



**Justin P. Wilson, Comptroller**

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## **New Audit Examines TNReady Testing Failures**

The Tennessee Comptroller's Office has released a performance audit of the Tennessee Department of Education detailing many of the problems that led up to the difficulties in executing the spring 2018 TNReady tests.

The online student assessment tests were plagued with numerous issues including login delays, slow servers, and software bugs. The first signs of trouble began on April 16, 2018 and continued through the end of the month.

Auditors determined that many of these issues occurred primarily because of Questar Assessment, Inc's performance and updates to the student assessment system. Auditors also found the Department of Education's oversight of test administration fell short of expectations.

The performance audit's nine findings include five issues surrounding TNReady. These findings include:

- the department's lack of sufficient, detailed information on its Work Plan with Questar rendered it less effective as a monitoring tool to ensure Questar met all deadlines.
- Questar's decision to make an unauthorized change to text-to-speech software without formally notifying the department. This change contributed to the online testing disruptions.
- Questar's failure to sufficiently staff customer support, resulting in lengthy call wait times and high rates of abandoned calls.
- a failure to track, document, and provide status updates to districts to let them know when students' tests would be recovered, leaving districts unaware if their students completed the required tests.
- inadequate evaluation and monitoring of internal controls implemented by external information technology service providers, such as Questar.

Over the course of the audit, the department and Questar worked constantly to address the issues that caused or contributed to the spring 2018 testing problems. On October 1, 2018, Questar and the department signed a contract amendment introducing new requirements and accountability measures for Questar. The department also made adjustments to improve its contract management.

The Comptroller's Office will present its audit findings to the General Assembly's Education, Health, and General Welfare Joint Subcommittee of Government Operations on December 19. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. in House Hearing Room III.

To view the audit report online, go to: <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/sa/>

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