

# Bar Code File Preparation, Transmission & Validation Frequently Asked Questions

## 2011-2012 Updates

### Important news!

The Department of Education requires bar code labels for all students taking the Iowa Assessments. To comply with DE guidelines, tests will not be scored unless a bar code label is affixed to ALL answer documents. Additional fees may apply if all documents do not have a barcode label when received at the scoring center.

Please submit a follow-up order as needed to cover any new students, students missed in the original order, lost or damaged labels, etc. before sending in documents for scoring. Please wait until you are sure all of your students are accounted for before submitting a follow-up order. This avoids the additional cost and time required to validate multiple follow-up orders and send multiple shipments and will help order fulfillment proceed more smoothly.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### File Preparation

**Q: What needs to go in a bar code file?**

**A:** All of the student information you would have previously coded on the answer documents, plus a few extra data fields. Only Test Form should be bubbled on the answer documents; no other student information will be read except from the bar code label. For a complete layout, please consult the “Bar Code File Layout” file on ITP’s “Document Center” page (<http://www.education.uiowa.edu/itp/downloads.aspx>). We also provide an Excel format template to help organize data. The layout of your file must match this layout exactly.

**Q: Are all of the data fields listed in the file layout required?**

**A:** All data fields are required for all public school and accredited non-public school students (please note: some fields will be blank). For home-schooled students, or students attending non-accredited non-public schools, only student name, date of birth, gender, grade, and building name are required (the other data fields can be supplied or left blank). Regardless of the student or school, however, your bar code file must have all 32 columns listed in the header line (row 1 of the template mentioned above). The building name for home-schooled students should be “Home” or “Home school” in order for the validation program to recognize the status of those students.

**Q: I'm not sure how to code some of the data fields listed in the file layout; where can I learn more about them?**

**A:** The document "Coding for Disaggregation of Scores" on the "Document Center" page (<https://itp.education.uiowa.edu/downloads.aspx>) of ITP's web site provides basic explanations on how to code many of the data fields required for each student.

**Q: I have read the "Coding for Disaggregation of Scores" document that ITP provides on its web site but I still have questions about how to code some of my student information such as Homelessness or Full Academic Year (FAY). What do I do?**

**A:** You can contact Tom Deeter at the Iowa DE at (515) 242-5616 or [tom.deeter@iowa.gov](mailto:tom.deeter@iowa.gov). Tom cannot answer questions regarding how to use student information systems; if you know how to code information, but are having trouble getting your coding into your student information system, please contact your system's vendor for help.

**Q: I am having trouble with the free student information system that the Iowa DE made available to my school. Who can help me with it?**

**A:** For help with the DE-issued student information system, you can contact Peter Green at (515) 281-3309 or [peter.green@iowa.gov](mailto:peter.green@iowa.gov). Peter cannot answer questions regarding how to use student information systems other than the one provided by the DE. For questions on the use of other student information systems, please contact your system's vendor for help.

**Q: How can I access the Iowa DE's student ID system to receive ID numbers for my students?**

**A:** The DE has information about this on its web site: [http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1&Itemid=1264](http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1&Itemid=1264). For additional assistance you can contact Carla Schimelfenig at the DE ([carla.schimelfenig@iowa.gov](mailto:carla.schimelfenig@iowa.gov) or 515-281-3111).

**Q: How do I create a bar code file?**

**A:** Most districts use student information systems (e.g. JMC, PowerSchool, Centerpoint, etc.) that have been approved by the Iowa Department of Education. These systems all have special functions built in to create files that fit the required format. The functions will be named something similar to "Create file for bar codes".

If your district does not have a student information system, you can use the Barcode Template available on the ITP Document Center.

**Q: How do I create a bar code file if I do not have a student information system approved by the Iowa DE?**

**A:** If you are using an unapproved system, you may still be able to extract something from your own system that is close to the format needed and then you can modify it in Excel to match the file layout and template provided on our "Document Center" page (see "What needs to go in a bar code file?" above). If you do not have a student information system, the DE is providing a free version that you can use. Otherwise you

will need to type or copy/paste information into the Excel template we provide and save that to your computer.

**Q: I have some new students (or some students for whom I discovered errors in their information after labels were printed) – what should I do?**

**A:** You need to order more labels, those for the new students and/or replacement labels for those with errors in their information, and affix them to the applicable answer documents PRIOR to mailing them in for scoring. Create a new barcode order and submit a file to ITP containing just the students you need labels for.

## **File Transmission**

**Q: How far in advance of testing should I submit my bar code file to ITP?**

**A:** If you want your labels prior to your test date, we recommend you submit your file at least four weeks in advance. If you wind up with new students between your initial full submission and your test date, you can submit a follow-up order with just those students. Because these follow-up orders are small, validation can usually be completed more quickly than with full orders. These extra labels can be affixed by districts after testing.

You are also welcome to wait until after you've tested and then order a full set of labels for placement after the fact. Students can write in their personal information on the test day, and then school staff can affix the correct labels with the correct students once the order is filled. When a test is scored, only the bar code label and not pencil coded demographics are read by the system. Students should still pencil code the test form as appropriate regardless of when labels are ordered.

**Q: Can I email my bar code file to ITP?**

**A:** No. Bar code files contain sensitive information and email is vulnerable to interception by third parties. The Online Tools website provides a secure means for you to send your file to ITP and for ITP to provide you with file validation results. Attachments sent to ITP's email address will be deleted and ignored.

**Q: Does my file need to be in a special format?**

**A:** Yes. Acceptable formats are an Excel spreadsheet (.xls or .xlsx), a comma-separated values (.csv) file, or a tab-delimited text (.txt) file, with one student per row. If you use a student information system approved by the DE, it will have an export function specifically designed to export a file to send to us. If you don't have this type of database available, you will need to arrange your data in the order presented in the "Bar Code Template" provided in the Document Center on the ITP web site: <https://itp.education.uiowa.edu/downloads.aspx>. Using the documents "Bar Code File Layout" and "Enrollment Entry Codes" available at the same location, you can ensure that your data are coded correctly prior to submission. Following these guidelines will result in a faster fulfillment time for your order.

**Q: When I try to submit my file, I get the error message “That is not a valid file type,” but I know that it is one of the accepted file formats. Why am I receiving this error message?**

**A:** Certain versions of Microsoft Office on Macintosh computers along with some third-party software may remove the “.xls” (Excel spreadsheet), “.csv” (comma-separated values) or “.txt” (tab-delimited text) filename extension, thereby confusing the web site into thinking your file is not one of the accepted types. Simply edit the name of your file by appending the correct extension to the end of your file’s name and submit it again; the web site should accept the submission.

**Q: After I submit my file and click “Upload,” I’m taken back to a login screen – did you receive my file?**

**A:** If you’re asked to log in again after you click “Upload” it is likely that your work session has “timed out.” This is a security feature that logs you out automatically after an hour of inactivity to protect your data in case you forget to log out. If this happens, we did not receive your file. Log back in to the web site and try submitting your file again. If your file was submitted successfully, you will see a “File upload complete” message and a new red-shaded row will appear under the “View a file” header just below the Upload a file box when the file upload is completed. If you don’t see a row matching this description, it is possible we did not receive your file. If you’re unsure if we’ve received your file, please contact us.

**Q: I am testing multiple grades at the same time and I have my data separated out over several files. Can I submit multiple files to the web site for ITP to process?**

**A:** Multiple file submissions increase the time required to process – therefore we ask that all records for a single order be gathered together in one file before submission to the web site. If you submit multiple files in one order, only the most recently submitted file will be validated and your order will be incomplete. If you submit several separate orders at the same time, ITP will ask you to combine your data and resubmit using one order.

**Q: I am testing in a month and already have a completed order. However I realized I forgot to include a grade – help!**

**A:** Completed orders are considered closed; you will need to start a new order, even if your test date and contact information are the same.

**Q: I am testing my high school in four weeks and my middle school one week after that. Should I submit these as separate orders?**

**A:** No. However, orders with very different test dates (e.g. October and February) or different contacts or shipping addresses should always be separated. Orders with similar test dates (e.g. October 6th and October 13th) should be combined together for faster processing.

## **File Validation**

**Q: I received an email that said my file had errors in it. I checked the web site and found that my errors were with birth dates. However the dates are correct; my**

**students are special ed., foreign exchange students, recent immigrants, etc. How do I take care of this error?**

**A:** Simply let ITP know that these dates are valid, either by marking the “Corrections” column in the Excel-format error summary file with an X and submitting it to the web site, or with a message via the “Contact ITP” interface. The dates will continue to show up as “errors” on the order summary, but you don’t need to do anything else with them. If you mark an X or send a message and the dates are way off (e.g. a student born in 2008 listed as a 3rd grader), ITP will contact you directly and request clarification.

**Q: I’m receiving an error “Race (Missing)” but my student is coded Hispanic. What is going on?**

**A:** Beginning with the 2009-2010 school year, classification of race/ethnicity is now a two-step process. The first step is to answer the question – is the student Hispanic? Regardless of the answer to the first question, the next step is to designate a race. So even if a student is Hispanic, you must still designate a race (choosing White, African-American, Asian, Native American, or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander), even though for reporting purposes they will still be classified as “Hispanic” only. Please see the document “Bar Code Procedures – Making Corrections” on our Document Center for information on how to convey corrections to us.

**Q: I’ve discovered errors with the counts in the order summary that ITP provided me. What do I do?**

**A:** Edit the information in your student information system to correct the mistakes, then generate a new bar code file and submit this new file to ITP for validation using your existing order.

**Q: I received a message that my file validated cleanly. Now what?**

**A:** As a final step, we need you to verify that the order summary ITP has provided for your order is accurate. **We cannot forward your order on for label processing until we receive this verification.** This summary is available as a PDF file in your account on the file management page of your order. Once you have verified your order summary, please indicate as such by clicking the “Mark summary file OK” button in the upper right area of the file management page of your order. Answer “Yes” when the site asks you if you’re sure you want to do this. A short time later you will receive an email from ITP stating that we have received your verification, at which time your file will be forwarded on to our printer for label processing. Alternately, ITP may have questions and request a follow-up in lieu of immediately sending your file to the printer.

**Q: When will I receive my labels?**

**A:** You should expect to receive your labels no more than 8 business days after you receive confirmation that ITP has sent your file to the printer. If 10 business days pass and you still have not received your labels, please contact us using the “Contact ITP” button in the “Tools” section of your file upload page. During the winter holidays, our printer will suspend shipments over winter break, and resume after New Year’s Day, so please allow extra time for order fulfillment during this time.