obtaining recognition of a high school (equivalent) education which they have achieved through self-directed study, travel, occupational experience, and other activities. The program is administered by the State Testing Agent in the Division of Vocational, Technical, and Adult Education.

The criterion test used in the SHSETP, administered in 35 testing centers throughout the state, is the General Education Development Test (GED) published by the Veterans' Testing Service of the ACE. The GED has five subtests as follows: Correctness and Effectiveness of Expression, Interpretation of Reading Materials in the Social Sciences, Interpretation of Literary Materials, and General Mathematical Ability. The GED is a highly restricted test, being available only on a rental basis from the ACE. GED test booklets are retained by the State Testing Agent and sent to testing centers temporarily only as required for immediate testing needs. The subtest reliabilities are reported to be between .85 and .90. Some 14 hours are required for the administration of the entire GED, and the Examiner's Manual indicates that it is inadvisable to administer more than three subtests in a single day.

The answer sheets are scored under the supervision of the State Testing Agent. Using national norms, raw scores on each of the subtests are converted to standard scores with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. In Florida, the State High School Equivalency Diploma is issued to examinees who score a minimum of 40 points on each and every subtest and an average of 45 points over all five subtests.

of GED Test Results" is prepared for each center by the State Testing Agent with subtest standard scores for each examinee.

The annual cost of conducting the program at the state level is about \$15,000 including \$1,500 for materials and shipping, and \$4,500 for (clerical salaries) scoring. From 3,000 to 3,500 examinees are tested annually at this time, however, and are charged \$7.50 for taking the battery; \$5.00 of this fee goes to the state and \$2.50 goes to the county. The program for all intents and purposes, at least at the state level, is largely self-supporting.

Scheduled Testing Programs Outside of the Florida State Department of Education

The largest state-wide scheduled testing programs are conducted outside the purview of the State Department of Education. The Ninth Grade Testing Program is administered by a Program Director in the Department of Educational Research and Testing at Florida State University, and the Twelfth Grade Testing Program is administered by a Program Director in the Board of Examiner's Office at the University of Florida. Each operates under the direction of its respective Steering Committee and has its own administrative personnel. A member of the State Department of Education, however, serves on the Steering Committee of both programs. Moreover, the planning and conduct of the programs are coordinated at the Program Director's level and through persons with membership on both committees.

The Ninth Grade Testing Program. This program is by far the largest state-wide scheduled testing program in the State of Florida with the testing of some 91,000 ninth grade students in the fall of 1964, virtually all of the ninth grade students in the state. Two clerks spend 15 weeks packaging and shipping testing materials and 10 clerks require 10 weeks for receiving and scoring activities. The Program Director and his assistant coordinate the program through the 67 county superintendents. The materials are handled directly through the offices of the superintendents in 24 counties and through the offices of the principals in 511 schools in the remaining 43 counties. The annual cost of the program is about \$84,000 of which \$40,000 is spent for materials, scoring, and shipping, and \$22,000 for salaries of full-time employees, and \$22,000 for wages of temporary personnel.

The program was initiated in 1956 for the early identification of successful twelfth grade examinees, but with the change to the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) in 1961, diagnosis was added to the original purpose of early identification of potentially successful 12 grade examinees. The

MAT, published by Harcourt, Brace, and Company, contains subtests measuring achievement levels in reading, language, arithmetic, social studies, and science. Form 3B of the SCAT is administered also as a measure of general ability. An administrator's Manual as well as the Manual for Interpreting Results are produced by the Department of Educational Research and Testing at an annual cost of about \$4,000. The publishers report that reliabilities of the tests are above .90. The working time for students taking the entire battery is three hours and 55 minutes, completed in two sessions. The battery is administered in the fall between the fifteenth of September and the fifteenth of October.

Raw and percentile scores are reported for verbal, quantitative, and total SCAT scores, and for ten MAT scores as follows: Reading, Language Usage, Punctuation and Capitalization, Kinds of Sentences, Parts of Speech, and Total: Arithmetic Computation, and Problem Solving and Concepts; Social Studies Information; and Science. Results are distributed as follows: The State Superintendent receives a copy of the alphabetical percentile list for every school in the Program; each county superintendent or a supervisor designated by him, receives two copies of the alphabetical roster of each school in his county as well as a report of the means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions for all tests scales for each school in his respective county; and each school receives one copy of its alphabetical roster, four copies of the pupil profile chart for each of its pupils, and two pressure sensitive labels for each pupil on which is printed the percentile scores for each of nine tests. The results are used for diagnostic purposes as well as for local comparisons by administrative personnel, and for studies in the prediction of twelfth grade scores (e.g., Stoker, 1961).

The Twelfth Grade Testing Program. This program is similar to the ninth grade testing program but older, being initiated in 1936 by the University of Florida. The Program Director has two assistants and hires approximately 20 people for clerical and scoring duties over a period of six or seven weeks. This program is also smaller, of course, than the ninth grade program, involving directly only five county superintendents and 426 high school principals for the testing of 61,000 high school seniors (approximately 100 per cent of all seniors in the state). The tests are administered early in the fall with an annual cost, at the Program Director's level, of about \$53,000, including \$36,000 for materials, scoring, and shipping, and \$17,000 for salaries, including temporary employees. The high annual cost of materials is due, to some extent, to a complete annual replacement of test booklets in accordance with a five-year contractual agreement

with ETS, the publisher of tests used in the program.

There are five tests in the battery, the use of which is restricted to the Florida Twelfth Grade Testing Program: an aptitude test which is a special form of the SCAT, and achievement tests in English, social studies, natural sciences, and mathematics. The Administrator's Manual is prepared by the Program Director at a cost of \$400. The ETS reports test score reliabilities ranging from .80 to .95. The battery is administered in two sessions with a total working time of three hours and 50 minutes. The raw scores on each test are converted to percentile scores, and in accordance with a 1962 Board of Control regulation, students are required to have a minimum sum of percentile scores of 300 across all five tests in addition to a "C" average in high school academic subjects to be fully qualified for admission as freshmen to state universities in Florida (as of September, 1965).

Two alphabetical listings are made with the percentile scores: a state-wide master list and a list by individual schools. A gum label is also prepared for each student. High school principals receive appropriate gum labels and their own high school listings. The county superintendent receives the high school lists for all high schools in his county. The State Superintendent receives the master list and all high school lists. In addition, all public and private Florida colleges and universities receive the master list, and state colleges and universities also receive the high school lists.

Unscheduled Testing in the Florida State Department of Education

Unscheduled testing, as the term is used in this study, refers to tests that are administered on an "as needed" basis. Two such programs were identified in the State Department of Education.

The Florida Exceptional Child Program in the Division of Instructional Services is one of the programs within the State Department of Education involved in unscheduled testing. This program serves some 60,000 to 80,000 exceptional children. Current reports filed with the department do not include specific test data, but it is planned in the future that such data will be put into the central data system. Moreover, the program was at one time coordinated with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation so that students beyond fourteen or fifteen years of age were automatically referred to Vocational Rehabilitation for rehabilitation services, but this procedure has not been followed since about 1962.

The second unscheduled testing program identified in the State Department of Education is one in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The testing is done locally in each of the fifteen District Vocational Rehabilitation offices by vocational rehabilitation counselors, although on occasion, as deemed necessary by counselors, testing may be accomplished on a contractual basis by psychologists outside of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Each Vocational Rehabilitation counselor is issued a testing kit containing interest, intellectual, achievement, special aptitudes, and personality tests that are, more or less, approved by the Division. The counselors use these tests as they deem necessary with vocation rehabilitation clients, and a summary of these test data are recorded on a form, "Summary Profile of Aptitudes," and retained in the client's folder in the local District Vocational Rehabilitation office. None of these data are transmitted to a central file, either in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or the Systems Data Division.

Discussion

The four scheduled testing programs were fairly easy to survey in terms of the information required for analyses, and the information should be quite dependable. Of all kinds of information acquired in the study, the cost information is probably the most inaccurate and unstable. It is impossible to estimate cost values, for instance, of the temporary use of surrounding facilities, temporary use of personnel not actually assigned to the programs, and utilities. In most cases, dollar-value estimates for these factors are just not available.

The information regarding the unscheduled testing programs is not centralized and hence could not be readily compiled for the study. Cost factors and program magnitudes may be indicated, however, from some information that was available. For the testing of exceptional children, the State Department of Education allots some 56 Minimum Foundation Program units costing approximately \$5,500 each so that, salary-wise, approximately \$306,000 is spent on this program. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation serviced about 21,000 clients in the 1963-64 fiscal year with some 130 counselors on an overall annual budget of \$3.5 million dollars. Estimates beyond these factors are not practical.

Notwithstanding the inaccuracy of minute details, it should be fairly obvious from the present study that state-wide testing programs represent a considerable cost to the

public, and that this cost is not likely to decrease in the future. Most programs report recent growth rates at the level of 10 to 15 percent. If this rate were to remain constant (and it will probably increase!), in five years the scholarship loan programs will test about 14,000 applicants, there will be approximately 7,000 adults tested with the GED for the State High School Equivalency Diploma, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will service some 42,000 clients. Some programs, such as the SHSETP, can be somewhat self-supporting, while others must be supported with public funds. The public is repaid many times over, of course, through better educational and vocational planning, guiding able people into better and higher paying jobs or, in the case of vocational rehabilitation services, getting people off of public support so that they are not only useful and self-supporting but tax-paying citizens.

There are several characteristics of the test programs surveyed in this study that would seem to be of interest to persons planning similar testing programs. Initial cost of programs will be about 40 to 50 cents per student for test booklets and answer sheets. Program planners will do well, also to plan on buying about 20 percent more booklets and answer sheets than is actually used, because operational personnel always request more than required of each. The replacement rate on reusable items, such as test booklets, will be about 10 to 15 percent for each administration session. Answer sheets will cost between five and ten cents. Cost of scoring and production of usual listings of results will be about 10 to 15 cents per student. Cost of manuals, packaging, and shipping should be considered very carefully, also, as this can turn out to be a large factor in testing programs.

Summary

The present study was conducted to identify state-wide testing programs in the state of Florida and to determine characteristics of these programs with regard to magnitude, examinees, types of tests, and cost factors. Two state-wide testing programs, the Ninth and Twelfth Grade Testing Programs, were found to be of large magnitude in the schools. Two unscheduled and two scheduled testing programs were identified in the State Department of Education. The unscheduled testing programs involved testing of exceptional children and testing of vocational rehabilitation clients. The two scheduled testing programs were identified as the Scholarship

Loans Program and the adult testing for High School Equivalency Diplomas. The conduct of programs was discussed in terms of general characteristics and implications for other large scale programs.

Reference

1. Stoker, H. W. Predicting Success from Scores on the Florida State-Wide Ninth Grade Testing Program. Florida Education, 1961, 39, 12-13.