



Standardized Testing: Comprehensive Testing Program by ERB

The ACCS Board of Directors has been pleased with what it has seen of the Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP4, paper and pencil version), published by the Educational Records Bureau (ERB), and is encouraging (*not requiring*) ACCS schools to use this test (CTP4) as their exam of choice. The CTP4 is a norm-referenced test.

I. Why the CTP4 Test?

A. Measurement and comparison

"When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise." (II Corinthians 10:12b)

Before you begin testing, you should identify your testing goals. What are you trying to measure and for what purpose? Standardized test results are one piece of information that helps teachers and parents understand how well children are learning. To obtain a more complete picture of a student, standardized test results must be evaluated along with report cards, teacher's observations and comments, and parental observations. Test results are only one aspect of a broad picture.

Administrators, board members, teachers, and parents are also interested in measuring how well their school is educating students. Standardized tests help schools evaluate their performance. Classical Christian schools typically have high educational goals. Schools that want excellence and desire to be considered outstanding must consider the types of school with which to be compared.

Do they want to compare themselves to all schools including public schools? Or do they want to compare themselves to elite private schools, some with very selective admission standards?

The CTP4 test provides classical Christian schools with the opportunity to compare themselves to three key groups: public schools, private schools, and other ACCS schools. This is done through the use of National Norms, Independent (School) Norms, and Association Norms. (There is also a Suburban [Public] Schools Norm.)

B. Scoring options

New schools: New schools need to establish credibility with parents and their local community. One option for these schools is to have tests scored on three norms, but *only publish* national norm results. National norm scores on the CTP4 test will likely look very similar to results on other popular standardized tests. ACCS schools will probably earn high marks, the publication of which can help them during their early years.

Established schools: Once a school has become established, standardized test scores should be used to help schools determine both where they are doing well and more importantly, where to focus their efforts for improvement. Of course everyone likes to see standardized test results with all national norms above the 85th percentile. However, high scores may not help the administrator or curriculum committee target areas for improvement. In these situations, the use of Independent School Norms and the Association Norm become quite valuable. Schools will likely see a much broader range of scores than they see on the National Norms. High scores will represent areas of real achievement. Lower scores will help guide curriculum review and faculty training.

Before publishing Independent School Norms for the first time, schools should first educate their parents. This may be done by using the ERB membership directory to find the schools in your area that use the CTP4. Schools should explain that these are the schools that are used for comparison when using the Independent School Norm. (Schools who are members of ERB are listed here: <http://www.erblearn.org/about/member-schools>.)

The CTP4 provides schools with two scoring packages: a Basic Package and a Value Package. ACCS schools will want to order the Value Package as every report is available for information when considering curriculum, instruction, and student performance. Reports are available through the CTP Portal where norms can be selected for the various reports according to their use when publishing to parents or guiding internal discussions.

C. Test content

The subtests that comprise the CTP4 tests focus on the essentials of reading, writing, and math. Listening skills are also tested in younger students. The narrow focus of these subtests helps keep testing times short. The exclusion of other subjects like social studies and study skills that may not match the curriculum is also a benefit. The broader emphasis on language arts is a good match to the classical Christian model. Students will likely find the reading selections and content questions to be more challenging and interesting than those on other tests. Eighth grade math tests provide some integration with logic skills.

D. Evaluation

ERB will send (electronically) sample tests to any school considering the use of the CTP4. Call 1-866-683-2335 to request these samples. Or, you can find the Member Services Consultant for your area, www.erblearn.org/about/contact, to request samples.

II. Once schools have decided to use the CTP4

A. ERB membership

Schools who want to use the CTP4 must first apply and be approved for membership in ERB. Schools must meet two of three criteria, one of which involves being sponsored by two current ERB members. The ERB membership directory is located at <https://www.erblearn.org/about/member-schools?country>. It is searchable by country, then state.

The head administrator of the applying school should contact a potential sponsor school's head administrator and ask if they would be willing to sponsor their school.

B. Testing calendar: fall or spring?

The CTP4 offers norms for two testing periods, a fall norm and a spring norm.

Most schools, including most ACCS schools, give standardized tests in the spring. The spring norm is calculated on more individual test scores than the fall norm. Schools use spring testing to measure what the students have learned during that school year.

However, schools should also consider giving tests in the fall, perhaps in late September or early October once teachers have finished reviewing information taught the previous year. This measures what the students have learned and retained from the previous year. Schools who use a fall norm will receive their test results back while teachers are available to discuss results and make timely modifications to curriculum to strengthen weak areas.

C. Association of Classical & Christian Schools Norm

The norm for ACCS is one of the ERB's Association Norms and is available for our schools. Your affiliation with ACCS must be authorized for you to have access to these norms.

This norm allows schools to see where their students' performance ranks in relation to all other ACCS schools using the CTP4.

While this norm is not available on every report, The Association scores will be reported on a separate Association Norm Report. In addition to the separate AN Report, schools are able to include the AS on the Students Roster, Individual Subscore or Narrative Report (reports to parents), label sets, and Rank Order Listing.

D. Consulting Services

ERB offers a variety of consultation services to schools. Your Member Services Consultant can provide more information about these services. Visit <https://www.erblearn.org/services/ctp-overview>.