

Internet Explorer Accelerator Issue with TestNav 8

Briefing Document

March 12, 2014

PRE-DECISIONAL – DO NOT DISTRIBUTE

The Issue:

- There is a common extension application for Internet Explorer, known as Accelerator, that cannot be disabled by TestNav during secure testing programmatically.
- If Accelerator is enabled in the version of IE running on the computer, a small menu pops up when a user selects/highlights/double-clicks on a word or block of text and provides the user with options to search the Internet using the highlighted text as the search terms.
- TestNav does not allow the connection to the Internet to be made, but does stop the student's test and generates an error message. The proctor must resume the student's test at the point they were exited from the test by the system.
- Accelerator can be disabled by the user, however it cannot be automatically disabled by the Test Nav application if other text selection/highlighting is also allowed.
- PARCC has a Text Highlighter tool that is one of the accessibility features functioning for the Field Test. Each time a student selects text to highlight with a color, the Accelerator menu button is displayed, increasing the risk of the student accidentally or intentionally activating Accelerator.
- If the Text Highlighter Tool is removed from PARCC tests, TestNav can be configured to not allow any text selection/highlighting/double-click selection. This is the only solution to prevent Accelerator from being activated.
- The down time between when students are exited from secure test mode in TestNav and when the proctor resumes testing leaves a gap that is a security risk.
- There is a similar issue with iPad devices in which students can select text and choose to have it defined, which tries to connect to the Internet. TestNav prevents the connection and stops the test. There is no way to disable this programmatically. Users cannot disable this feature on their own device.

The Options:

1. Offer the Text Highlighter Tool but message carefully to the field around:
 - a. How to turn off Accelerator in the IE browsers
 - b. Options for using a different browser
 - c. Guidance to give students about what to look for when the Accelerator button pops-up and instructions not to select it.
 - d. Reminders on how to restart tests for students that have been stopped by the system.

CONSIDERATIONS:

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- It is important to retain every accessibility feature we have in the Field Test
- There are other potential reasons a student might be exited from the test when the computer tries to access another program, a software update alert has not been turned off, pop-ups have not been turned off, etc.
- The text highlighter tool was deemed a desirable feature by PARCC and students in many states are trained to use highlighting as a test-taking strategy.
- Students taking the paper-pencil forms will be allowed to use highlighting.

2. Remove the Text Highlight Tool

- a. Message to the field around the removal of this option as a student support tool and accessibility feature

CONSIDERATIONS

- Internet Explorer is the most common browser being used and so removal of this tool will lower the test disruption and security risks of Accelerator being activated.
- Removal of the text highlighter is the best way to prevent the issue for computers using IE.
- Messaging about the removal of the tool will need to be regression analyzed across the tutorials, administration manuals, etc.
- Some districts may be including students who need certain accommodations to participate in computer-based field testing because of the availability of this tool.
- The similar issue for iPads will remain, but the number of iPad users for Field Test is much smaller.