

Calculators and Placement Tests: A new proposal

Ralph Kemphaus
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio
ralph.kemphaus@uc.edu

CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

Editorial, Thursday, April 12, 2007

Different states, same algebra

Achieve ADP (American Diploma Project):

Algebra II End-of-Course Exam calculator policy: The appropriate and effective use of technology is an essential practice in the Algebra II classroom. At the same time students should learn to work mathematically without the use of technology. Computing mentally or with paper and pencil is required on the Algebra II End-of-Course Exam and should be expected in classrooms where students are working at the Algebra II level. It is therefore important that the Algebra II End-of-Course Exam reflect both practices. For purposes of the Algebra II End-of-Course Exam, students are expected to have access to a calculator for one of the two 45-minute testing sessions, and use of a graphing calculator is strongly recommended.

- AP Calculus
 - Since 1995 the AP Calculus tests have featured the dual approach.
- State Level Exit Exams
 - Most permit and encourage the use of at least a scientific calculator.
- College Placement Tests
 - ACT, SAT, Compass, Accuplacer, and most departmental developed tests permit calculator use but stress that calculators are not necessary.
 - Institutions often use the tests but do not permit calculators.
- Tests not only measure, but they drive curriculum and methodology
- The blended nature of current placement tests
 - Do not give a clear measurement of students abilities
 - Do not give high schools a proper basis to develop curriculum
- Proposal:
 - A dual part placement tests involving:
 - A no calculator portion
 - A calculator necessary portion

