New York State Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

2015 Technical Report

Prepared for the New York State Department of Education

by

Data Recognition Corporation

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Chapter 1: Introduction and History

1.1 Introduction

This technical report for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) will provide the state of New York with documentation on the purpose of the Regents Examination, scoring information, evidence of both reliability and validity of the exams, scaling information, and guidelines and reporting information. As the *Standards for Education and Psychological Testing* discusses in Standard 7, "The objective of the documentation is to provide test users with the information needed to help them assess the nature and quality of the test, the resulting scores, and the interpretations based on the test scores" (American Educational Research Association [AERA], American Psychological Association [APA], & National Council on Measurement in Education [NCME], 2014, p.123).[1] Please note that a technical report, by design, addresses technical documentation of a testing program; other aspects of a testing program (content standards, scoring guides, guide to test interpretation, equating, etc.) are thoroughly addressed and referenced in supporting documents.

1.2 History

The Board of Regents adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts & Literacy and Mathematics at its July 2010 meeting and incorporated New York State-specific additions, creating the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), at its January 2011 meeting. In order to ensure adequate notice and time for students to be prepared to take the new Regents Exams measuring the CCLS, and based on feedback from the field, the Department provided an overlap in the administration of the Regents Exams measuring the 2005 Learning Standards with the Regents Exams measuring the CCLS and a phased-in sequence.

Students who took the old Regents Exam in addition to the new Regents Exam were allowed to use the higher of the two scores for local transcript purposes, and, similarly, the higher of the two scores was used for institutional accountability for the 2013–14 and 2014–15 school year results. Such students were able to meet the English Language Arts exam requirement for graduation by passing either of these exams. The complete memo detailing transition to the Common Core examinations can be located at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/commoncore/archive/transitionccregents1113rev-arc2.pdf.

1.3 Purposes of the Exam (Standard 12.1)

The Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) measures examinee achievement against the New York State (NYS) learning standards. The exam is prepared by educator examination committees and New York Department of Education subject and testing specialists and provides teachers and students with important information about student learning and performance against the established curriculum standards. Results of this exam may be used to identify student strengths and needs to guide classroom teaching and learning. The exams also provide students, parents, counselors, administrators, and college admissions officers with objective and easily understood achievement information that may be used to inform empirically based educational and vocational decisions about students. As a State-provided objective benchmark, the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) is intended for use in satisfying State testing requirements towards a NYS diploma for students who have finished a course of instruction in English Language Arts. A passing score on the exam counts toward requirements for a high school diploma as described in the New York State

[1] References to specific *Standards* will be placed in parentheses throughout the technical report to provide further context for each section.

diploma requirements: http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/gradreq/2015GradReq11-15.pdf. Results of the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) may also be used to satisfy various locally established requirements throughout the State.

1.4 Target Population (Standard 7.2)

The examinee population for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) is composed of students who have completed a course of study in English Language Arts. Any student, regardless of grade level or cohort, who began their first commencement-level English Language arts course in fall 2013 or later was provided with instruction aligned with the NYS P–12 Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts and therefore took or will take the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core). More information about testing requirements can be found at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/commoncore/transitionccregents1113rev.pdf.

Table 1 provides a demographic breakdown of all students who took the August 2014, January 2015 and June 2015 Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core). All analyses in this report are based on the population described in Table 1. Annual Regents Examination results in the New York State Report Cards are those reported in the Student Information Repository System (SIRS) as of the reporting deadline (see http://data.nysed.gov/). If a student takes the same exam multiple times in the year, the highest score only is included in these results. Item-level data used for the analyses in this report are reported by districts on a similar timeline, but through a different collection system. These data include all student results for each administration. Therefore, the n-sizes in this technical report will differ from publically reported counts of student test-takers.

Table 1 Total Examinee Population: Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

	August Admin		January Admin*		June Admin	
Demographics	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
All Students	750	100	13818	100	65610	100
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	0.40	54	0.39	446	0.68
Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	75	10.00	1091	7.90	5919	9.02
Black or African American	307	40.93	4026	29.14	15373	23.43
Hispanic or Latino	173	23.07	3675	26.60	15711	23.95
Multiracial	4	0.53	161	1.17	800	1.22
White	188	25.07	4810	34.81	27361	41.70
English Proficiency						
No	586	78.13	12887	93.26	61620	93.92
Yes	164	21.87	931	6.74	3990	6.08
Economically Disadvantaged						
No	268	35.73	5427	39.27	29875	45.53
Yes	482	64.27	8391	60.73	35735	54.47
Gender						
Female	334	44.53	6828	49.42	33130	50.50
Male	416	55.47	6989	50.58	32480	49.50
Student with Disabilities						
No	577	76.93	11642	84.25	56601	86.27
Yes	173	23.07	2176	15.75	9009	13.73

*Note: One student was not reported in the Ethnicity and Gender group but they are reflected in "All Students".

Chapter 2: Classical Item Statistics (Standard 4.10)

This chapter provides an overview of the two most familiar item-level statistics obtained from classical item analysis: item difficulty and item discrimination. The following results pertain only to the operational Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) items.

2.1 Item Difficulty

At the most general level, an item's difficulty is indicated by its mean score in some specified group (e.g., grade level).

$$\bar{x} = \frac{1}{n} \cdot \sum_{i=1}^{n} x_i$$

In the mean score formula above, the individual item scores (x_i) are summed and then divided by the total number of students (n). For multiple-choice (MC) items, student scores are represented by 0s and 1s (0 = wrong, 1 = right). With 0–1 scoring, the equation above also represents the number of students correctly answering the item divided by the total number of students. Therefore, this is also the proportion correct for the item, or the *p*-value. In theory, *p*-values can range from 0.00 to 1.00 on the proportion-correct scale.[2] For example, if a multiple-choice item has a *p*-value of 0.89, it means that 89 percent of the students answered the item correctly. This value might suggest that the item was relatively easy and/or the students who attempted the item were relatively high achievers. For constructed-response (CR) items, mean scores can range from the minimum possible score (usually zero) to the maximum possible score. To facilitate average score comparability across MC and CR items, mean item performance for CR items is divided by the maximum score possible so that the *p*-values for all items are reported as a ratio from 0.0 to 1.0.

Although the *p*-value statistic does not consider individual student ability in its computation, it provides a useful view of overall item difficulty and can provide an early and simple indication of items that are too difficult for the population of students taking the examination. Items with very high or very low *p*-values receive added scrutiny during all follow-up analyses, including item response theory analyses that factor student ability into estimates of item difficulty. Such items may be removed from the item pool during the test development process as field testing may reveal that they add insufficient measurement information. Items for the June 2014 Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) show a range of *p*-values consistent with the targeted exam difficulty. Item *p*-values range from 0.49 to0 .90, with a mean of 0.70. Further, the point biserial values (discussed in the following section) for these items indicate that they are generally discriminating performance on the test well.

Refer to Tables 2 and 3 for item-by-item *p*-values for multiple-choice and constructed-response items respectively.

2.2 Item Discrimination

At the most general level, estimates of item discrimination indicate each item's ability to differentiate between high and low student performance. It is expected that high-performing students (i.e., those who perform well on the Regents Examination in English Language Arts [Common Core] overall) would be more likely to answer any given item correctly, while low-performing students (i.e., those

[2] For MC items with four response options, pure random guessing would lead to an expected *p*-value of 0.25.

who perform poorly on the exam overall) would be more likely to answer the same item incorrectly. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (also commonly referred to as a point biserial correlation) between item scores and test scores is used to indicate discrimination (Pearson, 1896). The correlation coefficient can range from −1.0 to +1.0. If high-scoring students tend to get the item right while low-scoring students do not, the correlation between the item score and the total test score will be both positive and noticeably large in its magnitude (i.e., above zero), meaning the item is likely discriminating well between high- and low-performing students. Point biserials are computed for each answer option, including correct and incorrect options (commonly referred to as "distractors").Point biserial values for each distractor are an important part of test analysis. Point biserial values on distractors are typically negative. Positive point biserial values can indicate that higher performing students are selecting an incorrect answer or that the item key for the correct answer should be checked.

Refer to Tables 2 and 3 for point biserial values on the correct response and three distractors (Table 2 only). Point biserial values for correct answers are .14 or higher, indicating acceptable discrimination between high- and low-performing examinees. Point biserials for all distractors. This indicates that examinees are responding to the items as expected during item and rubric development.

Table 2 Multiple-Choice Item Analysis Summary: Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

Item	Number	*p*-Value	SD	Point Biserial	Point Biserial Distractor 1	Point Biserial Distractor 2	Point Biserial Distractor 3
1	65610	.73	.44	.14	-.02	-.16	-.07
2	65610	.73	.45	.46	-.25	-.30	-.12
3	65610	.75	.43	.32	-.19	-.17	-.16
4	65610	.82	.38	.32	-.15	-.23	-.12
5	65610	.64	.48	.44	-.22	-.21	-.23
6	65610	.51	.50	.48	-.21	-.19	-.27
7	65610	.76	.43	.42	-.18	-.25	-.22
8	65610	.71	.45	.38	-.18	-.19	-.23
9	65610	.58	.49	.48	-.28	-.23	-.21
10	65610	.66	.47	.57	-.28	-.27	-.31
11	65610	.68	.47	.29	-.08	-.21	-.16
12	65610	.73	.44	.38	-.13	-.25	-.21
13	65610	.78	.42	.38	-.22	-.20	-.18
14	65610	.49	.50	.28	-.20	-.02	-.20
15	65610	.63	.48	.35	-.21	-.13	-.20
16	65610	.84	.37	.44	-.22	-.23	-.26
17	65610	.68	.47	.41	-.17	-.29	-.16
18	65610	.66	.47	.40	-.28	-.20	-.14
19	65610	.69	.46	.43	-.26	-.20	-.20
20	65610	.61	.49	.31	-.16	-.15	-.14

Item	Number	*p*-Value	SD	Point Biserial	Point Biserial Distractor 1	Point Biserial Distractor 2	Point Biserial Distractor 3
21	65610	.60	.49	.36	-.20	-.14	-.23
22	65610	.90	.31	.37	-.22	-.21	-.17
23	65610	.83	.38	.38	-.22	-.17	-.22
24	65610	.76	.42	.39	-.23	-.24	-.16

Table 3 Constructed-Response Item Analysis Summary: Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

Item	Min. score	Max. score	Number of Students	Mean	SD	*p*-Value	Point Biserial
25	0	6	65610	3.93	1.13	.66	.59
26	0	4	65610	2.64	1.05	.66	.57

2.3 Discrimination on Difficulty Scatterplots

Figure 1 shows a scatterplot of item difficulty values (*x*-axis) and item discrimination values (*y*-axis). The distributions of *p*-value and point biserials are also included in the graphic to illustrate the mean, median, total range, and quartile ranges for each.

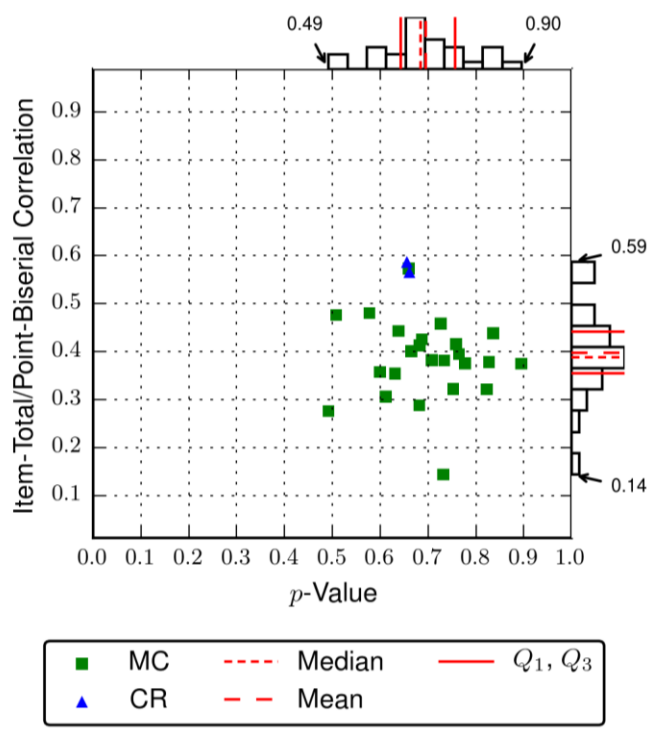

Figure 1 Scatterplot: Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

2.4 Observations and Interpretations

The *p*-values for the MC items ranged from 0.49 to 0.90, and proportion-correct values for the two constructed response items (Table 3) were .66. The difficulty distribution illustrated in Figure 1 shows an acceptable range of item difficulties on the exam. This is consistent with general test development practice which seeks to measure student ability along a full range of difficulty.

Chapter 3: IRT Calibrations, Equating, and Scaling (Standards 2, and 4.10)

The item response theory (IRT) model used for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) is based on the work of Georg Rasch (Rasch, 1960). The Rasch model has a long-standing presence in applied testing programs. IRT has several advantages over classical test theory and has become the standard procedure for analyzing item response data in large-scale assessments. According to van der Linden and Hambleton (1997), "The central feature of IRT is the specification of a mathematical function relating the probability of an examinee's response on a test item to an underlying ability." Ability in this sense can be thought of as performance on the test and is defined as "the expected value of observed performance on the test of interest" (Hambleton, Swaminathan, and Roger, 1991). This performance value is often referred to as θ. Performance and θ will be used interchangeably through the remainder of this report.

A fundamental advantage of IRT is that it links examinee performance and item difficulty estimates and places them on the same scale, allowing for an evaluation of examinee performance that considers the difficulty of the test. This is particularly valuable for final test construction and test form equating as it facilitates a fundamental attention to fairness for all examinees across items and test forms.

This chapter outlines the procedures used for calibrating the operational Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) items. Generally, item calibration is the process of assigning a difficulty or item "location" estimate to each item in an assessment so that all items are placed onto a common scale. This chapter briefly introduces the Rasch model, reports the results from evaluations of the adequacy of the Rasch assumptions, and summarizes the Rasch item statistics.

3.1 Description of the Rasch Model

The Rasch model (Rasch, 1960) was used to calibrate multiple-choice items, and the partial credit model, or PCM (Wright and Masters, 1982), was used to calibrate constructed-response items. The PCM extends the Rasch model for dichotomous (0, 1) items so that it accommodates the polytomous CR item data. Under the PCM model, for a given item i with m_i score categories, the probability of person n scoring x (x = 0, 1, 2,... m_i) is given by

$$P_{ni}(X = x) = \frac{\exp \sum_{j=0}^{x} (\theta_n - D_{ij})}{\sum_{k=0}^{m_i} \exp \sum_{j=0}^{k} (\theta_n - D_{ij})},$$

where θ_n represents examinee ability, and D_{ij} is the step difficulty of the jth step on item i. For dichotomous MC items, the RPCM reduces to the standard Rasch model and the single step difficulty is referred to as the item's difficulty. The Rasch model predicts the probability of person n getting item i correct as follows:

$$P_{ni}(X = 1) = \frac{\exp(\theta_n - D_{ij})}{1 + \exp(\theta_n - D_{ij})}.$$

The Rasch model places both performance and item difficulty (estimated in terms of log-odds or logits) on the same continuum. When the model assumptions are met, the Rasch model provides estimates of examinee performance and item difficulty that are theoretically invariant across random samples of the same examinee population.

3.2 Software and Estimation Algorithm

Item calibration was implemented via the WINSTEPS 2015 computer program (Wright and Linacre, 2015), which employs unconditional (UCON), joint maximum likelihood estimation (JMLE).

3.3 Characteristics of the Testing Population

The data analyses reported here are based on all students who took the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) in June 2014. The characteristics of this population are provided in Table 1 Total Examinee Population: Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core).

3.4. Item Difficulty-Student Performance Maps

The distributions of the Rasch item logits (item difficulty estimates) and student performance are shown on the item difficulty–student performance map presented in Figure 2. This graphic illustrates the location of student performance and item difficulty on the same scale, along with their respective distributions and cut scores (indicated by the horizontal dotted lines). The figure shows more difficult items and higher examinee performance at the top and lower performance and easier items at the bottom.

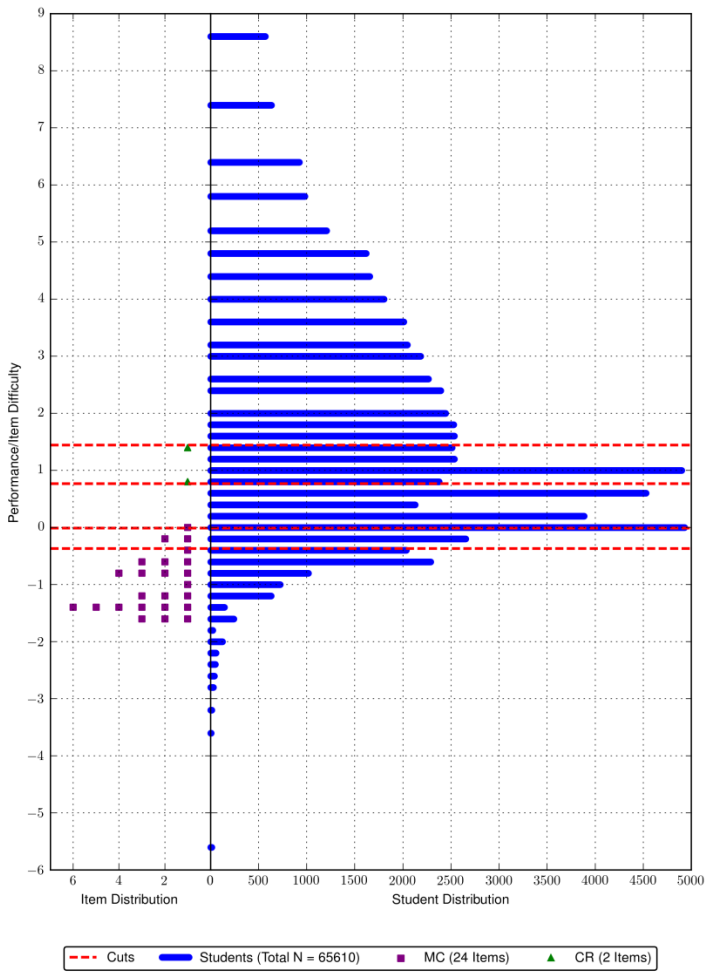

Figure 2 Student Performance Map: Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

3.5 Checking Rasch Assumptions

Since the Rasch model was the basis of all calibration, scoring, and scaling analyses associated with the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core), the validity of the inferences from these results depends on the degree to which the assumptions of the model were met and how well the model fits the test data. Therefore, it is important to check these assumptions. This section evaluates the dimensionality of the data, local item independence, and item fit. It should be noted that only operational items were analyzed, since they are the basis of student scores.

Unidimensionality

Rasch models assume that one dominant dimension determines the differences in student performance. Principal Components Analysis (PCA) can be used to assess the unidimensionality assumption. The purpose of the analysis is to verify whether any other dominant components exist among the items. If any other dimensions are found, the unidimensionality of test content assumption may be violated.

A parallel analysis (Horn, 1965) can be further helpful to help distinguish components that are real from components that are random. Parallel analysis is a technique to decide how many factors exist in principal components. For the parallel analysis, 100 random data sets of sizes equal to the original data were created. For each random data set, a PCA was performed and the resulting eigenvalues stored. Then for each component, the upper 95th percentile value of the distribution of the 100 eigenvalues from the random data sets was plotted. Given the size of the data generated for the parallel analysis, the reference line is essentially equivalent to plotting a reference line for an eigenvalue of 1.

Figure 3 shows the PCA and parallel analysis results for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core). The results include the eigenvalues and the percentage of variance explained for the first five components as well as the scree plots. The scree plots show the eigenvalues plotted by component number and the results from a parallel analysis. Although the total number of components in PCA is same as the total number of items in a test, Figure 3 shows only 10 components. This view is sufficient for interpretation because components are listed in descending eigenvalue order. The lower eigenvalues from components 2 through 10 demonstrates that components beyond 1 are not individually contributing to the explanation of variance in the data.

As rule of thumb, Reckase (1979) proposed that the variance explained by the primary dimension should be greater than 20 percent to indicate unidimensionality. However, as this rule is not absolute, it is helpful to consider three additional characteristics of the PCA and parallel analysis results, 1) whether the ratio of the first to the second eigenvalue is greater than 3, 2) whether the second value is not much larger than the third value, and 3) whether the second value is not significantly different from those from the parallel analysis.

As shown in Figure 3, the primary dimension 22.4% of the total variance for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core). The eigenvalue of the second dimension less than one third of the first at 1.1, and the second value is not significantly different from the parallel analysis. Overall, the PCA suggests that the test is reasonably unidimensional.

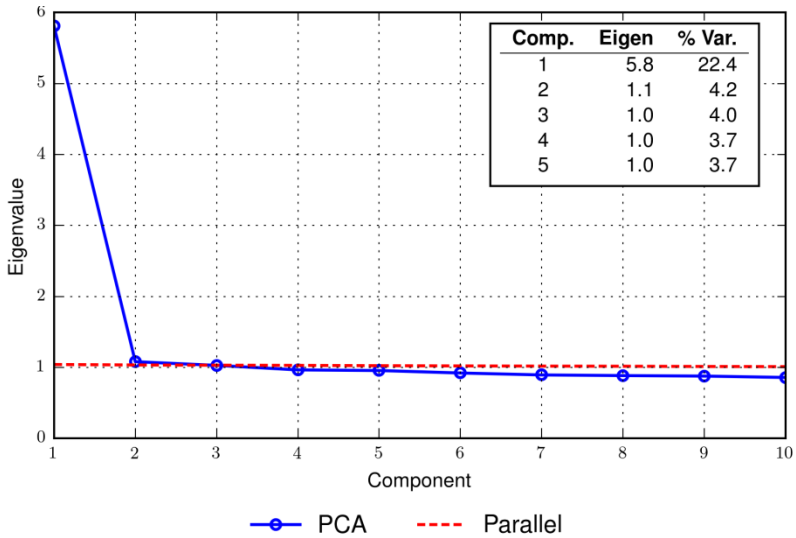

Figure 3 Scree Plots: Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

Local Independence

Local independence (LI) is a fundamental assumption of IRT. This means simply, that for statistical purposes, an examinee's response to any one item should not depend on the examinee's response to any other item on the test. In formal statistical terms, a test X that is comprised of items $X_1, X_2, \ldots X_n$ is locally independent with respect to the latent variable θ if, for all $x = (x_1, x_2, \ldots x_n)$ and θ,

$$P(\mathbf{X} = \mathbf{x} \mid \theta) = \prod_{i=1}^{I} P(X_i = x_i \mid \theta).$$

This formula essentially states that the probability of any pattern of responses across all items (**x**), after conditioning on the examinee's true score (θ) as measured by the test, should be equal to the product of the conditional probabilities across each item (cf. the multiplication rule for independent events where the joint probabilities are equal to the product of the associated marginal probabilities).
The equation above shows the condition after satisfying the strong form of local independence. A weak form of local independence (WLI) is proposed by McDonald (1979). The distinction is important because many indicators of local dependency are actually framed by WLI. For WLI, the conditional covariances of all pairs of item responses, conditioned on the abilities, are assumed to be equal to zero. When this assumption is met, the joint probability of responses to an item pair, conditioned on abilities, is the product of the probabilities of responses to these two items, as shown below. Based on the WLI, the following expression can be derived:

$$P(X_i = x_i, X_j = x_j \mid \theta) = P(X_i = x_i \mid \theta) P(X_j = x_j \mid \theta).$$

Marais and Andrich (2008) point out that local item dependence in the Rasch model can occur in two ways that may be difficult to distinguish. The first way occurs when the assumption of unidimensionality is violated. Here, other nuisance dimensions besides a dominant dimension determine student performance (this can be called "trait dependence"). The second violation occurs when responses to an item depend on responses to another item. This is a violation of local independence and can be called response dependence. By distinguishing the two sources of local

dependence, one can see that while local independence can be related to unidimensionality, the two are different assumptions and therefore require different tests.

Residual item correlations provided in WINSTEPS for each item pair were used to assess the local dependence among the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) items. In general, these residuals are computed as follows. First, expected item performance based on the Rasch model is determined using (θ) and item parameter estimates. Next, deviations (residuals) between the examinees' expected and observed performance are determined for each item. Finally, for each item pair, a correlation between the respective deviations is computed.

Three types of residual correlations are available in WINSTEPS: raw, standardized, and logit. It is noted that the raw score residual correlation essentially corresponds to Yen's Q_3 index, a popular statistic used to assess local independence. The expected value for the Q_3 statistic is approximately $-1/(k-1)$ when no local dependence exists, where k is test length (Yen, 1993). Thus, the expected Q_3 values should be approximately −0.04 for the items on the exam. Index values that are greater than 0.20 indicate a degree of local dependence that probably should be examined by test developers (Chen & Thissen, 1997).

Since the three residual correlations are very similar, the default "standardized residual correlation" in WINSTEPS was used for these analyses. Table 4 shows the summary statistics—mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, and several percentiles (P10, P25, P50, P75, P90) — for all the residual correlations for each test. The total number of item pairs (N) and the number of pairs with the residual correlations greater than 0.20 are also reported in this table. There were no item pairs with residual correlations greater than 0.20, but only slightly at 0.22. The mean residual correlations were slightly negative and the values were close to −0.03. The vast majority of the correlations were very small, suggesting local item independence generally holds for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core).

Table 4 Summary of Item Residual Correlations: English Language Arts (Common core) Item Fit

Statistic Type	Value
N	325
Mean	−0.03
SD	0.03
Minimum	−0.16
P_{10}	−0.08
P_{25}	−0.04
P_{50}	−0.03
P_{75}	−0.01
P_{90}	0.00
Maximum	0.11
>|0.20|	0

An important assumption of the Rasch model is that the data for each item fit the model. WINSTEPS provides two item fit statistics (infit and outfit) for evaluating the degree to which the Rasch model predicts the observed item responses for a given set of test items. Each fit statistic can be expressed as a mean square (MnSq) statistic or on a standardized metric (Zstd with mean = 0 and variance = 1). MnSq values are more oriented toward practical significance, while Zstd values are more oriented toward statistical significance. Infit MnSq values are the average of standardized residual variance (the difference between the observed score and the Rasch estimated score divided by the square root of the Rasch model variance). The infit statistic is weighted by the (θ) relative to item difficulty.

The expected MnSq value is 1.0 and can range from 0.0 to infinity. Deviation in excess of the expected value can be interpreted as either noise or lack of fit between the items and the model. Values lower than the expected value can be interpreted as item redundancy or overfitting items (too predictable, too much redundancy), and values greater than the expected value indicate underfitting items (too unpredictable, too much noise). Rules of thumb regarding "practically significant" MnSq values vary. Table 5 presents the summary statistics of infit mean square statistics for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core), including the mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum values.

The number of items within a targeted range of [0.7, 1.3] is also reported in Table 5. The mean infit value is 1.20, with 21 of the 26 items falling in a targeted range of [0.7, 1.3]. As the range of [0.7, 1.3] is used as guide for ideal fit, fit values outside of the range are considered individually and in light of the specific characteristics of the test and the performance of the corhort. In this case, the maximum value for the 5 items falling outside of the ideal range has an infit of 2.93. The overall high performance of examinees on a test may have the effect of reducing the variance of scores for many items which can in turn, impact model fit negatively.

Table 5 Summary of Infit Mean Square Statistics: English Language Arts (Common Core)

	Infit Mean Square				
	Mean	**SD**	**Min**	**Max**	**[0.7, 1.3]**
ELA	1.20	0.42	0.77	2.93	21/26

Items for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) were field tested in 2013 and 2014, and separate technical reports were produced to document the full test development, scoring, scaling, and data analysis conducted. Please refer to http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/reports for details.

Chapter 4: Reliability (Standard 2)

Test reliability is a measure of the internal consistency of a test (Cronbach, 1951). It is a measure of the extent to which the items on a test provide consistent information about student mastery of a domain. Reliability should ultimately demonstrate that examinee score estimates maximize consistency and therefore minimize error, or theoretically speaking, that examinees who take a test multiple times would get the same score each time.

Reliability is specifically concerned with random sources of error. Accordingly, the degree of inconsistency due to random error sources is what determines reliability: less consistency is associated with lower reliability, and more consistency is associated with higher reliability. Of course, systematic error sources also may exist. According to the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, "A number of factors can have significant effects on reliability/precision, and in some cases, these factors can lead to misinterpretations of test scores, if not taken into account" (AERA et al., 2014, p. 38). Examples of such factors that can influence reliability estimates include test length and the variability of observed scores. Tests with fewer items or with a lack of heterogeneity in scores tend to produce lower reliability estimates.

The remainder of this chapter discusses reliability results for Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) and three additional statistical measures to address the multiple factors affecting an interpretation of the Exam's reliability:

- standard errors of measurement
- decision consistency
- group means

4.1 Reliability Indices (Standard 2.20)

Classical test theory describes reliability as a measure of the internal consistency of test scores. It is defined as the proportion of true score variance contained in the observed scores. The total variance contains two components: 1) the variance in true scores and 2) the variance due to the imperfections in the measurement process. Put differently, total variance equals true score variance plus error variance.[3]

$$\rho_X^2 = \frac{\sigma_T^2}{\sigma_X^2} = \frac{\sigma_T^2}{\sigma_T^2 + \sigma_E^2}$$

Reliability coefficients indicate the degree to which differences in test scores reflect true differences in the attribute being tested rather than random fluctuations. Total test score variance (i.e., individual differences) is partly due to real differences in the construct (true variance) and partly due to random error in the measurement process (error variance).

Reliability coefficients range from 0.0 to 1.0. The index will be 0.0 if none of the test score variances are true. Such scores would be pure random noise (i.e., all measurement error). If all test score variances were true, the index would equal 1.0. If the index achieved a value of 1.0, scores would be perfectly consistent (i.e., contain no measurement error). Although values of 1.0 are never achieved in

[3] A covariance term is not required, as true scores and error are assumed to be uncorrelated in classical test theory.

practice, it is clear that larger coefficients are more desirable because they indicate that test scores are less influenced by random error.

Coefficient Alpha

Reliability is most often estimated using the formula for Coefficient Alpha, which provides a practical internal consistency index. Coefficient Alpha can be conceptualized as the extent to which an exchangeable set of items from the same domain would result in a similar rank ordering of students. Note that relative error is reflected in this index. Excessive variation in student performance from one sample of items to the next should be of particular concern for any achievement test user.

A general computational formula for Alpha is as follows:

$$\alpha = \frac{N}{N-1}\left(1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N}\sigma_{Yi}^2}{\sigma_X^2}\right),$$

where N is the number of parts (items), σ_X^2 is the variance of the observed total test scores, and σ_{Yi}^2 is the variance of part *i*. Table 6 in section 4.2 displays the coefficient alpha for the in Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core), along with the standard error of measurement (SEM).

4.2 Standard Error of Measurement (Standards 2.13, 2.14, 2.15)

Reliability coefficients best reflect the extent to which measurement inconsistencies may be present or absent. The standard error of measurement is another indicator of test score precision that is better suited for determining the effect of measurement inconsistencies for the scores obtained by individual examinees. This is particularly so for conditional SEMs (CSEMs), discussed further below.

Traditional Standard Error of Measurement

The standard error of measurement (SEM) is defined as the standard deviation of the distribution of observed scores for students with identical true scores. Because the SEM is an index of the random variability in test scores in test score units, it represents important information for test score users. The SEM formula is provided below.

$$SEM = SD\sqrt{1 - \alpha}$$

This formula indicates that the value of the SEM depends on both the reliability coefficient (the coefficient alpha, as detailed previously) and the standard deviation of test scores. If the reliability were equal to 0.00 (the lowest possible value), the SEM would be equal to the standard deviation of the test scores. If test reliability were equal to 1.00 (the highest possible value), the SEM would be 0.0. In other words, a perfectly reliable test has no measurement error (Harvill, 1991). Additionally, the value of the SEM takes the group variation (i.e., score standard deviation) into account. Consider that an SEM of 3 on a 10-point test would be very different than an SEM of 3 on a 100-point test.

Traditional Standard Error of Measurement Confidence Intervals

The SEM is an index of the random variability in test scores reported in raw score units, which is why it has such great utility for test score users. SEMs allow statements regarding the precision of individual test scores. SEMs help place “reasonable limits” (Gulliksen, 1950) around observed scores

through construction of an approximate score band. Often referred to as confidence intervals, these bands are constructed by taking the observed scores, *X*, and adding and subtracting a multiplicative factor of the SEM. As an example, students with a given true score will have observed scores that fall between +/−1 SEM about two-thirds of the time.[4] For +/−2 SEM confidence intervals, this increases to about 95 percent.

The coefficient alpha and associated SEM for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) are provided in Table 6. The reliability of .84 reflects the relatively short test length as well as the presence of items with high score point ranges.

Table 6 Reliabilities and Standard Errors of Measurement: Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

Subject	Coefficient Alpha	*SEM*
ELA	0.84	3.83

Assuming normally distributed scores, one would expect about two-thirds of the observations to be within one standard deviation of the mean. An estimate of the standard deviation of the true scores can be computed as

$$\hat{\sigma}_T = \sqrt{\hat{\sigma}_x^2 - \hat{\sigma}_x^2 (1 - \hat{\rho}_{xx})} \ .$$

Conditional Standard Error of Measurement

Every time an assessment is administered, the score the student receives contains some error. If the same exam were administered an infinite number of times to the same student, the mean of the distribution of the student's raw scores would be equal to their true score (θ, the score obtained with no error), and the standard deviation of the distribution of their raw scores would be the conditional standard error. Since there is a one-to-one correspondence between the raw score and θ in the Rasch model, we can apply this concept more generally to all students who obtained a particular raw score, and calculate the probability of obtaining each possible raw score given the student's estimated θ. The standard deviation of this conditional distribution is defined as the conditional standard error of measurement (CSEM). The computer program POLYCSEM (Kolen, 2004) was used to carry out the mechanics of this computation.

The relationship between θ and the scale score is not expressible in a simple mathematical form because it is a blend of the third-degree polynomial relationship between the raw and scale scores along with the nonlinear relationship between the expected raw and θ scores. In addition, as the exam is equated from year to year, the relationship between the raw and scale scores moves away from the original third degree polynomial relationship to one that is also no longer expressible in simple mathematical form. In the absence of a simple mathematical relationship between θ and the scale scores, the CSEMs that are available for each θ score via Rasch IRT cannot be converted directly to the scale score metric.

[4] Some prefer the following interpretation: if a student were tested an infinite number of times, the +/−1 SEM confidence intervals constructed for each score would capture the student's true score 68 percent of the time.

The use of Rasch IRT to scale and equate the Regents Exams does, however, make it possible to calculate CSEMs using the procedures described by Kolen, Zeng, and Hanson (1996) for dichotomously scored items and extended by Wang, Kolen, and Harris (2000) to polytomously scored items. For tests such as the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) that do not have a one-to-one relationship between raw and scale scores, the CSEM for each achievable scale score can be calculated using the compound multinomial distribution to represent the conditional distribution of raw scores for each level of θ.

Consider an examinee with a certain performance level. If it were possible to measure this examinee's performance perfectly, without any error, this measure could be called the examinee's "true score," as discussed earlier. This score is equal to the expected raw score. However, whenever an examinee takes a test, their observed test score always includes some level of measurement error. Sometimes this error is positive, and the examinee achieves a higher score than would be expected given their level of θ; other times it is negative, and the examinee achieves a lower than expected score. If we could give an examinee the same test multiple times and record their observed test scores, the resulting distribution would be the conditional distribution of raw scores for that examinee's level of θ with a mean value equal to the examinee's expected raw (true) score. The CSEM for that level of θ in the raw score metric is the square root of the variance of this conditional distribution.

The conditional distribution of raw scores for any level of θ is the compound multinomial distribution (Wang et al., 2000). An algorithm to compute this can be found in Hanson (1994) and Thissen, Pommerich, Billeaud, and Williams (1995) and is also implemented in the computer program POLYCSEM (Kolen, 2004). The compound multinomial distribution yields the probabilities that an examinee with a given level of θ has of achieving each achievable raw (and accompanying scale) score. The point values associated with each achievable raw or scale score point can be used to calculate the mean and variance of this distribution in the raw or scale score metric, respectively; the square root of the variance is the CSEM of the raw or scale score point associated with the current level of θ.

Conditional Standard Error of Measurement Confidence Intervals

CSEMs allow statements regarding the precision of individual tests scores. Like SEMs, they help place reasonable limits around observed scaled scores through construction of an approximate score band. The confidence intervals are constructed by adding and subtracting a multiplicative factor of the CSEM.

Conditional Standard Error of Measurement Characteristics

The relationship between the scale score CSEM and θ depends both on the nature of the raw to scale score transformation (Kolen and Brennan, 2005; Kolen and Lee, 2011) and on whether the CSEM is derived from the raw scores or from θ (Lord, 1980). The pattern of CSEMs for raw scores and linear transformations of the raw score tend to have a characteristic "inverted-U" shape, with smaller CSEMs at the ends of the score continuum and larger CSEMs towards the middle of the distribution.

Achievable raw score points for these distributions are spaced equally across the score range. Kolen and Brennan (2005, p. 357) state, "When, relative to raw scores, the transformation compresses the scale in the middle and stretches it at the ends, the pattern of the conditional standard errors of measurement will be concave up (U-shaped), even though the pattern for the raw scores was concave down (inverted-U shape)."

Results and Observations

The CSEMs for the Regents Exams can be expected to have inverted-U shaped patterns, with some variations. The relationship between raw and scale scores for the Regents Exams tends to be roughly linear from scale scores of 0 to 79 and then concave down from about 79 to 100. In other words, the scale scores track linearly with the raw scores for about the lower 80 percent of the scale score range and then are compressed relative to the raw scores for about the remaining 20 percent of the range, though there are variations.

Figure 4 shows this type of CSEM variation for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) where the compression of raw score to scale scores around the cut score 85 changes the shape of the curve slightly. This type of expansion and compression can be seen in Figure 4 by looking at the changing density of raw score points along the scale score range on the horizontal axis. Specifically, at the lower end of the scale, scale scores 0 through 15 span raw scores 0 through 13. Over the range from scale scores 19 to 60 the raw score range is 14 to 28 (41 scale score points to 14 raw score points). Finally, scale scores over the range of 62 to 100 span raw scores of 29 to 56 (38 scale score points for 17 raw score points).

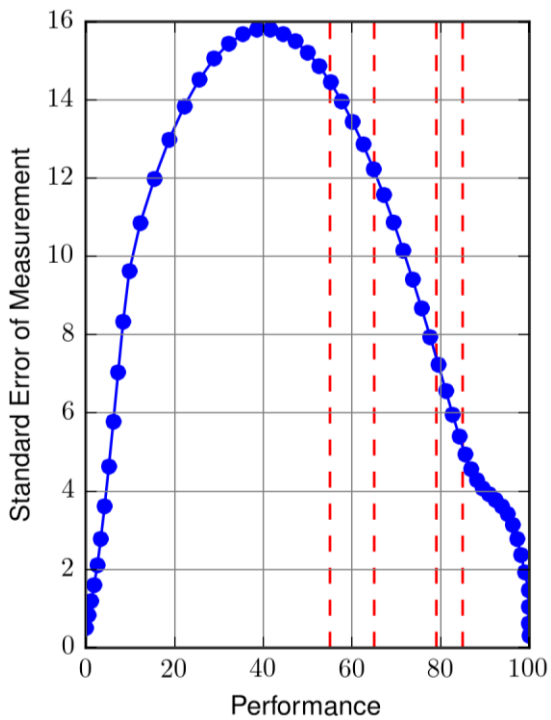

Figure 4 Conditional Standard Error Plots: Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

4.3 Decision Consistency and Accuracy (Standard 2.16)

In a standards-based testing program there is interest in knowing how accurately students are classified into performance categories. In contrast to the Coefficient Alpha, which is concerned with the relative rank-ordering of students, it is the absolute values of student scores that are important in decision consistency and accuracy.

Classification consistency refers to the degree to which the achievement level for each student can be replicated upon retesting using an equivalent form (Huynh, 1976). Decision consistency answers the following question: What is the agreement between the classifications based on two non-overlapping, equally difficult forms of the test? If two parallel forms of the test were given to the same students, the consistency of the measure would be reflected by the extent that the classification decisions made from the first set of test scores matched the decisions based on the second set of test scores. Consider the tables below.

		TEST ONE		
		LEVEL I	**LEVEL II**	**MARGINAL**
TEST TWO	**LEVEL I**	φ11	φ12	φ1●
	LEVEL II	φ21	φ22	φ2●
	MARGINAL	φ●1	φ●2	1

Figure 5 Pseudo-Decision Table for Two Hypothetical Categories

		TEST ONE				
		LEVEL I	**LEVEL II**	**LEVEL III**	**LEVEL IV**	**MARGINAL**
TEST TWO	**LEVEL I**	φ11	φ12	φ13	φ14	φ1●
	LEVEL II	φ21	φ22	φ23	φ24	φ2●
	LEVEL III	φ31	φ32	φ33	φ34	φ3●
	LEVEL IV	φ41	φ42	φ43	φ44	φ4●
	MARGINAL	φ●1	φ●2	φ●3	φ●4	1

Figure 6 Pseudo-Decision Table for Four Hypothetical Categories

If a student is classified as being in one category based on Test One's score, how probable would it be that the student would be reclassified as being in the same category if he or she took Test Two (a non-overlapping, equally difficult form of the test)? This proportion is a measure of decision consistency.

The proportions of correct decisions, φ, for two and four categories are computed by the following two formulas, respectively:

$$\varphi = \varphi_{11} + \varphi_{22}$$

$$\varphi = \varphi_{11} + \varphi_{22} + \varphi_{33} + \varphi_{44}$$

The sum of the diagonal entries—that is, the proportion of students classified by the two forms into exactly the same achievement level—signifies the overall consistency.

Classification accuracy refers to the agreement of the observed classifications of students with the classifications made on the basis of their true scores. As discussed above, an observed score contains measurement error while a true score is theoretically free of measurement error. A student's observed score can be formulated by the sum of his or her true score plus measurement error, or $Observed = True + Error$. Decision accuracy is an index to determine the extent to which measurement error causes a classification different than the one expected from the true score.

Since true scores are unobserved and decision consistency is computed based on a single administration of the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core), a statistical model using solely data from the available administration is used to estimate the true scores and to project the consistency and accuracy of classifications (Hambleton & Novick, 1973). Although a number of procedures are available, a well-known method developed by Livingston and Lewis (1995) that utilizes a specific true score model is used.

Several factors might affect decision consistency and accuracy. One important factor is the reliability of the scores. All other things being equal, more reliable test scores tend to result in more similar reclassifications and less measurement error. Another factor is the location of the cut score in the score distribution. More consistent and accurate classifications are observed when the cut scores are located away from the mass of the score distribution. The number of performance levels is also a consideration. Consistency and accuracy indices for four performance levels should be lower than those based on two categories. This is not surprising, since classification and accuracy using four levels would allow more opportunity to change achievement levels. Hence, there would be more classification errors and less accuracy with four achievement levels, resulting in lower consistency indices.

Results and Observations The results for the dichotomies created by the four cut scores, are presented in Table 7. The tabled values are derived with the program *BB-Class* (Brennan, 2004) using the Livingston and Lewis method. The overall decision consistency ranged from 0.83 to 0.91, and the decision accuracy ranged from 0.88 to .94. Both decision consistency and accuracy values indicate good consistency and accuracy of examinee classifications.

Table 7 Decision Consistency and Accuracy Results: Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

Statistic	1/2	2/3	3/4	4/5
Consistency	0.91	0.88	0.83	0.83
Accuracy	0.94	0.91	0.88	0.88

4.4 Group Means (Standard 2.17)

Mean scale scores were computed based on reported gender, race/ethnicity, English language learner status, economically disadvantaged status, and student with disability status. The results are reported in Table 8.

Table 8 Group Means: Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

Demographics	Number	Mean Scale-score	Standard error of group
All Students	65610	77.41	18.43
Ethnicity			
American Indian/Alaska Native	446	75.09	17.91
Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	5919	77.98	19.33
Black/African American	15373	72.07	18.31
Hispanic/Latino	15711	72.00	19.14
Multiracial	800	81.70	16.31
White	27361	83.31	15.93
English Language Learner			
No	61620	79.04	17.01
Yes	3990	52.21	21.03
Economically Disadvantaged			
No	29875	83.30	15.95
Yes	35735	72.49	18.92
Gender			
Female	33130	79.82	17.08
Male	32480	74.95	19.41
Student with Disabilities			
No	56601	80.06	16.78
Yes	9009	60.78	19.60

4.5 State Percentile Rankings

State percentile rankings based on raw score distributions are noted in Table 9. The percentiles are based on the distribution of all students taking the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core). The percentile ranks are computed in the following manner:

- A student's assigned "State percentile rank" will be the cumulative percentage of students scoring at the immediate lower score plus half of the percentage of students obtaining the given score.
- Students who obtain the highest possible score will receive a percentile rank of 99.
- Students who obtain the lowest possible score (0) will not receive a percentile rank.

Table 9 State Percentile Ranking for Raw Score – Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

Raw Score	Percentile Rank	Raw Score	Percentile Rank	Raw Score	Percentile Rank
0	-	26	12	52	94
1	-	27	14	53	96
2	-	28	16	54	97
3	-	29	19	55	99
4	-	30	21	56	99
5	-	31	24		
6	-	32	27		
7	-	33	30		
8	-	34	34		
9	-	35	37		
10	-	36	41		
11	1	37	44		
12	1	38	48		
13	1	39	52		
14	1	40	56		
15	2	41	60		
16	2	42	63		
17	2	43	67		
18	3	44	71		
19	4	45	74		
20	4	46	78		
21	5	47	81		
22	6	48	84		
23	8	49	87		
24	9	50	90		
25	10	51	92		

Chapter 5: Validity (Standard 1)

Restating the purpose and uses of the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core), this exam measures examinee achievement against New York State's learning standards. The exam is prepared by teacher examination committees and New York Department of Education subject and testing specialists, and it provides teachers and students with important information about student learning and performance against the established curriculum standards. Results of this exam may be used to identify student strengths and needs to guide classroom teaching and learning. The exams also provide students, parents, counselors, administrators, and college admissions officers with objective and easily understood achievement information that may be used to inform empirically based educational and vocational decisions about students. As a State-provided objective benchmark, the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) is intended for use in satisfying State testing requirements for students who have finished a course of instruction in English Language Arts. A passing score on the exam counts toward requirements for a high school diploma as described in the New York State diploma requirements: http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/gradreq/2015GradReq11-15.pdf. Results of the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) may also be used to satisfy various locally established requirements throughout the State.

The validity of score interpretations for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) is supported by multiple sources of evidence. Chapter 1 of the *Standards for Educational Psychological Testing* (AERA et al., 2014) specifies five sources of validity evidence that are important to gather and document to support validity claims for an assessment:

- test content
- response processes
- internal test structure
- relation to other variables
- consequences of testing

It is important to note that these categories are not mutually exclusive. One source of validity evidence often falls into more than one category, as discussed in more detail in this chapter. These classifications provide a useful framework within the *Standards* (AERA et al., 2014) for the discussion and documentation of validity evidence, so they are used here. The process of gathering evidence of the validity of score interpretations is best characterized as ongoing throughout the test development, administration, scoring, reporting, and beyond.

5.1 Evidence Based on Test Content

The validity of test content is fundamental to arguments that test scores are valid for their intended purpose. It demands that a test developer provide evidence that test content is well aligned with the framework and standards used in curriculum and instruction. Accordingly, detailed attention was given to this correspondence between standards and test content during test design and construction.

The Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) measures student achievement on the NYS P–12 Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts, consistent with the Model Content Frameworks for English Language Arts provided by the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC, 2014). The model content frameworks are located at http://parcconline.org/resources/educator-resources/model-content-frameworks/ela-model-content-

framework. The standards for English Language Arts are located at https://www.engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-p-12-common-core-learning-standards-for-english-language-arts-and-literacy.

Content Validity

Content validity is necessarily concerned with the proper definition of the construct and evidence that the test provides an accurate measure of examinee performance within the defined construct. The test blueprint for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) is essentially the design document for constructing the exam. It provides explicit definition of the construct domain that is to be represented on the exam. The test development process, (discussed in the next section), is in place to ensure to the extent possible that the blueprint is met in all operational forms of the exam.

Table 10 displays the test part, suggested time each part, the standards addressed, and descriptions of the associated text and student tasks on the exam.

Table 10 Test Blueprint, Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

Test Part	Suggested Time	Standards Addressed	Text Description	Student Task
Part 1 Reading Comprehension	60 minutes	RL.1-6, 10 RI.1-6, 8-10 L.3-5	3 texts Up to approximately 2,600 words total Each test will contain one literature text, one poem, and one	Students will perform a close reading of the texts and answer 24 multiple-choice questions.
Part 2 Writing from Sources: Argument	90 minutes	RI.1-10 W.1, 4,9 L.1-6	4 texts Up to approximately 2,600 words total Each test will contain 4 informational texts. Texts may include graphically-presented information.	Students will perform a close reading of the texts and write a source-based argument, as directed by the task.
Part 3 Text Analysis: Exposition	30 minutes	RL.1-6, 10 RI.1-6, 8-10 W.2,4,9 L.1-6	1 text Up to approximately 1,000 words Each test will contain one literature or one informational text.	Students will perform a close reading of the text and write a two-to-three paragraph expository response that identifies a central idea in the text and analyzes how the author's use of one writing strategy (literary element or literary technique or rhetorical device) develops this central idea.

Overall, the test requires that students read closely 8 texts of up to approximately 6,200 words total and that they answer 24 multiple-choice questions, write one source-based argument, and one text- based response that identifies a central idea in the text and analyzes how the author's use of one writing strategy develops this central idea. The test assesses Common Core Learning Standards in Reading, Writing and Language for the Grade 11-12 Band, but, due to the integrative and cumulative nature of the standards, items may also assess standards in the Grade 9-10 Band. Exact standard coverage will vary from test to test based on the texts and writing tasks used.

Item Development Process

Test development for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) is a detailed, step-by-step process of development and review cycles. An important element of this process is that all test items are developed by New York State educators in a process facilitated by State subject matter and testing experts. Bringing experienced classroom teachers into this central item development role serves to draw a strong connection between classroom and test content.

Only New York State–certified educators may participate in this process. The New York State Department of Education asks for nominations from districts, and all recruiting is done with diversity of participants in mind, including diversity in gender, ethnicity, geographic region, and teaching experience. Educators with item-writing skills from around the State are retained to write all items for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) under strict guidelines that leverage best practices (see https://www.engageny.org/resource/regents-exams-ela). State educators also conduct all item quality and bias reviews to ensure that item content is appropriate to the construct being measured and fair for all students. Finally, educators use the defined standards, test blueprint targets, and statistical information generated during field testing to select the highest quality items for use in the operational test.

Figure 7 summarizes the full test development process, with steps 3 and 4 addressing initial item development and review. This figure also demonstrates the ongoing nature of ensuring the content validity of items through field test trials, and final item selection for operational testing.

Initial item development is conducted under the criteria and guidance provided by multiple documents, including the blueprint noted in Table 10 and Item Writing Guidelines noted in Appendix A. To facilitate the alignment of items during development with standards, Standards Interpretations are also provided to developers. These interpretations are noted in Appendix B. Both multiple-choice and constructed-response items are included in the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) to ensure appropriate coverage of the construct domain.

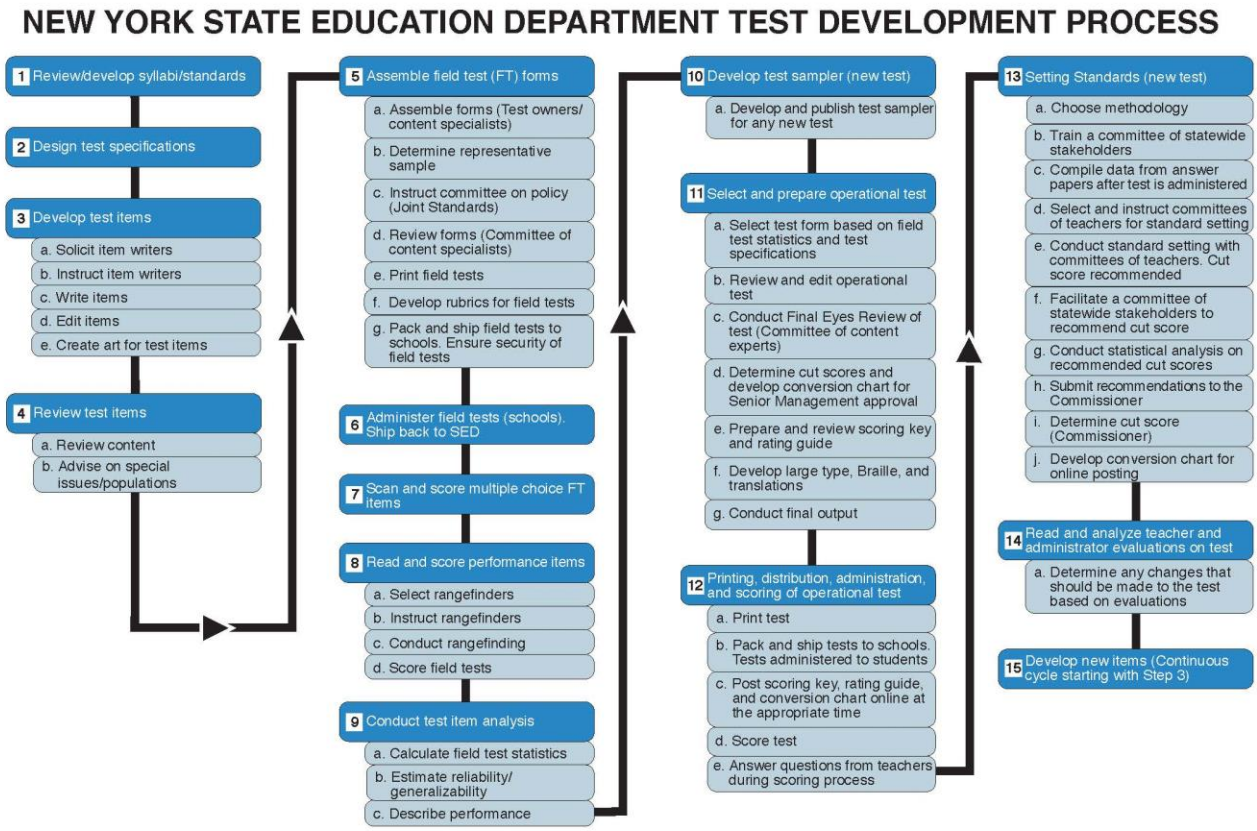

Figure 7 New York State Education Department Test Development Process

Item Review Process

The item review process helps to ensure the consistent application of rigorous item reviews intended to assess the quality of the items developed and identify items that require edits or removal from the pool of items to be field tested. This process allows high quality items to be continually developed in a manner that is consistent with the test blueprint. Item review guidelines for multiple-choice items are included in Appendix C.

All reviewers participate in rigorous training designed to assist in a consistent interpretation of the standards throughout the item review process. This is a critical step in item development because consistency between the standards and what the items are asking examinees is a fundamental form of evidence of the validity of the intended score interpretations. Another integral component of this item review process is to review the scoring rules, or "rubrics," for their clarity and consistency in what the examinee is being asked to demonstrate by responding to each item. Each of these elements of the review process are in place, ultimately, to target fairness for all students by targeting consistency in examinee scores and providing evidence of the validity of their interpretations.

Specifically, the item review process articulates the four major item characteristics the New York State Education Department looks for in developing quality items:

1. language and graphical appropriateness
2. sensitivity/bias
3. fidelity of measurement to standards
4. conformity to the expectations for the specific item types and formats

Each of the criteria includes pertinent questions that help reviewers determine whether or not an item is of sufficient quality. Within the first two categories, criteria for language appropriateness are used to help ensure that students understand what is asked in each question and that the language in the question does not adversely affect a student's ability to perform the required task. Likewise, sensitivity/bias criteria are used to evaluate whether questions are unbiased, non-offensive, and not disadvantageous to any given subgroup(s).

The third category of item review, alignment, addresses how each item measures a given standard. This category asks the reviewer to comment on key aspects of how the item addresses and calls for the skills demanded by the standards.

The fourth category addresses the specific demands for different item types and formats. Reviewers evaluate each item to ensure that it conforms to the given requirements. For example, multiple-choice items must have, among other characteristics, one unambiguously correct answer and several plausible but incorrect answer choices.
Following these reviews, only items that are approved by an assigned educator panel move forward for field testing.

Ongoing attention is also given to the relevance of the standards used to guide curriculum and assessment. Consistent with a desire to assess this relevance, the New York State Department of Education (NYSED) is committed to ongoing standards review over time and periodically solicits thoughtful, specific responses from stakeholders about individual standards within the NY P–12 Standards.

5.2 Evidence Based on Response Processes

The second source of validity evidence is based on examinee response processes. This standard requires evidence that examinees are responding in the manner intended by the test items and rubrics and that raters are scoring those responses consistent with the rubrics. Accordingly, it is important to control and monitor whether construct-irrelevant variance in response patterns has been introduced at any point in the test development, administration, or scoring processes.

The controls and monitoring in place for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) include the item development process, with attention paid to mitigating the introduction of construct-irrelevant variance. The development process described in the previous sections details the process and attention given to reducing the potential for construct irrelevance in response processes by attending to the quality and alignment of test content to the test blueprint and to the item development guidelines. Further evidence is documented in the test administration and scoring procedures, as well as the results of statistical analyses, which are covered in the following two sections.

Administration and Scoring

Adherence to standardized administration procedures is fundamental to the validity of test scores and their interpretation, as such procedures allow for adequate and consistently applied conditions for scoring the work of every student who takes the examination. For this reason, guidelines titled *School Administrator's Manual, Secondary Level Examinations* (http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/sam/secondary/hssam-update.html) have been developed and implemented for the New York Regents testing program. All secondary level Regents examinations are administered under these standard conditions to support valid inferences for all students. These standard procedures also cover testing students with disabilities that are provided testing accommodations consistent with their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Accommodation Plans (504 Plans). Full test administration procedures are available at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/hsgen/.

The implementation of rigorous scoring procedures directly supports the validity of the scores. Regents test-scoring practices therefore focus on producing high quality scores. Multiple-choice items are scored via local scanning at testing centers, and trained educators score constructed-response items. There are many studies that focus on various elements of producing valid and reliable scores for constructed-response items, but generally, attention to the following all contribute to valid and reliable scores for constructed-response items:

1) Quality training (Hoyt & Kerns, 1999; Lumley & McNamara, 1995; Wang, Wang, and Kwong, 2010; Gorman & Rentsch, 2009; Schleicher, Day, Bronston, Mayes, and Riggo, 2002; Woehr & Huffcutt, 1994; Johnson, Penny, and Gordon, 2008; Weigle, 1998)
2) Detection and correction of rating bias (McQueen & Congdon, 1997; Congdon & McQueen, 2000; Myford, & Wolfe, 2009; Barkaoui, 2011; Patz, Junker, Johnson, and Mariano, 2002)
3) Consistency or reliability of ratings (Congdon & McQueen, 2000; Harik Clauser, Grabovsky, Nungester, Swanson, & Nandakumar, 2009; McQueen & Congdon, 1997; Myford, & Wolfe, 2009; Mero & Motowidlo, 1995; Weinrott & Jones, 1984)
4) Rubric designs that facilitate consistency of ratings (Pecheone & Chung, 2006; Wolfe & Gitomer, 2000; Cronbach, Linn, Brennan, & Haertel, 1995; Cook & Beckman, 2009; Penny, Johnson, & Gordon, 2000; Smith, 1993; Leacock, Gonzalez, and Conarro, 2014)

The distinct steps for operational test scoring include close attention to each of these elements and begin before the operational test is even selected. After the field test process, during which many more items than appear on the operational test are administered to a representative sample of students, a set of "anchor" papers representing student responses across the range of possible responses for constructed-response items are selected. The objective of these "range-finding" efforts is to create a training set for scorer training and execution, the scores from which are used to generate important statistical information about the item. A consensus on a training for each score point of each item is the basis for creating rating guides and scoring ancillaries to be used during operational scoring.

To review and select these anchor papers, NYS educators serve as table leaders during the range-finding session. In the range-finding process, committees of educators receive a set of student papers for each field-tested question. Committee members familiarize themselves with each item type and score a number of responses that are representative of each of the different score points. After the independent scoring is completed, the committee reviews and discusses their results and determines consensus scores for the student responses. During this process, atypical responses are important to

identify and annotate for use in training and live scoring. The range-finding results are then used to build training materials for the vendor's scorers, who then score the rest of the field test responses to constructed-response items. The final model response set for the June 2014 administration of the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) is located at http://www.nysedregents.org/hsela/614/hsela62014-rg1w.pdf.

During the range-finding and field test scoring processes, it is important to be aware of and control for sources of variation in scoring. One possible source of variation in constructed-response scores is unintended rater bias associated with items and examinee responses. Because the rater is often unaware of such bias, this type of variation may be the most challenging source of variation in scoring to control and measure. Rater biases can appear as severity or leniency in applying the scoring rubric. Bias also includes phenomena such as the halo effect, which occur when good or poor performance on one element of the rubric encourages inaccurate scoring of other elements. These types of rater bias can be effectively controlled by training practices with a strict focus on rubric requirements.

The training process for operational scoring by state educators begins with a review and discussion of actual student work on constructed-response test items. This helps raters understand the range and characteristics typical of examinee responses, as well as the kinds of mistakes students commonly make. This information is used to train raters on how to consistently apply key elements of the scoring rubric across the domain of student responses.

Raters then receive training consistent with the guidelines and ancillaries produced after field testing and are allowed to practice scoring prior to the start of live scoring. Throughout the scoring process, there are important procedures for correcting inconsistent scoring or misapplication of scoring rubrics for constructed-response items. When monitoring and correction do not occur during scoring, construct-irrelevant variation may be introduced. Accordingly, a scoring lead may be assigned to review the consistency of scoring for their assigned staff against model responses and is also available for consultation throughout the scoring process.

Attention to the rubric design also fundamentally contributes to the validity of examinee response processes. The rubric specifies what the examinee needs to provide as evidence of learning based on the question asked. The more explicit the rubric (and the item), the more clear the response expectations are for examinees.

In support of the goal of valid score interpretations for each examinee, then, such scoring training procedures are implemented for the Regents Examination in Physical Setting/Earth Science. Operational raters are selected based on expertise in the exam subject and are assigned a specific set of items to score. No more than approximately one-half of the items on the test are assigned to any one rater. This has the effect of increasing the consistency of scoring across examinee responses by allowing each rater to focus on a subset of items. It also assures that no one rater is allowed to score the entire test for any one student. This practice reduces the effect of any potential bias of a single rater on individual examinees. Additionally, no rater is allowed to score the responses of his or her own students.

Statistical Analysis

One statistic that is useful for evaluating the response processes for multiple-choice items is an item's point biserial correlation on the distractors. A high point biserial on a distractor may indicate that

students are not able to identify the correct response for a reason other than the difficulty of the item. A finding of poor model fit for an item may also support a finding that examinees are not responding the way the item developer intended them to. As documented in Table 2, the point biserial statistics for distractors in the multiple-choice are all negative values indicating that examinees are not being drawn to an unintended construct.

5.3 Evidence Based on Internal Structure

The third source of validity evidence comes from the internal structure of the test. This requires that test developers evaluate the test structure to ensure that the test is functioning as intended. Such an evaluation may include attention to item interactions, tests of dimensionality, or indications of test bias for or against one or more subgroups of examinees detected by differential item functioning (DIF) analysis. Evaluation of internal test structure also includes a review of the results of classical item analyses, test reliability, and the IRT scaling and equating.

The following analyses were conducted for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core):

- item difficulty
- item discrimination
- differential item functioning
- IRT model fit
- test reliability
- classification consistency
- test dimensionality

Item Difficulty

Multiple analyses allow an evaluation of item difficulty. For this exam, *p*-values and Rasch difficulty (item location) estimates were computed for MC and CR items.[5] Items for the 2014 Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) show a range of *p*-values consistent with the targeted exam difficulty. Item *p*-values range from 0.49 to 0.90, with a mean of 0.70.

Item Discrimination

How well the items on a test discriminate between high- and low-performing examinees is an important measure of the structure of a test. Items that do not discriminate well generally provide less reliable information about student performance. Tables 2 and 3 provide point biserial values on the correct responses, and Table 2 also provides point biserial values on the three distractors. The values for correct answers are 0.14 or higher, indicating that all items are discriminating examinee performance very well. Point biserials for all distractors are all negative, indicating that examinees are responding to the items as expected during item and rubric development. Refer to section 2 of this report for additional details.

[5] Refer to the field test report for details: http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/reports.

Differential Item Functioning

Differential item functioning (DIF) for gender was conducted following field testing of the items in 2013 and 2014. Sample sizes for subgroups based on ethnicity and English language learner status were unfortunately too small to reliably compute DIF statistics, so only gender DIF analyses were conducted. The Mantel-Haenszel χ^2 and standardized mean difference were used to detect items that may function differently for any of these subgroups. The Mantel χ^2 is a conditional mean comparison of the ordered response categories for reference and focal groups combined over values of the matching variable score. "Ordered" means that a response earning a score of "1" on an item is better than a response earning a score of "0," and "2" is better than "1," and so on. "Conditional," on the other hand, refers to the comparison of members from the two groups who received the same score on the matching variable—the total test score in our analysis.

One operational item (#25) showed a high level of DIF favoring female examinees, and 2 items (#s 10 and 14) showed a moderate level of DIF favoring females during field test analyses. One additional item showed moderate DIF in favor of male examinees. The items were subsequently reviewed by content specialists, who were unable to identify content-based reasons why they might be functioning differently between male students and female students. Consequently, the items were used in the operational test to represent, RI.1-6 &10, W.1,4 & 9, L.1-6; RL.3; RL.2; and RI.3 respectively.

Full differential item functioning results are reported in Appendix E of the 2013 and 2014 technical reports located at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/reports.

IRT Model Fit

Model fit for the Rasch method used to estimate location (difficulty) parameters for the items on the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) provide important evidence that the internal structure of the test is of high technical quality. The number of items within a targeted range of [0.7, 1.3] is reported in Table 5. The mean infit value is 1.20, with 21 of the 26 items falling in a targeted range of [0.7, 1.3]. As the range of [0.7, 1.3] is used as guide for ideal fit, fit values outside of the range are considered individually and in light of the specific characteristics of the test and the performance of the corhort. In this case, the maximum value for the 5 items falling outside of the ideal range has an infit of 2.93. The overall high performance of examinees on a test may have the effect of reducing the variance of scores for many items which can in turn, impact model fit negatively. Refer to section 3 of this report for additional details.

Test Reliability

As discussed, test reliability is a measure of the internal consistency of a test (Cronbach, 1951). It is a measure of the extent to which the items on a test provide consistent information about student mastery of the domain. Reliability should ultimately demonstrate that examinee score estimates maximize consistency and therefore minimize error or, theoretically speaking, that examinees who take a test multiple times would get the same score each time. Assessments that include items with higher maximum possible score points may show slightly lower reliabilities than assessments with dichotomous and low maximum possible scores points. The Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) contains two constructed response items with maximum possible points of 4 and 6. The reliability estimate for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) is 0.84, which reflects the relatively short test length as well as the presence of these items with higher score point ranges. Refer to section 4 of this report for additional details related to evaluating the standard errors of measurement, and the consistency and accuracy of examinee scores.

Classification Consistency and Accuracy

A decision consistency analysis measures the agreement between the classifications based on two non-overlapping, equally difficult forms of the test. If two parallel forms of the test were given to the same students, the consistency of the measure would be reflected by the extent that the classification decisions made from the first set of test scores matched the decisions based on the second set of test scores. Decision accuracy is an index to determine the extent to which measurement error causes a classification different than expected from the true score. High decision consistency and accuracy provides strong evidence that the internal structure of a test is sound.

The results for the dichotomies created by the four cut scores, are presented in Table 7. The tabled values are derived with the program *BB-Class* (Brennan, 2004) using the Livingston and Lewis method. The overall decision consistency ranged from 0.83 to 0.91, and the decision accuracy ranged from 0.88 to .94. Both decision consistency and accuracy values indicate good consistency and accuracy of examinee classifications.

Dimensionality

In addition to model fit, a strong assumption of the Rasch model is that the construct measured by a test is unidimensional. Violation of this assumption might suggest that the test is measuring something other than the intended content and indicate that the quality of the test structure is compromised. A principal components analysis was conducted to test the assumption of unidimensionality, and the results provide strong evidence that a single dimension in the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) is explaining a large portion of the variance in student response data. This analysis does not characterize or explain the dimension, but a reasonable assumption can be made that the test is largely unidimensional and that the dimension most present is the targeted construct. Refer to section 3 for details of this analysis.

Considering this collection of analyses on the internal structure of the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core), strong evidence exists that the exam is functioning as intended and is providing reasonably valid and reliable information about examinee performance.

5.4 Evidence Based on Relations to Other Variables

Another source of validity evidence is based on the relation of the test to other variables. This source commonly encompasses two validity categories prevalent in the literature and practice—concurrent and predictive validity. To make claims about the validity of a test that is to be used for high stakes purposes, such as the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core), these claims could be supported by providing evidence that performance on the English Language Arts test correlates well with other tests that measure the same or similar constructs. Although not absolute in its ability to offer evidence that concurrent test score validity exists, such correlations can be helpful for supporting a claim of concurrent validity if the correlation is high. To conduct such studies, matched examinee score data for other tests measuring the same content as the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) is ideal, but the systematic acquisition of such data is complex and costly.

Importantly, a strong connection between classroom curriculum and test content may be inferred by the fact that New York State educators, deeply familiar with both the curriculum standards and their enactment in the classroom, develop all content for the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core).

In terms of predictive validity, time is a fundamental constraint on gathering evidence. The gold standard for supporting the validity of predictive Statements about test scores requires empirical evidence of the relationship between test scores and future performance on a defined characteristic. To the extent that the objective of the Common Core Learning Standards is to prepare students for college and career, it will be important to gather evidence of this empirical relationship over time.

Currently, the predictive validity is supported by expert judgments gathered during the standard-setting process for Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core). During this process, subject matter experts described the performance of examinees across five levels and made recommendations on the cut scores to be used in distinguishing such performance. The process reflected best psychometric practice as articulated in the Standards for Educational and Psychological Measurement (AERA et al., 2014) and proceeded according to the plans reviewed by the New York State Technical Advisory Committee as well as independent national expert. This effort inherently represents further expert review of the test content and its alignment with the objectives of the CCLS. Participating subject matter experts made explicit judgments about what each item was asking of examinees and what successful performance on the items means for the progress toward college and career readiness as defined by the standards.

After careful consideration of the nature of the new examinations including their goal of providing evidence to support readiness claims, the rigor of the new curricula, the transitional and aspirational aspects of the State policy directives, and the role of the assessment in student learning throughout high school and beyond, the standard setting committees made recommendations on the cut scores to the Commissioner of Education. The Commissioner accepted the recommendations of the standard setting panelists. More information is available in the Standard Setting technical report at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/reports/commoncore.

5.5 Evidence Based on Testing Consequences

There are two general approaches in the literature to evaluating consequential validity. Messick (1995) points out that adverse social consequences invalidate test use mainly if they are due to flaws in the test. In this sense, the sources of evidence documented in this report (based on the construct, internal test structure, response processes, and relation to other variables) serve as a consequential validity argument as well. This evidence supports conclusions based on test scores that social consequences are not likely to be traced to characteristics or qualities of the test itself. Cronbach (1988), on the other hand, argues that negative consequences could invalidate test use. From this perspective, the test user is obligated to make the case for test use and to ensure appropriate and supported uses.

Regardless of perspective on the nature of consequential validity, however, it is important to caution against uses that are not supported by the validity claims documented for this test. For example, use of this test to predict examinee scores on other tests is not directly supported by either the stated purposes or by the development process and research conducted on examinee data. A brief survey of websites for New York State universities and colleges finds that, beyond the explicitly defined use as a testing requirement toward graduation for students who have completed a course in English Language Arts, the exam is most commonly used to inform admissions and course placement decisions. Such uses can be considered reasonable, assuming the competencies demonstrated in the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) are consistent with those required in the courses for which a student is seeking enrollment or placement. Educational institutions using the exam for placement purposes are advised to examine the scoring rules for the Regents Examination in English Language

Arts (Common Core) and to assess their appropriateness for the inferences being made about course placement.

As stated, the nature of validity arguments is not absolute, but it is supported through ongoing processes and studies designed to accumulate support for validity claims. The evidence provided in this report documents the evidence to date that supports the use of the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) scores for the purposes described.

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Appendix A – Item Writing Guidelines

General Rules for Writing Multiple-Choice Items

1. ***Use either a direct question or an incomplete statement as the item stem, whichever seems more appropriate to effective presentation of the item.***

   Some item ideas can be expressed more simply and clearly in the incomplete statement style of question. On the other hand, some items seem to require direct question stems for the most effective expression. Teachers should use the item style that seems most appropriate.

2. ***Items should be written in clear and simple language, with vocabulary kept as simple as possible.***

   Like any other item, the multiple-choice item should be perfectly clear. Difficult and technical vocabulary should be avoided unless essential for the purpose of the question. The important elements should generally appear early in the statement of the item, with qualifications and explanations following.

3. ***Each item should have one and only one correct answer.***

   While this requirement is obvious, it is not always fulfilled. Sometimes writers produce items involving issues so controversial and debatable that even experts are unable to agree on one correct answer. More often the trouble is failure to consider the full implications of each response.

4. ***Base each item on a single central problem.***

   A multiple-choice item functions most effectively when the student is required to compare directly the relative merits of a number of specific responses to a definite problem. An item consisting merely of a series of unrelated true-false statements, all of which happen to begin with the same phrase, is unacceptable.

5. ***State the central problem of the item clearly and completely in the stem. (See Helpful Hint #2,476.)***

   The stem should be meaningful by itself. It should be clear and should convey the central problem of the item. It should not be necessary for the student to read and reread all the responses before he/she can understand the basis upon which he/she is to make a choice.

6. ***In general, include in the stem any words that must otherwise be repeated in each response.***

   The stem should contain everything the answers have in common or as much as possible of their common content. This practice serves to make the item shorter, so that it can be read and grasped more quickly.

7. ***Avoid negative statements.***

   Negative statements in multiple-choice items lead to unnecessary difficulties and confusion. Special care must be exercised against the double negative.

8. ***Avoid excessive "window dressing."***

The item should contain only material relevant to its solution, unless selection of what is relevant is part of the problem.

9. ***Make the responses grammatically consistent with the stem and parallel with one another in form.***

10. ***Make all responses plausible and attractive to students who lack the information or ability tested by the item.***

The incorrect responses should be plausible answers. So far as possible, each response should be designed specifically to attract students who have certain misconceptions or who tend to make certain common errors.

11. ***Arrange the responses in logical order, if one exists.***

Where the responses consist of numbers or letters, they should ordinarily be arranged in ascending order. Events should be listed in the order in which they occurred, from earliest to most recent, except when this order would clue the answer. This practice helps insure the student will mark the answer correctly.

12. ***Make the responses independent and mutually exclusive.***

Responses should not be interrelated in meaning. Responses that are not mutually-exclusive, aid the student in eliminating wrong answers and reduce the reliability of the item by decreasing the number of effective, functioning responses.

13. ***Avoid extraneous clues.***

Since the student is required to associate one of several alternative responses with the stem, any aspect of the question that provides an extraneous basis for correctly associating the right answer or for eliminating a wrong response constitutes an undesirable clue.

14. ***Avoid using "all of the above" and "none of the above" as alternatives.***

15. ***Avoid using the phrase "of the following" in the stem.***

HECKLIST OF TEST CONSTRUCTION PRINCIPLES
(Multiple Choice Items)

		YES	NO
1.	Is the item significant?		
2.	Does the item have curricular validity?		
3.	Is the item presented in clear and simple language, with vocabulary kept as simple as possible?		
4.	Does the item have one and only one correct answer?		
5.	Does the item state one single central problem completely in the stem? (See Helpful Hint below.)		
6.	Does the stem include any extraneous material ("window dressing")?		
7.	Are all responses grammatically consistent with the stem and parallel with one another in form?		
8.	Are all responses plausible (attractive to students who lack the information tested by the item)?		
9.	Are all responses independent and mutually exclusive?		
10.	Are there any extraneous clues due to grammatical inconsistencies, verbal associations, length of response, etc.?		
11.	Were the principles of Universal Design used in constructing the item?		

HELPFUL HINT

To determine if the stem is complete (meaningful all by itself):

1. **Cover up the responses and read just the stem.**

2. **Try to turn the stem into a short-answer question by drawing a line after the last word. (If it would not be a good-short answer item you may have a problem with the stem.)**

3. **The stem must consist of a statement that contains a verb.**

Appendix B – Standards Interpretations for Multiple Choice Items

New York State Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

Standard Interpretations for Multiple-Choice Questions

Grade 11- RL.2

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Central aspect: Items measure students' ability to analyze the development of a central idea across the text, and to summarize the text's ideas.

	Yes/No	If "No", Explain or Describe
Measures central aspect: The item requires students to identify or summarize how a story's central themes/ideas **develop**. Possible stems may include but not limited to: **Stem**: The author develops the central idea in the text by **Stem**: Which direct quote from passage best reflects the moment when the theme changes? **Stem**: Which alternative title best expresses the central idea of the poem/story?		
Measures supporting aspect: The item requires students to identify or summarize a story's central themes/ideas. Possible stems may include but not limited to: **Stem**: Which detail would be most important to include in a summary of the text? **Stem**: Which direct quote from passage best summarizes the theme of the text? **Stem**: Which statement/claim **best** states the central idea of the text?		
The item stem **does not** reveal: - the central themes/ideas - how the central themes/ideas develop *unless the theme is presented in the stem in order to ask the student to identify or explain a contrast		
The analysis in the item is supported by the text (i.e., there is development of central themes/ideas).		

The item requires students to comprehend the majority of the passage to answer the item correctly.		
THE ITEM MEASURES THIS STANDARD.		

Grade 11- RL.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Central aspect: Items measure students' ability to analyze how different elements of a story interact with one another. Elements may include how a plot is developed in episodes, how the setting shapes the plot, how characters respond to changes in the story, or how specific dialogue and action propel the plot.

Item Measuring CCLS RL.3	Yes/No	If "No", Explain or Describe
Measures central aspect: The item requires identification or analysis of the interaction between developing story elements (character(s), setting, events, and ideas). Possible stems may include: **Stem**: How do lines # – # build suspense/irony/propel action/provoke a decision**?** **Stem**: How does paragraph X/lines # – # develop the plot? **Stem**: What does line X reveal about a character/event/relationship?		
Measures supporting aspect: The item requires identification or analysis of the interaction between story elements (character(s), setting, events, and ideas). Possible stems may include: **Stem**: How is idea/character X introduced into the passage? **Stem**: What statement best describes the relationship between characters X and Y?		
The item stem **does not** reveal: - the interaction of elements - the key change/development * unless the interaction is identified in the stem to set up a question regarding the contrast		
The analysis in the item is supported by the text (i.e., there are development of story elements).		

The item requires students to comprehend the majority of the passage to answer the item correctly.		
THE ITEM MEASURES THIS STANDARD.		

Grade 11- RL.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Central aspects: Items measure the students' ability to determine the meaning of multiple-meaning words as they are used in text OR analyze the impact of specific word choices.

Item Measuring CCLS R.4	Yes/No	If "No", Explain or Describe
Measures central aspect: Item requires that the student glean meaning of multiple-meaning vocabulary word from context. Possible stems may include: **Stem**: Which word or phrase from sentence X helps the reader understand the meaning of word Y in the passage? **Stem**: Which line best helps define the meaning of word X? **Stem**: Define X as used in lines #-# (figurative/connotative/analogous word use) OR Measures central aspect: Item requires analysis of the impact of word choice and literary devices on the meaning, tone, or analysis developed in the text. Possible stems may include: **Stem**: What does the word/phrase X in the story suggest about the narrator's actions/decisions? **Stem**: What affect does X word in line # have on the tone/plot/description of character?		
The stem **does not** reveal: - the connotation or impact of the literary device - the meaning of the word or phrase		
The analysis in the item is supported by the text.		
THE ITEM MEASURES THIS STANDARD.		

Grade 11- RL.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Central aspect: Items measure students' ability to analyze how specific phrases, paragraphs, and sections of a text develop the plot and themes of a story. In contrast to RL.3, RL.5 focuses on students' ability to identify how structure shapes meaning in a story.

Item Measuring CCLS RL.5	Yes/No	If "No", Explain or Describe
Measures central aspect The item requires analysis of how a particular sentence/paragraph develops/contributes to the overall structure, theme, setting, or plot of the passage. Possible stems may include: **Stem**: What effect does paragraph X have on the story/poem? **Stem**: Lines #-# develop a key theme in the story by **Stem**: Which statement accurately describes the effect of the story's structure?		
The item stem **does not** reveal: - key analysis - key differences/similarities		
The analysis in the item is supported by the text.		
The item requires students to comprehend the majority of the passage to answer the item correctly.		
THE ITEM MEASURES THIS STANDARD.		

Grade 11- RL.6 *Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant.* *Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.* *Central aspects: Items measure students' ability to assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text* ***OR to*** *analyze how an author builds a point of view through the narrator, different characters, and/or the audience.*		
Item Measuring CCLS RL.6	**Yes/No**	**If "No", Explain or Describe**
Measures central aspect: The item requires students to identify how an author uses specific techniques to distinguish the narrator's point of view from those of the other characters and the audience. Possible stems may include: **Stem**: How does the narrator's point of view contrast with the point of view of another character in the story? **Stem**: How does the author help the reader better understand the points of view of X and Y? **Stem**: What is an effect of telling the story from X's point of view? **Stem**: How does the author develop X's character in lines # – #?		
Measures supporting aspect: The item requires students to identify author, narrator, or characters' point of view. Possible stems may include: **Stem**: What do lines #-# suggest about author's point of view? **Stem**: In which sentence does the narrator reveal the irony/suspense/etc. of his situation?		
The item stem **does not** reveal: - all necessary points of view - how the point of view is developed using a specific strategy - clues that would limit reliance on text		
The analysis in the item is supported by the text.		
THE ITEM MEASURES THIS STANDARD.		

Standard Interpretations for Multiple-Choice Questions

Grade 11- RI.2

Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Central aspect: Items measure students' ability to analyze the development of a central idea across the text, and to summarize the text's ideas.

Item Measuring CCLS RI.2	Yes/No	If "No", Explain or Describe
Measures central aspect: The item requires students to identify or summarize how a story's central ideas **develop or interact**. Possible stems may include: **Stem**: The author develops a central idea/claim in the text by **Stem**: Lines # to # develop a central idea/claim by **Stem**: Which statement **best** describes how lines # to # develop the author's claim/central idea?		
Measures supporting aspect: The item requires students to identify or summarize a text's central themes or an author's central claim. Possible stems may include: **Stem**: Which detail would be most important to include in a summary of the text? **Stem**: Which direct quote from passage best summarizes a central idea of the text/central claim of the author? **Stem**: Which statement **best** states the central idea of the text/ central claim of the author?		
The item stem **does not** reveal: - the central ideas/claims - how the central ideas/claims develop *unless the idea/claim is presented in the stem in order to ask the student to identify or explain a contrast		
The analysis in the item is supported by the text (i.e., there is development of central themes/ideas).		
The item requires students to comprehend the majority of the passage to answer the item correctly.		
THE ITEM ALIGNS TO THIS STANDARD.		

Grade 11- RI.3

Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Central aspect: Items measure students' ability to analyze how different elements of a text interact with one another. Elements may include how ideas, events or claims connect and overlap over the course of the text to support a central claim/idea.

Item Measuring CCLS RI.3	Yes/No	If "No", Explain or Describe
Measures central aspect: The item requires identification or analysis of the interaction between developing text elements (events, ideas, and supporting claims). Possible stems may include: **Stem**: How do lines **#**- **#** develop an idea/support a claim**?** **Stem**: What does line **#** reveal about an event/idea? **Stem**: The examples provided in lines **#**-**#** serve mostly to illustrate		
Measures supporting aspect: The item requires identification or analysis of the interaction between text elements (events, ideas, and points/claims). Possible stems may include: **Stem**: How is idea introduced into the passage? **Stem**: What statement best describes the relationship between events/individuals/ideas X and Y?		
The item stem **does not** reveal: - the interaction of elements - the key change/development * unless the interaction is identified in the stem to set up a question regarding the contrast		
The analysis in the item is supported by the text (i.e., there are development of text elements).		
The item requires students to comprehend the majority of the passage to answer the item correctly.		
THE ITEM MEASURES THIS STANDARD.		

Grade 11- RI.4 *Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).* *Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.* *Central aspects: Items measure the students' ability to determine the meaning of multiple-meaning words as they are used in text OR analyze the impact of specific word choices.*		
Item Measuring CCLS RI.4	**Yes/No**	**If "No", Explain or Describe**
Measures central aspect: Item requires that the student glean meaning of multiple-meaning vocabulary word from context. Possible stems may include: **Stem**: Which word or phrase from sentence X helps the reader understand the meaning of word Y in the passage? **Stem**: Define X as used in lines #-# (figurative/connotative/analogous word use) OR Measures central aspect: Item requires analysis of the impact of word choice and literary devices on the meaning, tone, or analysis developed in the text. Possible stems may include: **Stem**: What does the word/phrase X in the story suggest about the author's actions/decisions? **Stem**: What affect does X word in line # have on the tone/description of the text?		
The item stem **does not** reveal: - the interaction of elements - the key change/development * unless the interaction is identified in the stem to set up a question regarding the contrast		
The analysis in the item is supported by the text.		
THE ITEM MEASURES THIS STANDARD.		

Grade 11- RI.5 *Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.* *Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.* *Central aspect: Items measure students' ability to analyze how specific phrases, paragraphs, and sections of a text develop an analysis or argument. In contrast to RI.3, RI.5 focuses on students' ability to identify how structure shapes meaning and efficacy in a text.*		
Item Measuring CCLS RI.5	**Yes/No**	**If "No", Explain or Describe**
Measures central aspect: The item requires analysis of how a particular sentence/paragraph develops/contributes to the overall structure, theme, meaning, efficacy of the passage. Possible stems may include: **Stem**: What effect does paragraph X have on the text? **Stem**: Lines **#-#** develop a key concept of the article by Measures supporting aspect: the item requires identification of how a particular sentence/paragraph develops/contributes to the overall structure, theme, meaning, efficacy of the passage. Possible stems may include: **Stem**: The purpose of lines #-# in the passage is to (support a claim/give necessary information/offer a counterclaim.)		
The item stem **does not** reveal: - key analysis - key differences/similarities		
The analysis in the item is supported by the text.		
The item requires students to comprehend the majority of the passage to answer the item correctly.		
THE ITEM MEASURES THIS STANDARD.		

Grade 11- RI.6 *Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.* *Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.* *Central aspects: Items measure students' ability to assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text* ***OR*** *analyze how an author builds a point of view/purpose through the use of rhetoric.*		
Item Measuring CCLS RI.6	**Yes/No**	**If "No", Explain or Describe**
Measures central aspect: The item requires students to assess how the author's point of view shapes the content or style of a text. Possible stems may include: **Stem**: What do lines #-# suggest about author's point of view/purpose **Stem**: What does the author's choice of words in lines #-# suggest about his or her point of view/purpose? **Stem** The function of lines #-# in the passage is to Measures central aspect: The item requires students to analyze how an author uses rhetoric to build a point of view or purpose. Possible stems may include: **Stem:** Paragraph X supports the author's central claim by **Stem**: Lines #-# and lines #-# reinforce the author's argument by **Stem**: The choice of words in lines # serve the purpose of		
The analysis in the item is supported by the text (i.e., the text contains a distinct point of view/purpose that shapes the content and style of the text, and/or the text contains effective rhetoric).		
The item requires students to comprehend the majority of the passage to answer the item correctly.		
THE ITEM MEASURES THIS STANDARD.		

Grade 11- L.4 *Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11–12 reading and content.* *Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.* *Central aspect: Items measuring this standard test students' ability to determine the meaning of words and phrases in context.*		
Item Measuring CCLS L.4	**Yes/No**	**If "No", Explain or Describe**
Aligned: Item requires that the student glean meaning of an above-grade-level or otherwise unfamiliar vocabulary word from context. Possible stems may include: **Stem**: Which word or phrase from sentence X helps the reader understand the meaning of word Y in the passage? **Stem**: Which line best helps define the meaning of word X? **Stem**: What is the definition of X as used in lines # – # (figurative/connotative/analogous word use)		
The item stem **does not** reveal: - the meaning of the word or phrase		
The text provides the required context.		
THE ITEM MEASURES THIS STANDARD.		

Grade 11- L.5 *Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.* *Central aspect: Items measuring this standard test students' ability to demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.*		
Item Measuring CCLS L.5	**Yes/No**	**If "No", Explain or Describe**
Aligned: The item requires students to demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. Possible stems may include: **Stem:** The statement in line # suggests that **Stem:** The author's use of figurative lang. in lines #-# of the text serves to illustrate/emphasize **Stem:** In the context of the entire text, phrase X as used in lines # – # most likely means		
The item stem **does not** reveal: - the meaning of the figurative language/word relationships - the nuances in word meanings		
The analysis in the item is supported by the text.		
THE ITEM MEASURES THIS STANDARD.		

Appendix C – Item Review Criteria

New York State Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

Multiple-Choice Item Review Checklist

Text _____ Passage ____ Set _____ Item ____

Reviewer _____ Date _____

	CRITERIA	Accept Revise Reject
1	The item is free of content that might offend, typecast, or lead to offensive or stereotypic inferences regarding individuals or groups of different genders, ethnicities, locations, religions, socio-economic status, political views, family situations, ability, or physical or mental conditions, etc. The item would not be construed as offensive to any constituency—even if taken out of test context.	
2	The item asks a question worth asking—it is not trivial, tricky, unrelated to a close reading of the text, or unnecessary to an understanding or analysis of the text.	
3	The item is purposeful, well crafted and succinct—language and word choice is appropriate, clear, direct, graceful, etc.	
4	Item vocabulary is on grade level—unless item assesses vocabulary.	
5	The item only uses acronyms or foreign words whose meaning is clear in the text.	
6	The item is written in the active voice and present tense—unless another tense is appropriate.	
7	Item identification of persons, locations, etc. is identical to the text and consistent throughout entire item set.	
8	Item references to lines in the text are correct.	
9	The item does not reference the author of the text by name.	
10	The item stem presents one problem.	
11	The item stem presents sufficient information and qualifications to enable the student to answer the question.	
12	The item stem does not include words, phrases, number, tense, or grammar that cue particular options.	
13	The item has one and only one correct text-based option which requires understanding and analysis of the text.	
14	Incorrect item options are text-based and plausible.	
15	Item options are written such that the correct option is not obvious because of word choice, length, etc.	
16	Item options are consistent with the stem and written using parallel structures—forms, styles, tenses, etc.	
17	Item options are mutually exclusive, but not opposites.	
18	Item options are ordered by the their appearance in the text, length, etc. (unless randomized)	
19	The item does not use absolute statements—never, always, impossible, etc.	
20	The item does not use copyrighted or trademarked words or references	
21	The item is unique in the item set—it does not repeat similar concepts or wording or other items.	
22	The item's correct option is not keyed by other items in the item set.	

Comments or Suggestions

Multiple-Choice Question Review Checklist Form
5/7/2014

Appendix D – Tables and Figures for August 2014 Administration

Table D 1 Multiple-Choice Item Analysis Summary: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Item	Number of Students	*p*-Value	SD	Point Biserial	Point Biserial Distractor 1	Point Biserial Distractor 2	Point Biserial Distractor 3
1	750	.45	.50	.08	-.07	-.10	.15
2	750	.54	.50	.20	-.05	-.08	-.10
3	750	.49	.50	.12	.08	-.05	-.24
4	750	.38	.49	.13	.02	-.10	-.09
5	750	.49	.50	.28	-.01	-.17	-.14
6	750	.19	.39	.19	-.08	-.06	.02
7	750	.31	.46	.14	-.12	-.06	.07
8	750	.33	.47	.19	-.04	-.07	-.05
9	750	.43	.49	.05	.02	-.03	.00
10	750	.26	.44	.12	.02	.02	-.15
11	750	.53	.50	.32	-.11	-.20	-.09
12	750	.51	.50	.34	-.08	-.16	-.18
13	750	.52	.50	.28	-.14	-.04	-.17
14	750	.44	.50	.22	-.12	.01	-.14
15	750	.39	.49	.23	-.14	-.05	-.02
16	750	.35	.48	.29	-.14	-.05	-.09
17	750	.38	.49	.30	-.16	-.09	-.09
18	750	.41	.49	.11	-.16	.03	.02
19	750	.32	.47	.01	-.02	.06	.00
20	750	.51	.50	.32	-.10	-.17	-.10
21	750	.53	.50	.39	-.11	-.14	-.22
22	750	.37	.48	.16	-.04	.01	-.11
23	750	.37	.48	.27	-.04	-.13	-.08
24	750	.57	.50	.35	-.17	-.14	-.13

Table D 2 Constructed-Response Item Analysis Summary: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Item	Min. score	Max. score	Number of Students	Mean	SD	*p*-Value	Point Biserial
25	0	6	750	2.46	1.31	.41	.45
26	0	4	750	1.45	1.03	.36	.48

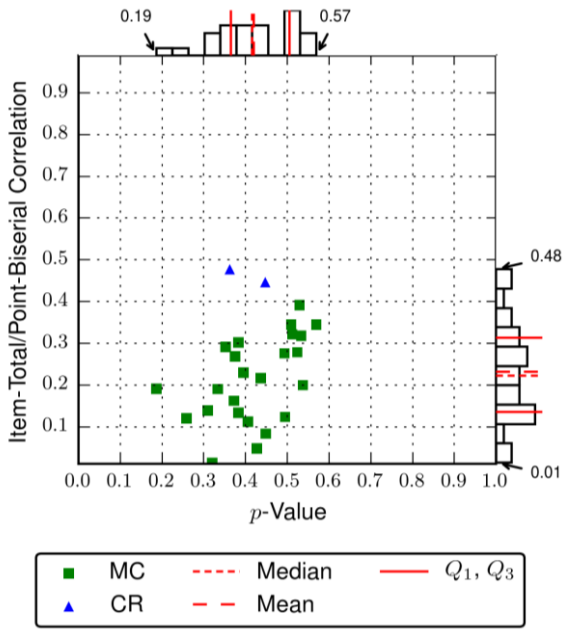

Figure D 1 Scatterplot: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

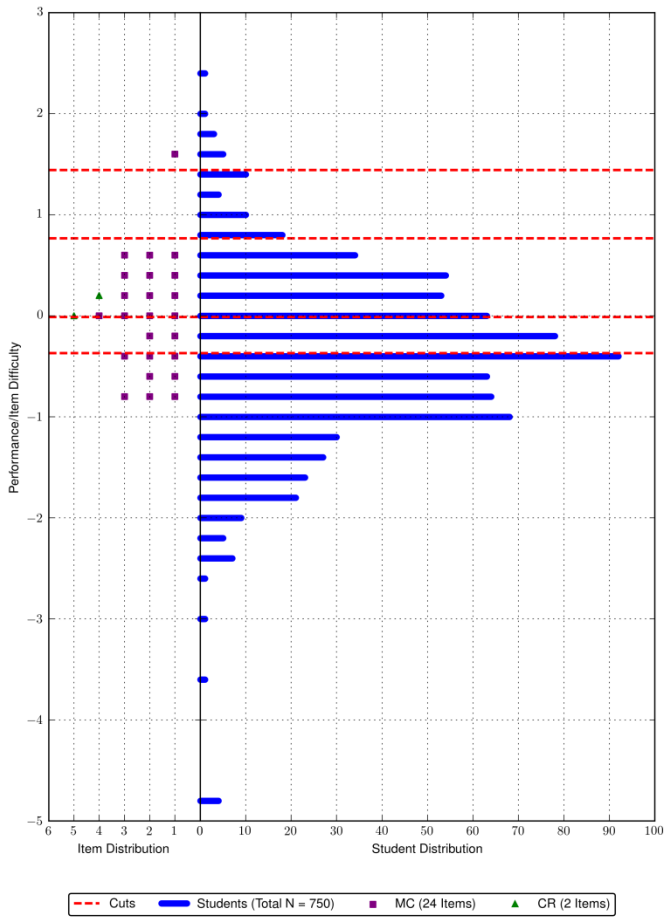

Figure D 2 Student Performance Map: Regents Examination in Physical Setting/Earth Science

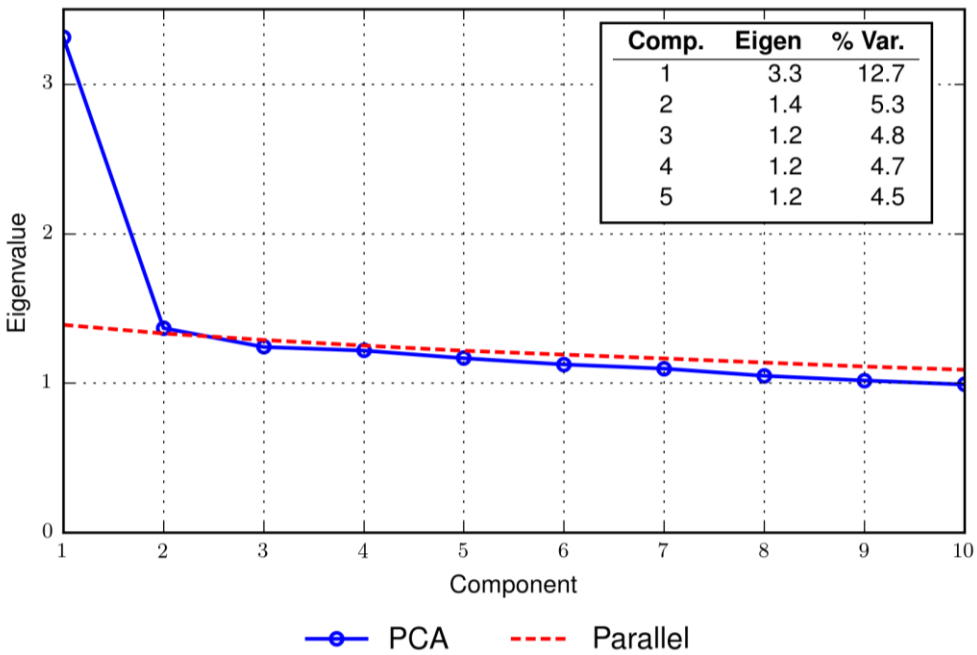

Figure D 3 Scree Plots: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Table D 3 Summary of Item Residual Correlations: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Statistic Type	Value
N	325
Mean	−0.04
SD	0.06
Minimum	−0.19
P_{10}	−0.11
P_{25}	−0.07
P_{50}	−0.03
P_{75}	0.00
P_{90}	0.03
Maximum	0.31
>|0.20|	1

Table D 4 Summary of Infit Mean Square Statistics: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

	Infit Mean Square				
	Mean	**SD**	**Min**	**Max**	**[0.7, 1.3]**
ELA	1.08	0.31	0.81	2.48	25/26

Table D 5 Reliabilities and Standard Errors of Measurement: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Subject	Coefficient Alpha	*SEM*
ELA	0.69	4.93

Table D 6 Decision Consistency and Accuracy Results: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Statistic	1/2	2/3	3/4	4/5
Consistency	0.75	0.77	0.92	0.98
Accuracy	0.81	0.84	0.94	0.99

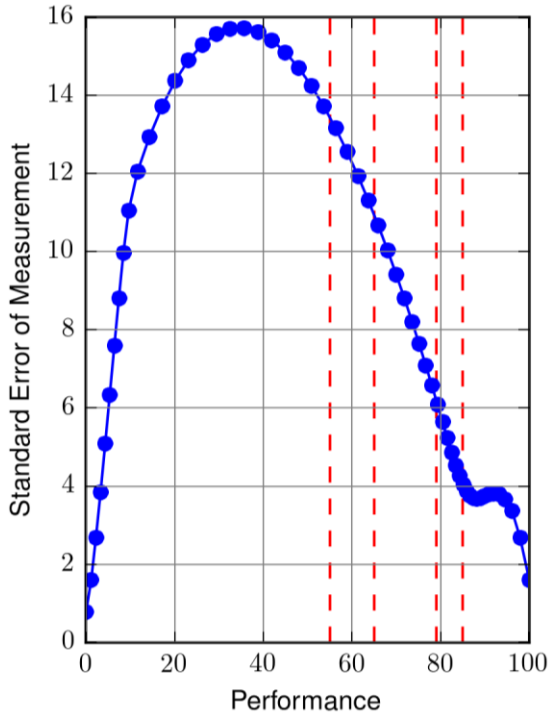

Figure D 4 Conditional Standard Error Plots: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Table D 7 Group Means: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Demographics	Number	Mean Scale-score	Standard error of group
All Students	750	46.84	21.88
Ethnicity			
American Indian/Alaska Native	3	52.33	33.83
Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	75	44.00	20.84
Black/African American	307	45.59	21.48
Hispanic/Latino	173	47.18	23.03
Multiracial	4	57.75	23.19
White	188	49.36	21.58
English Language Learner			
No	586	49.00	21.56
Yes	164	39.09	21.30
Economically Disadvantaged			
No	268	46.54	22.58
Yes	482	47.00	21.49
Gender			
Female	334	47.49	21.99
Male	416	46.31	21.79
Student with Disabilities			
No	577	49.05	21.85
Yes	173	39.46	20.34

Appendix E – Tables and Figures for January 2015 Administration

Table E 1 Multiple-Choice Item Analysis Summary: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Item	Number of Students	*p*-Value	SD	Point Biserial	Point Biserial Distractor 1	Point Biserial Distractor 2	Point Biserial Distractor 3
1	13818	.76	.43	.23	-.22	-.05	-.06
4	13818	.34	.47	.26	.06	-.25	-.17
5	13818	.51	.50	.39	-.23	-.16	-.14
8	13818	.70	.46	.25	-.07	-.19	-.11
14	13818	.85	.36	.31	-.21	-.14	-.15
17	13818	.36	.48	.11	-.18	.07	-.04
19	13818	.72	.45	.36	-.23	-.20	-.17
21	13818	.54	.50	.37	-.28	-.16	-.10
3	13818	.91	.29	.34	-.21	-.18	-.16
9	13818	.40	.49	.33	-.08	-.37	.03
12	13818	.62	.48	.45	-.28	-.21	-.18
18	13818	.73	.45	.48	-.26	-.23	-.24
24	13818	.67	.47	.23	-.17	-.12	-.05
6	13818	.66	.47	.31	-.18	-.14	-.17
10	13818	.93	.25	.32	-.12	-.18	-.21
13	13818	.56	.50	.42	-.18	-.23	-.20
15	13818	.63	.48	.37	-.21	-.17	-.15
22	13818	.58	.49	.33	-.18	-.17	-.12
2	13818	.69	.46	.38	-.23	-.15	-.21
7	13818	.67	.47	.36	-.26	-.18	-.10
11	13818	.88	.32	.30	-.16	-.14	-.19
16	13818	.46	.50	.22	.04	-.12	-.27
20	13818	.53	.50	.20	-.10	-.01	-.22
23	13818	.51	.50	.11	-.17	-.22	.10

Table E 2 Constructed-Response Item Analysis Summary: Regents Examination in ELA Common Core)

Item	Min. score	Max. score	Number of Students	Mean	SD	*p*-Value	Point Biserial
25	0	6	13818	3.57	1.22	.60	.62
26	0	4	13818	2.28	1.12	.57	.56

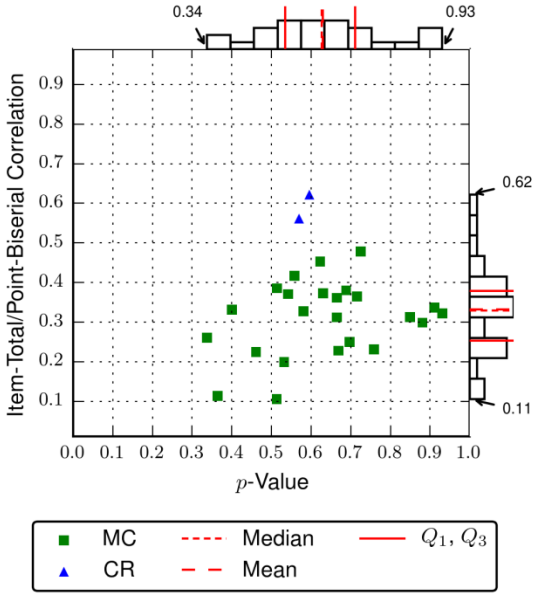

Figure E 1 Scatterplot: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

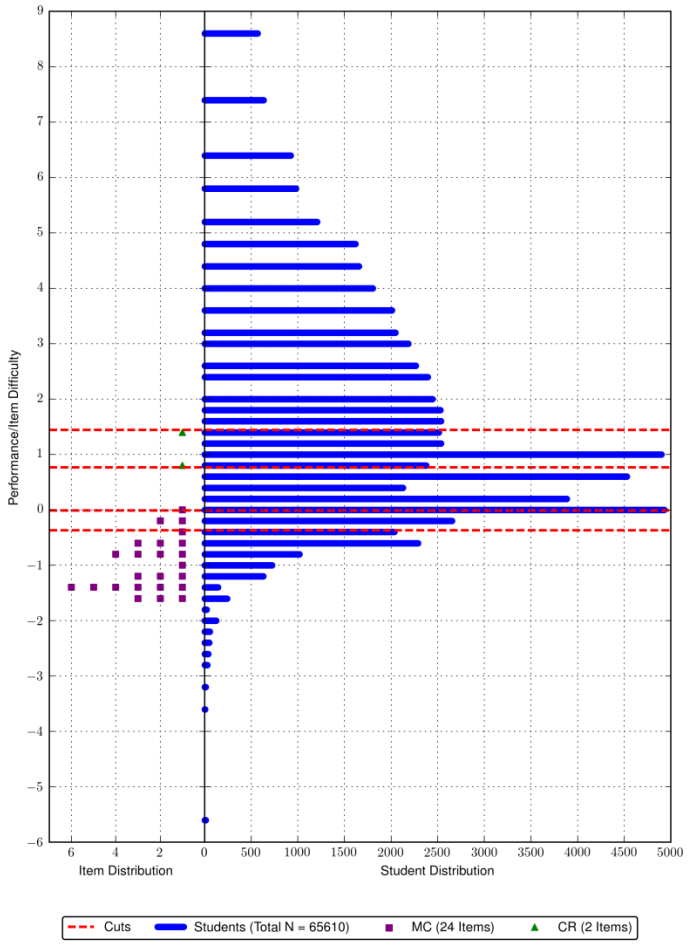

Figure E 2 Student Performance Map: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

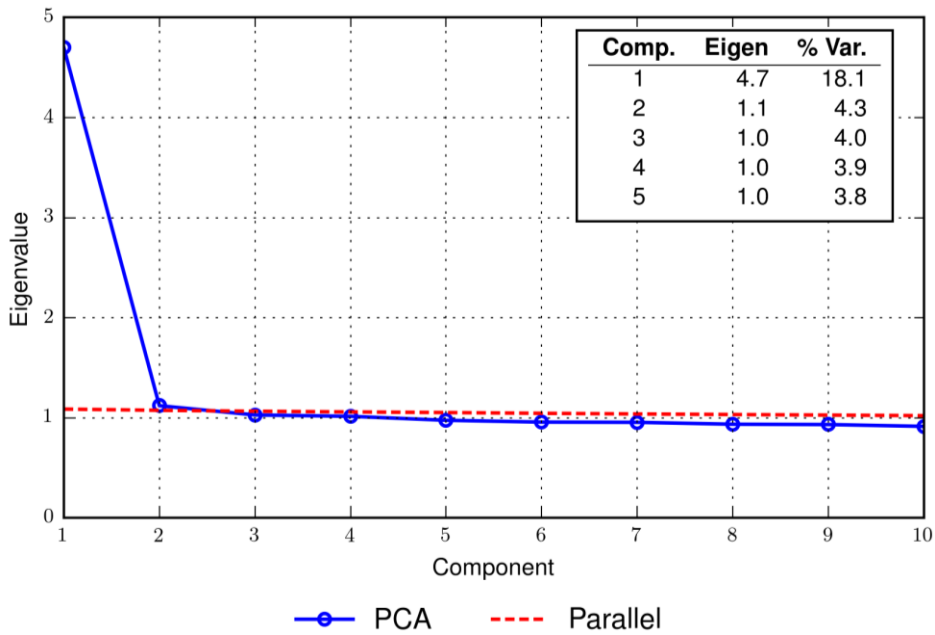

Figure E 3 Scree Plots: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Table E 3 Summary of Item Residual Correlations: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Statistic Type	Value
N	352
Mean	-0.03
SD	0.04
Minimum	-0.21
P_{10}	-0.08
P_{25}	-0.04
P_{50}	-0.03
P_{75}	-0.01
P_{90}	0.00
Maximum	0.10
>|0.20|	1

Table E 4 Summary of Infit Mean Square Statistics: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

	Infit Mean Square				
	Mean	**SD**	**Min**	**Max**	**[0.7, 1.3]**
ELA	1.20	0.42	0.77	2.93	21/26

Table E 5 Reliabilities and Standard Errors of Measurement: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Subject	Coefficient Alpha	*SEM*
ELA	0.80	4.37

Table E 6 Decision Consistency and Accuracy Results: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Statistic	1/2	2/3	3/4	4/5
Consistency	0.86	0.82	0.80	0.83
Accuracy	0.90	0.87	0.85	0.87

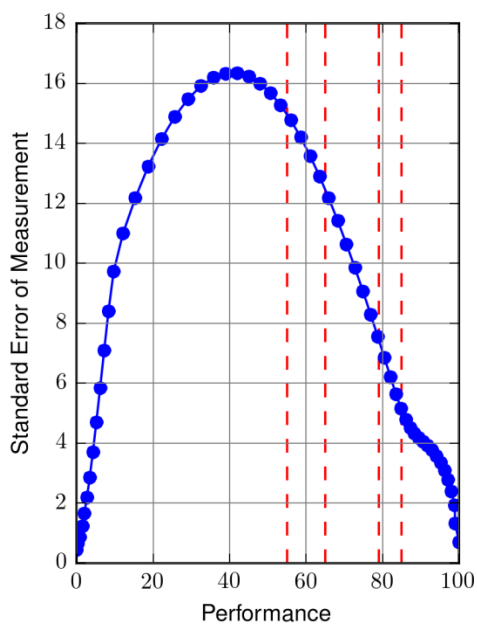

Figure E 4 Conditional Standard Error Plots: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Table E 7 Group Means: Regents Examination in ELA (Common Core)

Demographics	Number	Mean Scale-score	Standard error of group
All Students	13818	69.24	20.69
Ethnicity			
American Indian/Alaska Native	54	68.80	19.97
Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	1091	74.49	21.04
Black/African American	4026	62.97	20.93
Hispanic/Latino	3675	64.65	20.94
Multiracial	161	75.13	17.48
White	4810	76.62	17.39
English Language Learner			
No	12887	71.22	19.19
Yes	931	41.85	21.24
Economically Disadvantaged			
No	5427	75.86	18.30
Yes	8391	64.96	21.02
Gender			
Female	6828	71.91	19.64
Male	6989	66.64	21.35
Student with Disabilities			
No	11642	72.29	19.18
Yes	2176	52.91	20.83

*Note: One student was not reported in the Ethnicity and Gender groups but they are reflected in “All Students”.