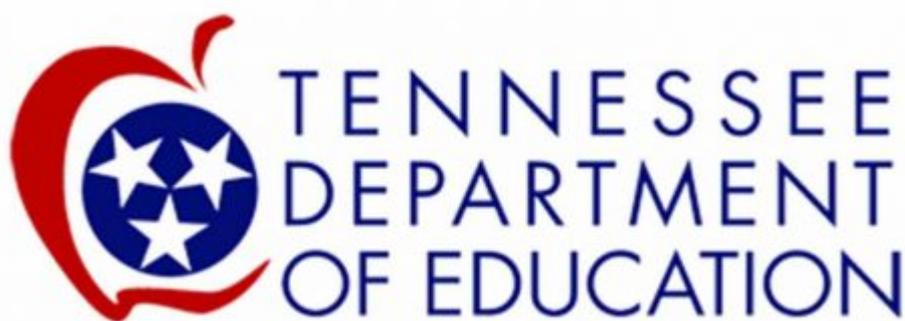


Questar to bid for new testing contract with Tennessee

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The company that administers Tennessee’s problem-plagued student assessment testing program says it still plans on throwing its hat in the ring to secure a new state contract so they can continue overseeing the same service in the fall.



Officials with Questar Assessment Inc. confirmed this week their plans to participate in the bidding process. The announcement comes just a few weeks after both state auditors and top education officials largely pointed to the company as the key culprit for the longtime failures of the TNReady test.

“Questar Assessment is planning to bid for the TNReady contract,” said Questar Assessment Chief Operating Officer Brad Baumgartner, in a Thursday statement. “We believe we have the right people and processes in place to best serve the state of Tennessee.”

Questar added that it “does not agree with several of the Tennessee comptroller’s findings,” but the company says it appreciated being included in the audit process.

Last year, Gov. Bill Haslam said the state plans on

contracting with a new vendor and is currently preparing the contracting process.

Shortly after, auditors released a lengthy report in December that held both the state and Questar accountable for failing to monitor and evaluate the testing program. However, the audit specifically pointed to Questar for failing to adequately staff customer support and the decision to switch its text-to-speech software which resulted in not only lengthy testing disruptions, but also led officials to briefly speculate the system was experiencing a cyberattack.

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“We believe we have the right people and processes in place to best serve the state of Tennessee.” -Questar Assessment Chief Operating Officer Brad Baumgartner”

Baumgartner says Questar has since improved its “outbound” communication with state and school district staff and its customer support centers will continue to be properly staffed. The company says it also never indicated that a “cyberattack was certain.”

Additionally, fall testing that occurred late last year was deemed a success by both the state and Questar due to the lack of disruptions and technology challenges.

Tennessee Department of Education spokeswoman Sara Gast declined to comment to Questar’s response, saying the agency had already addressed the audit

At the time, Gast said “Questar’s performance was the root of the issues we experienced this spring.”

In 2016, the state cancelled its five-year \$108 million contract with a testing company because of repeated failures, including the inability of students to get online to take the tests and later with problems getting paper assessments

shipped to schools on time.

Then in 2017, state officials announced that nearly 10,000 of the tests were scored incorrectly. The following year, lawmakers scrambled during the final days of the legislative session to pass last-minute legislation ensuring no students, teachers or schools suffered as a result of repeated failures with the state assessment test.

That's because state law says teachers must be evaluated partly based on the tests, as well as students and schools.

Questar Assessment Inc. Responds to TN Comptroller Report



Questar®

**Minneapolis, MN,
January 3, 2019**

– Questar Assessment Inc. is committed to serving Tennessee, its teachers, students, and parents.

Following the 2018 Spring administration of TNReady,

Questar Assessment hired an outside firm to perform a comprehensive review of its processes. Questar immediately

implemented several recommendations and will continue to implement others prior to the 2019 Spring administration.

“We understand the frustration with TNReady testing last spring,” says Questar Assessment Chief Operating Officer Brad Baumgartner. “We have a long history of successfully serving our customers, and we look forward to continuing those partnerships in the future.”

While Questar does not agree with several of the Tennessee Comptroller’s findings, we appreciate the thorough nature of the audit and inclusion in the process.

“Questar has always held the position that the pattern of data discovered during Spring TNReady administration was consistent with what could have been an attack, but we did not at any time indicate that a cyberattack was certain,” Baumgartner says.

In response to the Comptroller’s finding that Questar Assessment was not adequately staffed during testing, Questar has implemented a process to improve outbound communication with state and district staff should an event of this nature occur in the future.

“Because we had never experienced an issue of this magnitude, we had not developed appropriate outbound communication channels that would have better informed state and district staff. These channels are now in place, thanks to the work of the Tennessee Department of Education and Questar. Our centers will continue to be properly staffed for any additional questions,” Baumgartner says.

Fall testing has been successfully completed, and Questar is focused on the production and distribution of reports. Students across Tennessee took more than 72,000 tests, and the Tennessee Department of Education reported a smooth testing experience across all districts.

“We are not standing still. Questar Assessment is committed to continually advancing our processes, technology, and security,” Baumgartner says. “We look forward to serving Tennessee teachers and students this spring with the best testing experience possible.”

About Questar Assessment Inc.

Questar Assessment Inc. is a K–12 assessment solutions provider focused on building a bridge between learning and accountability. As a wholly-owned, independently-operated subsidiary of [Educational Testing Service \(ETS\)](#), Questar Assessment shares a belief that better measurement solutions can make a positive impact on education. Questar Assessment takes a fresh and innovative approach to design, delivery, scoring, analysis, and reporting. The company is reimagining how assessments can empower educators by giving them the insights they need to improve instruction and fully prepare students for college or career. The company’s high-quality, reliable assessment products and services are easily scaled and tailored to meet the specific needs of states and districts at an unprecedented value. Educators trust Questar Assessment’s high-performing teams and dependable technology to minimize risks and ensure success for states, districts, schools, and students. Questar Assessment Inc. is based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Learn more at questarai.com.

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