FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why are we doing this?

The high level goals of the standardized testing are:

- To help keep athletes in ringette as long as possible (sport for life)
- To give all athletes the environment they need to reach their full potential (excellence)

The following outcomes of the standardized testing will help us achieve these goals:

- All associations will have the same measuring stick to assess individual athlete's core ringette skills.
- Eliminate the real or perceived bias in start of season evaluations.
- Data from testing will indicate training needs by individual player, by team, by association, and provincially so that together we can be more proactive in designing programs that meet our athletes' needs and supporting our coaches
- Provide parents and athletes information they need to understand current level of core ringette skills, set measurable goals and monitor progress over approximately a six year period.
- Provide coaches an objective measure of their effectiveness to complement the traditional end of season survey
- Improve our ability to group athletes by stage in order to provide them a better training environment and to improve competitive equity (i.e., change the current tiering policy)

How many evaluators do we need to run the ice session?

- Zero. This testing protocol does not use anyone to "evaluate" skills; instead, we have Station Recorders on the ice recording time or quantity. There are no subjective "evaluations".

How many athletes per ice session?

- The session can accommodate up to 30 athletes in a 60 minute ice slot which includes time for a warm up, setting up the stations and transition time between stations.

How much ice is required?

- Each session is designed to accommodate up to 30 athletes per hour so you can calculate what you need based on the number of athletes you intend to test and how many you wish to put on the ice at a time.

How many volunteers are needed to run the session?

- If you intend on conducting testing at a rate of 30 athletes per hour using all six (6) stations, we recommend a total of 16 volunteers on the ice (including Station Recorder and Assistants). Fewer athletes per hour or fewer stations per hour will require fewer volunteers. Ultimately, your association's unique situation will determine the number of volunteers you require. We do recommend that Station Recorders have no other duties (e.g., setting up rings, fixing knocked over pylons) during testing to ensure all data is recorded correctly.

- You will require a similar number of volunteers for off-ice coordination as your association required for the typical evaluations you conducted in the past less the number of evaluators you traditionally used.
- A total of three, one hour sessions can be conducted effectively without a flood.

Is t this going to be stressful for the kids and potential for hurt feelings?

- No more than the traditional evaluation process and likely less since the athletes will receive clear feedback on how they did vs the traditional approach to evaluations which often leaves the athletes and their parents wondering about the decisions that were made by the evaluators (which can lead to accusations of bias). Athletes and parents will have more immediate and objective feedback than the traditional evaluations.
- The impact on the athletes also depends largely on how we adults send the message.
- This testing is not to determine which kids are "good" or not. This is simply a measure of their skills at one moment in time and we know that if we provide the kids with quality training they are guaranteed to improve. This is the message adults need to send to the kids and then we need to follow through on our promise to help them build their core skills.

What about "game play". Why aren't games included in the testing?

- game play assessments are entirely subjective and are therefore unreliable for the objectives we intend the testing to meet.
- It is true that, how athletes perform in game situations may be different than their performance in standardized testing, however, on average, we know that higher scores in standardized tests of core ringette skills at these stages of development are a strong indicator of how these skills will be performed in game play.
- There may be some outliers, however these will be the exception and therefore it is acceptable to give up game play evaluations for the higher reliability of standardized testing.
- On an individual basis, regardless of how an athlete does in game play, there is still value in measuring progress over time in standardized tests.

What is it with all the ropes and the paint?

- We cannot guarantee that arenas used for testing will have identical dimensions and markings therefore we require an easily repeatable and reasonably quick method to set up the stations.

Won't the paint be a problem?

- No, the paint comes off with the next flood.

What skills are being measured?

- (INSERT HERE)

Why are you using stop watches? There is too much room for error.

- Yes, there is a margin for error with "hand timing". Ideally, we'd use timing lights however this is impractical due to cost, the number of testing kits that would be required across the province, and set up time.
- We know that the margin of error for hand timing will be, on average, the same for all trials regardless of where or when the testing is conducted so the standard will be the same for all athletes.
- We will also have a published / known procedure for conducting hand timing.

Why aren't the stations made more challenging as the athletes improve?

- We want to have the athletes complete identical tests over time to measure their progress. Changing the test (more challenge) would eliminate our ability to measure improvement.
- In our preliminary evaluation of the various stations we found that, with athletes in the 18+ AA, A, B, C categories, the testing was still valid.

Those shooting targets looks awfully big. Why?

- We tested the shooting accuracy test with smaller targets of a Shooter Tutor and the success rate was too low to provide a valid statistical distribution. We also want the athletes at these stages to experience a higher level of success than what the shooter tutor (sized) targets provided.
- Note: We could have modified the Shooter Tutor however the cost of the Shooter Tutor is more than the prototype we've built.

My daughter doesn't do well at testing. I don't want her participating in this.

- All athletes are required to complete this testing in order to be placed on a team.
- This testing will become a regular occurrence in ringette so all athletes will get accustomed to the tests. We also advocate for testing to only be done after a minimum of _____ ice sessions at the beginning of the season to ensure each athlete has an opportunity to get re-acquainted with the ice after the off season and used to things like new peers, new coaches, and / or new equipment. We advocate that all associations expose the athletes to the drills used in the testing in a "non-testing" environment. We do not advocate having athletes try these tests for the first time in a "live test".
- Our children experience al sorts of testing of their abilities in other parts of life, exams and assignments at school being a prime example.

When should the testing be done?

- we recommend that athletes have time at the beginning of the season to get comfortable on the ice (about a month) before testing is done.
- We also recommend that testing be completed a minimum of three times per season: Early, mid, end of season. This will allow associations, coaches, parents and the players themselves to measure progress over the season.
- Our expectation is that local associations make this a required component of their programs and ensure coaches comply. Moreover, we expect associations to lead the process to ensure quality testing is completed, data is recorded and reported properly and leveraging a cooperative approach will maximize the use of volunteer time and ice time.

Goalies

- no full time goaltenders at U10...
- ...

At what age should kids take part in this testing?

- We won't use chronological age to determine readiness. Instead, we expect all athletes to have earned their green bandana from the Ringette ABCs program before moving on to this testing. If they've earned their green bandana, they're ready, as far as core ringette skills are concerned, to take part in this testing. If they haven't, they should remain in the Ringette ABCs until they do.

My association doesn't run the Ringette ABCs program.

- It is an excellent program with wonderful accompanying resources including practice plans so coaches don't have to develop them themselves (of course more experienced coaches will be able to develop similar practice plans and / or modify the plans provided)
- Developing core skills through Ringette ABCs ensures all your association's athletes are being exposed to a progressive program and, having earned their green bandana, all will have achieved a minimum level of competency thereby reducing the skill differential among players...
- Tell your association to get with the program.

I think the Ringette ABCs tests are too easy for my athletes, so why should I run them through it?

- First, run the tests to be sure.
- If your athletes are all at the level to earn their green bandana, great! Now, have them move on to a higher level program where they should be.

How will this be used to tier teams?

- Each athlete will receive a score for each test. The athlete will then receive an overall score for all her tests combined.
- Associations will then form teams however they wish. They can form teams geographically to reduce travel, to help friends play with friends, balanced, etc. No matter how teams are formed, associations MUST guarantee that all athletes receive appropriate skill development throughout the season so that the athletes experience measurable improvement (success) from test event to test event.
- Once teams are formed, teams will be grouped for competition with teams in a similar score range. The grouping will be determined by Ringette Alberta.

How much does all the testing equipment cost?

- We've built prototypes and we estimate the average is around $100 per testing kit.
- Modifications to the prototypes and volume purchase and production may reduce the cost.

How do we guarantee that all the equipment is the same and equipment does not become a factor in testing results?

- Ringette Alberta will produce and distribute standardized kits to all associations.

What if we learn over time that changes are necessary?

- We strongly encourage all associations to provide Ringette Alberta with feedback on the tests themselves, the equipment, set up, etc. We also would appreciate notices of your test events so we can observe whenever possible. This includes start of season, mid season test(s) and end of season.
- Feedback will indicate appropriate modifications that will be deployed universally and simultaneously.

How will all this data be stored?

- In the absence of a "single entry system", the data can be transcribed from the paper used during testing to a spreadsheet and a copy sent to Ringette Alberta. The paper recording sheets are designed to facilitate easy transcription.
- Over the summer of 2013, Ringette Alberta will investigate more efficient electronic solutions.

What if people try to manipulate the system by recording false results?

- First, if you become aware of it, report it. It is a clear violation of Ringette Alberta's code of conduct.
- The data belongs to the athletes and is valuable to them and their parents / guardians and coaches over the long term. Manipulating the data places short term results (such as manipulating data for team tiering) ahead of a long term development