

Enhancements to DRC Assessment Software in 2016/2017

Summary

DRC is introducing several enhancements to our assessment software in the 2016/2017 school year. These enhancements will provide an improved user experience and new functionality to benefit our clients.

Redesigned DRC Portal/eDIRECT

DRC is rolling out a redesigned administrative website for state, district, and school personnel. This will update and improve upon the current eDIRECT and will feature:

- An updated, easy-to-navigate interface that can be used on tablets and mobile devices
- Better overall performance with faster response times
- Improved tools for Student and Test Management
- A centralized login for users who have more than one assessment program (e.g., a combination of State assessments, WIDA assessments, and/or DRC shelf assessment products)—all programs can be accessed through one set of login credentials for each user

Improved Testing Site Manager (TSM)

DRC is introducing several improvements to the TSM that will make the software more reliable and easier to support:

- **Greater user visibility into content download information**, including a new feature to verify downloaded content on demand.
- **Increased number of retries during content download.** This will allow more time to resolve network issues by removing the restriction on the maximum number of files that can be retried during the download of test content to the TSM.
- **Improved customer service support.** DRC's Customer Service Team will have greater visibility into the TSM at each site, minimizing the need for the client to send TSM logs to DRC.
- **Improved content hosting** using a cloud-based content distribution network that is geographically distributed across the country. This means that test content can be downloaded from a server that may be much closer to the testing site, which shortens the distance that the test content travels across the Internet.
- **Support for a higher number of concurrent testers.** A new 64-bit based configuration will allow an increase in the number of students who can test on a network at the same time.

The TSM will continue to be offered through the end of the 2016/2017 school year. After that, all clients will need to transition to the new Central Office tool (described in the next section).

Enhancements to DRC Assessment Software in 2016/2017

NEW! Central Office Tool

As part of the redesigned DRC Portal/eDIRECT, DRC is introducing a new tool for online test setup and configuration called Central Office. The Central Office tool will combine the functions of the improved Testing Site Manager (TSM) and the Device Toolkit into a **single, simplified tool**. This has several benefits:

- **You will no longer need to go to two different places to set up and configure your online testing environment**—these functions will be accessed through the streamlined Central Office tool within the DRC Portal.
- **You will no longer need to maintain separate content caching servers if you have more than one online testing program** (e.g., a State program and a WIDA program). You will only need one content caching service through Central Office to manage all of your programs.

In addition to streamlining the process for test setup and configuration, Central Office will include many other new features:

- **Installation flexibility**—additional installation options will be available based on a testing site's size and unique needs.
 - Central site configuration (Large)
 - Distributed site configuration (Medium)
 - Single tester site configuration (Small)
- **Scalability improvements**—new code base with new technologies will address current scalability limitations.
- **Enhanced content management** with the option to download only the content needed for testing (e.g., download only the grades 9–12 content at a high school site).
- **Improved Load Simulation tools** that will provide a more realistic and accurate simulation of the testing load to validate environment and configurations.
- **Remote access to Central Office and improved log management**, reducing the demands on school staff to provide DRC with troubleshooting information.
- **Elimination of response caching**—test responses will go directly from the testing device to DRC rather than being cached at the testing site. This will help simplify the process of tracking and managing student test responses. Content caching will continue to be available. More information on the removal of response caching is provided in the *Central Office Overview* document.

In addition to these new features, Central Office will include all of the new features of the improved TSM, described in the previous section.

Enhancements to DRC Assessment Software in 2016/2017

Comparison of Central Office and the TSM

Online testing clients may elect to start using the new Central Office tool in late October 2016. DRC recognizes that some of our clients may prefer to continue using the TSM rather than immediately transitioning to the new Central Office. We will continue to offer our TSM service through the 2016/2017 school year to allow clients to make a more gradual transition to Central Office.

The following table compares the features and benefits of Central Office and the TSM. Please see the corresponding Overview documents for more information and the timing of each feature.

Side-by-Side Comparison: Central Office versus TSM

Feature	Central Office	TSM
Enhanced content handling (cloud-based content distribution network)	X	X
Greater user visibility into content download information, including a new feature to verify downloaded content on demand	X	X
Increased retries during content download	X	X
Support for a higher number of concurrent testers with a 64-bit based version	X	X
Enhanced customer service support, minimizing user intervention needed at the school/testing site	X	X
Test readiness tools including Ping Trends and Load Simulator	X	X
Content caching	X	X
Response caching (for fixed-form tests)		X
Single, centralized application for test readiness, device configuration, and content caching	X	
Supports multiple programs (WIDA Assessments, State Assessments, Shelf Assessments) on one shared application; eliminates the need for separate content caching servers for each program	X	
Installation flexibility – small, medium, and large install options based on testing site’s size and needs	X	
Enhanced scalability	X	
Option to download only the content needed for the particular testing site (e.g., only download high school content at a high school site)	X	
Improved load simulation tools	X	

In summary, Central Office provides the same benefits as the TSM, with the added benefit of a simplified, centralized process for setup and configuration; removal of response caching; and other new features.

Enhancements to DRC Assessment Software in 2016/2017

Timeline

The updates and features described in the previous sections are being introduced in phases over the coming months. The following timelines show the major milestones for each product.

