

# Acuity Item Authoring Guide





# **Authoring Custom Items**

### **Overview of Item Authoring**

Item Authoring allows users with appropriate author permission to create multiple choice or constructed response items to be used in Custom Tests. Item authors can also create passages that can be used with multiple items.

Items and passages go through an approval process before being available for use, although some users may be granted special permission to have their items and passages automatically approved and processed. Approved items are processed about every three hours, and are placed in a district-specific item bank. Once new items or passages are created and approved for use, they exist at the district level. That is, the items are shared across all schools in a district, and can be assigned by the district or below in the hierarchy. When authoring items to passages, you can use only passages authored by you or by someone in your district.

You can have multiple item banks--each of which must be created by CTB Account Management or Customer Service. Item banks will be made available for use approximately one week after they are requested.

## **Item Authoring and Item Bank Permissions**

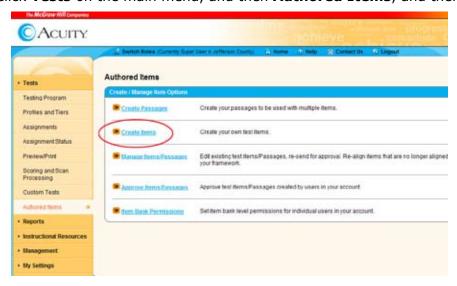
Permission to access specific Item Banks can be assigned on an individual basis, in addition to the default access by role. A specific item bank will show up for selection and use during custom test building only if a user is granted access to that item bank. In the same way, the user will be able to drill into items in reports only for items to which the user has been given access by item bank.

When you first log in to Acuity, the menu of options is listed in a column on the left side. This is the starting point for all item authoring activities.

**Note:** Always keep a list of your Item Numbers as you create items, so you can easily find the items when constructing your custom tests.

# **Creating a Multiple Choice Item**

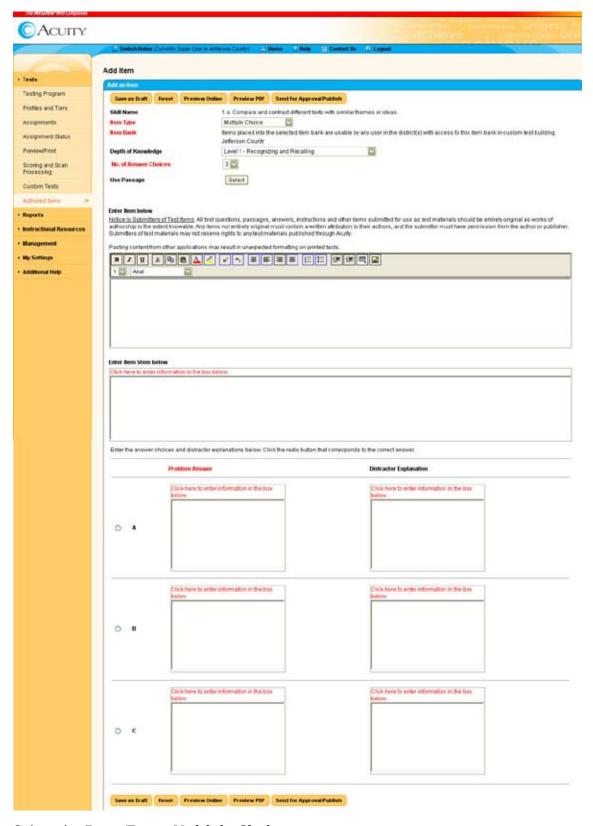
1. Click **Tests** on the main menu, and then **Authored Items**, and then **Create Items**.



#### A Create Item screen opens.



- 3. Enter **Create Item** criteria. These are the alignment criteria for the new item. **Search for Skills by: Standards** is displayed in static text.
  - Select a **Subject**, **Standard**, **Grade**, and then select information for the desired standard. These fields will vary depending on your state-defined standards.
- 4. Click **Create Item**. The **Add Item** screen opens. The example shown below is a typical view of the Create Item page appears when you choose to create a multiple choice item. Required entries are indicated by red text, while optional entries are in black text.

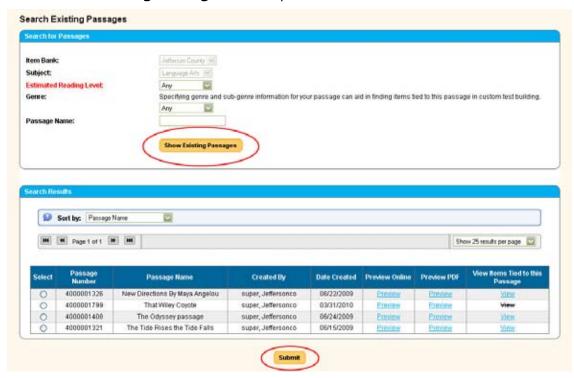


- 5. Select the **Item Type**: **Multiple Choice**.
- 6. Select an Item Bank, Depth of Knowledge, and Number of Answer Choices.

7. If you want to associate this question with an existing (approved) passage, click **Select** on the **Use Passage** field. If not using a passage, proceed to step 8.

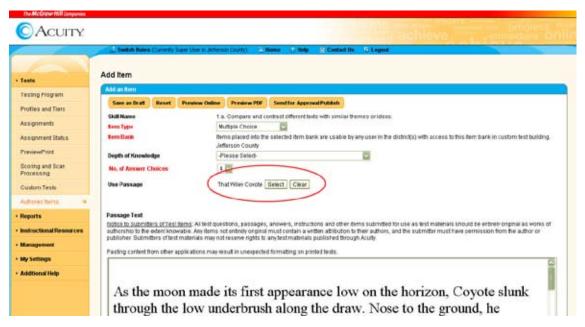


The **Search Existing Passage** screen opens.



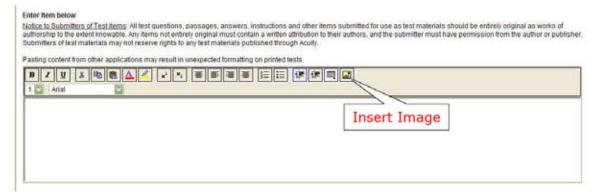
Enter search criteria: Select an **Item Bank**, **Subject**, **Estimated Reading Level**, **Genre**, **Sub-Genre**, and enter **Passage Name**, and then click **Show Existing Passages**. (Alternatively, leaving all or some of the search fields blank will return all passages for a given subject area.) Select the desired passage from the list of results and click **Submit**.

The **Search Existing Passages** screen closes, returning you to the **Add Item** page.



The selected passage is shown by name with a **Clear** button beside the **Select** button. The passage is displayed in the **Passage Text** area for you. Continue filling in the rest of the item elements or, to remove the passage, click **Clear**.

8. If you did not choose to use an existing passage in step 7, the first text entry area is labeled **Enter Item Below**.



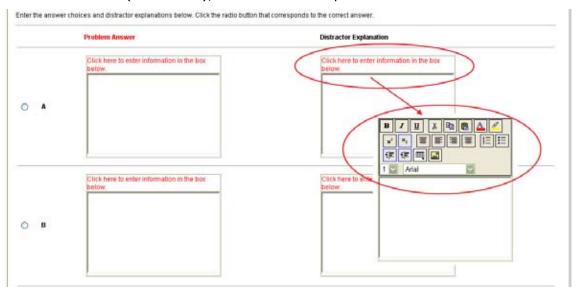
Information entered in this area will be displayed on the left half of the screen when viewing the test online. When viewing the test in PDF format, it will be displayed as the first element of an item, with the question or second element and distractors below it.

This is where text or a picture can be inserted to support the test question. You can type in the box and use all of the formatting tools displayed across the top of the text entry area, such as Bold, Italics, Underlining, bulleted or numbered lists, and so on, to create supporting text for this item. You can also insert an image. Inserted images must be GIF format, and 96 dpi (dots per inch) or less.

Alternatively, you can compose text or other type of stimulus, including art, in another text editor, and then capture it using standard image capturing software, and save it in GIF format. The GIF can then be inserted using the "insert image" button on the formatting bar. If you paste text from another source be sure to **Preview PDF** to verify that the formatting will appear as expected if the passage is part of a printed test.

If you want to include a picture in this area, it's a good idea to put the image in a location where you can easily find it. Inserted images must be GIF format and 96 dpi (dots per inch) or less.

**Note:** Wherever you see the instructions "Click here to enter information in the box below," clicking on those instructions causes the formatting tool bar to appear for your use in the box below it. You can format the passage/stimulus, Item Stem, Problem Answers (distractors), and Distractor Explanations.



- 9. **Enter Item Stem Below**—Enter the question using the text editor tools, or by inserting an image, as discussed above. Information entered in this area will be displayed on the right half of the screen, immediately above the answer choices (distractors) when viewing the item online. It would be the second element of an item viewed in a PDF, (normally the test question), with the distractors below it.
- 10. Enter the Problem Answers and Distractor Explanations—Enter the answers/ distractors and any distractor explanations (optional) using the text editor tools, or by inserting an image, as discussed in step 8. Images must be GIF format, and 96 dpi or less. Item distractors will display on the right half of the screen below the question when viewed online, or as the third element in a PDF, below the stimulus and/or question. Be sure to click the radio button beside the correct answer.
- 11. Choose an option at the top or bottom of the screen:
  - -Click **Save** to save the item for later editing.
  - -Click **Reset** to reset all fields on the page.
  - -Click **Preview** to view the item from a student's perspective if testing online.
  - -Click **Preview PDF** to view or to print the item as seen by a student on a printed test booklet.
- 12. When the item is complete and you have viewed it to be sure it will appear correctly, the final step is to click **Send for Approval/Publish**.
  - -If this user's permission requires approval, the item will be sent to eligible approvers.

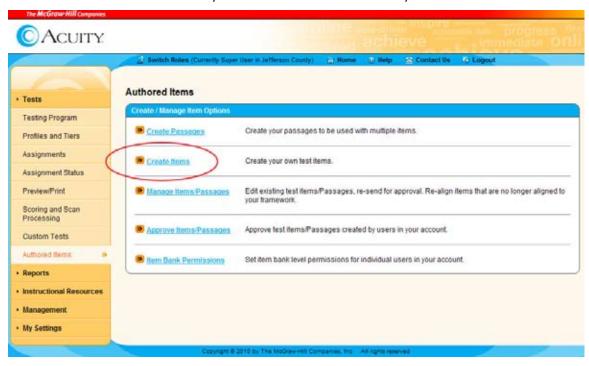
-If this user's permission does not require approval, the item is automatically marked as approved and will be published to production within a few hours (approximately 3 hours).

**NOTE:** After you **Send for Approval/Publish**, you will be given an item number. Be sure to keep track of all item numbers. This will aid you in the process of locating the items when building custom tests.

## **Creating a Constructed Response Item**

The first four steps of creating a constructed response item are the same as those for creating a multiple choice item.

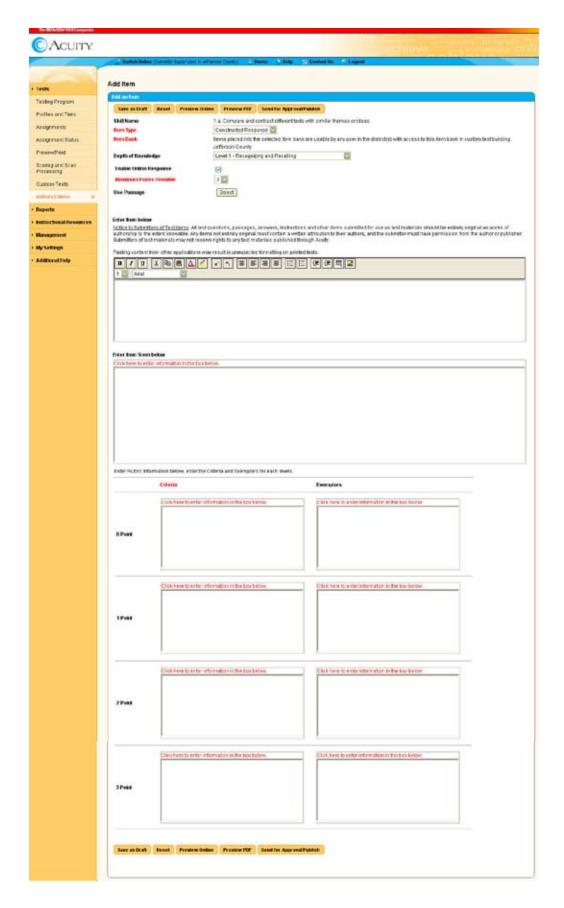
1. Click **Tests** on the main menu, and then **Authored Items**, and then **Create Items**.



A **Create Item** screen opens.



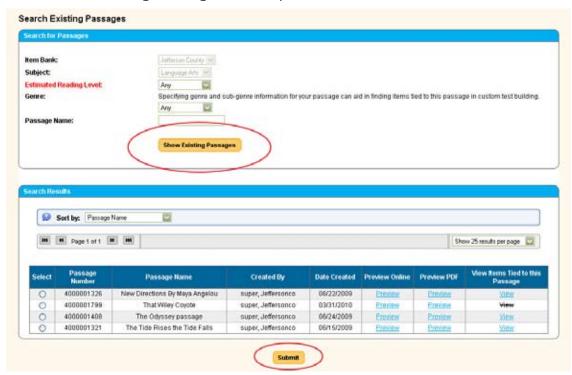
- 2. Enter **Create Item** criteria. These are the alignment criteria for the new item. **Search for Skills by: Standards** is displayed in static text.
  - Select a **Subject**, **Standard**, **Grade**, and then select information for the desired standard. These fields will vary depending on your state-defined standards.
- 3. Click **Create Item**. The **Add Item** screen opens. The example shown below is a typical view of the Create Item page appears when you choose to create a constructed response item. Required entries are indicated by red text, while optional entries are in black text.



- 4. Select the Item Type: Constructed Response.
- 5. Select an **Item Bank** and **Depth of Knowledge**.
- 6. Designate whether this Constructed Response item can be answered by students online (**Enable Online Response**). The default is **YES** uncheck this box if you want students to answer on a separate piece of paper.
- 7. Select Score Points Possible.
- 8. If you want to associate this question with an existing (approved) passage, click **Select** on the **Use Passage** field. If not using a passage, skip to step 9.

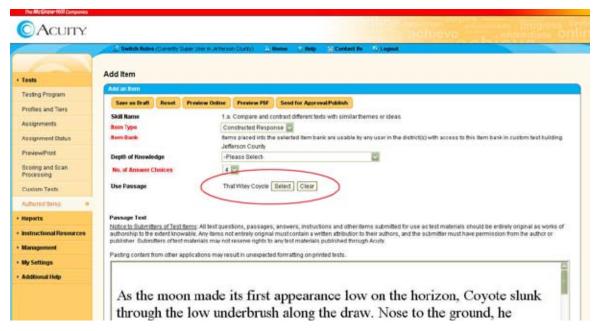


The **Search Existing Passage** screen opens.



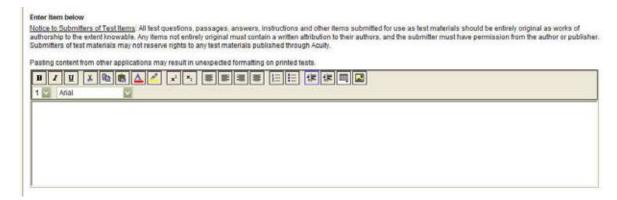
Enter search criteria: Select **Subject**, **Estimated Reading Level**, **Genre**, **Sub-Genre**, and enter **Passage Name**, and then click **Show Existing Passages**. Select the desired Passage and click **Submit**.

The **Search Existing Passages** screen closes, returning you to the **Add Item** page.



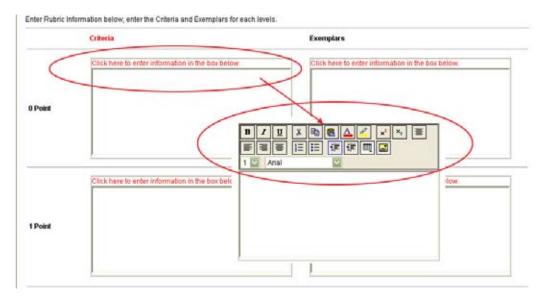
The selected passage is shown by name with a **Clear** button beside the **Select** button. The passage is displayed in the **Passage Text** area for you. Continue filling in the rest of the item elements or, to remove the passage, click **Clear**.

9. If you did not choose to use an existing passage in step 8, the first text entry area is labeled **Enter Item Below**.



Information entered in this area will be displayed on the left side of the screen when viewing the item online. It will be displayed as the first element of an item in a PDF, with the question and response area below it

**Note:** Wherever you see the instructions "Click here to enter information in the box below," clicking on those instructions causes the formatting tool bar to appear for your use in the box below it. You can format the passage/stimulus, item stem, scoring Criteria, and Exemplar information.



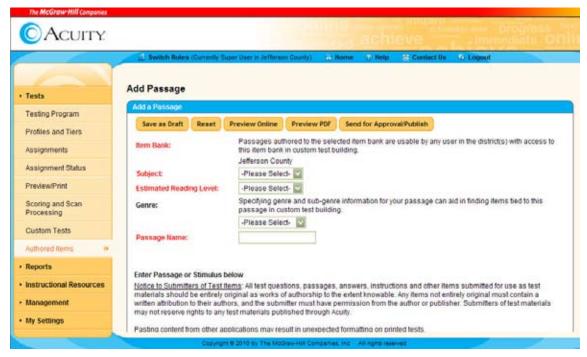
- 10. **Enter Item Stem Below**—Enter the question using the text editor tools, or by inserting an image, as discussed above. Information entered in this area will be displayed on the right half of the screen, immediately above the answer choices (distractors) when viewing the item online. It would be the second element of an item viewed in a PDF, (normally the test question), with the distractors below it.
- 11. **Enter Rubric Information below**—For each score point possible, enter scoring Criteria and Exemplar information. These will not be displayed in the test, but will be added to the Scoring Rubric.
- 12. Choose an option:
  - -Click **Save** to save the item for later editing.
  - -Click **Reset** to reset all fields on the page.
  - -Click **Preview** to view the item from a student's perspective if testing online.
  - -Click **Preview PDF** to view or print the item as seen by a student on a printed test booklet.
- 13. When the item is complete and you have viewed it to be sure it will appear correctly, the final step is to click **Send for Approval/Publish**.
  - -If this user's permission requires approval, the item will be sent to eligible approvers.
  - -If this user's permission does not require approval, the item is automatically marked as approved and will be published to production within a few hours (approximately 3 hours).

**NOTE:** After you **Send for Approval/Publish**, you will be given an item number. Be sure to keep track of all item numbers. This will aid you in the process of locating the items when building custom tests.

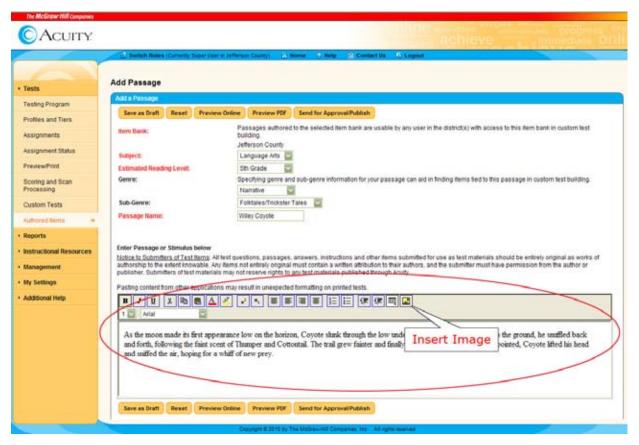
## **Creating a Passage**

A passage is often created as a basis or stimulus on which to create multiple items. When creating a new passage or other stimuli, it is a good idea to keep a list of the passage name, number, and alignment for ease in locating the passage when creating items.

1. Click **Tests** on the main menu, and then click **Authored Items**, and then **Create Passages**. An **Add Passage** screen opens.



- Complete Add Passage information by selecting an Item Bank from the list of those available to you, a Subject from the list of your purchased Acuity subjects, the Estimated Reading Level, a Genre and a Sub-Genre to put the passage in the appropriate category, and then enter a Passage Name. This name must be unique within the selected item bank.
- 3. Enter **Passage** or **Stimulus** in the area provided. Information entered in this area will be displayed on the left side of the screen when viewing the online. It will be displayed as the first element of an item in a PDF, with the question and distractors below it.



You can enter the passage by typing it into the area provided or by copying and pasting text from a document created in Notepad or other text editor or from a PDF. If you paste text from another source be sure to Preview PDF to verify that the formatting will appear as expected if the passage is part of a printed test.

**Note:** Microsoft Word can sometimes include formatting that is not visible but that will be used if pasted directly into Acuity. To avoid this, first paste text into Notepad to eliminate the formatting, and then copy/paste the text into Acuity.

Alternatively, you can compose a passage or other type of stimulus, including art, in another text editor, and then capture it using standard image capturing software, and save it in GIF format. The GIF can then be inserted using the "insert image" button on the formatting bar. This will ensure that the material appears as expected in the PDF or online.

You can also use all of the formatting tools displayed across the top of the text entry area, such as Bold, Italics, Underlining, bulleted or numbered lists, and so on.

If you want to include a picture with the passage, it's a good idea to put the image in a location where you can easily find it. Inserted images must be GIF format and 96 dpi (dots per inch) or less.

- 4. Choose an option.
  - -Click Save as Draft to save the item for later editing.
  - -Click **Reset** to clear and reset all fields on the page.
  - -Click **Preview** to view the passage online from a student's perspective if testing online.

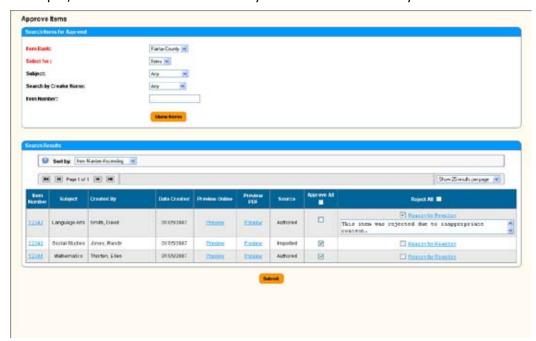
- -Click **Preview PDF** to view or print the passage as seen by a student on a printed test booklet.
- 5. When the passage is complete and you have viewed it to be sure it will appear correctly, the final step is to click **Send for Approval/Publish**.
  - -If this user's permission requires approval, the item will be sent to eligible approvers.
  - -If this user's permission does not require approval, the item is automatically marked as approved and will be published to production within a few hours (approximately 3 hours).

### **Approving Items or Passages**

- 1. Click **Tests** on the main menu, and then **Authored Items**, and then **Approve Items/Passages**.
- 2. Select **Item Bank**. If there is only one, it will be pre-selected.
- 3. Select **Select for** (either Items or Passages). If you select either items or passages and there are none waiting to be approved, a message will confirm this.
  - -If **Item** is selected, select **Subject** and **Creator Name**, and enter **Item Number**.
  - -If **Passage** is selected, select **Subject**, **Estimated Reading Level**, and **Creator Name**, and enter **Passage Name** and/or **Passage Number**.

**Note:** You can search for items or passages by unique Item or Passage Number using a wild card character. Enter at least two numbers before using the wild card (%), and be sure % is the last character in the number sequence.

5. Click **Show Items** or **Show Passages** to view items/passages that meet the search criteria. The user will only see items created by users lower in the hierarchy. For example, a School Administrator only sees items created by teachers in his district.



6. The following options are available for each item/passage.

- -For items, click the **Item Number** to view the item from item builder view.
- -Click the **Preview** link in the **Preview Online** column to view the item/passage from a student perspective if taking the test online.
- -Click the **Preview** link in the **Preview PDF** column to view or print the item/ passage as a student would see it on a printed test booklet.
- -Click the **Approve** checkbox to approve the item. Click the **Approve** checkbox in the header to select all items for approval.
- -Click the **Reasons for Rejection** checkbox to reject the item. The approver may enter a rejection reason. Click the **Reject** checkbox in the header to select all items to reject.
- 7. Click **Submit**.

**Note:** Once passages or items are approved they will be pushed into production in a few hours (approximately three hours). Once these items are deployed, their status will change to **Available for Use** and can then be used in custom tests

## Managing/Editing Existing Items or Passages

This feature allows you to edit existing test items or passages and re-send for approval.

1.Click **Tests** on the main menu, and then **Authored Items**, and then **Manage Items/Passages**.



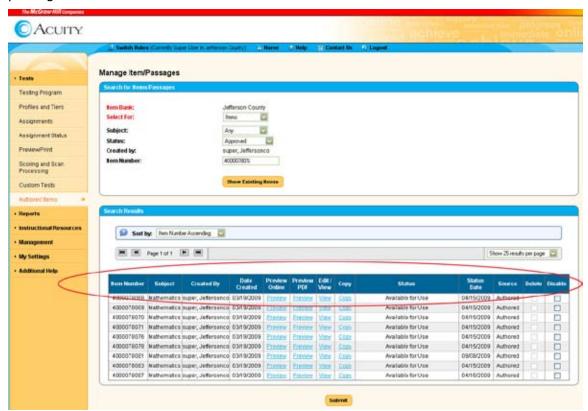
**Note:** If there are items that have become "orphaned," or have lost their alignment to your framework, you will see an **Orphaned Items** link. Click this link to realign these items to your framework.

- 2. Select **Item Bank**. If there is only one available, it is already selected.
- Select for either **Items** or **Passages**.
  - -If **Item** is selected—Select **Subject**, **Status** (either approved, draft, rejected or pending approval), and **Created by**. Optionally enter **Item Number(s)** separated by commas to search by unique item number.



**Note:** You can search for items or passages by unique Item or Passage Number using a wild card character. Enter at least two numbers before using the wild card (%), and be sure % is the last character in the number sequence. It is recommended that you track item numbers along with original item source documents to locate items and assemble tests.

- -If **Passage** is selected—Select **Subject**, **Estimated Reading Level**, **Status** (either approved, draft, rejected or pending approval), and **Created By**, and enter **Passage Name**. Optionally, enter **Passage Number** to search by unique passage number.
- 4. Click **Show Existing Items** or **Show Existing Passages** to view a list of items or passages that meet the search criteria.



Fields displayed include:

**Unique Item number** for items or a **Passage Name** and, optionally, **Passage Number**, for passages.

#### Subject.

**Created by**—name of the person who created the item or passage.

#### **Date Created.**

**Preview Online** link allows the item or passage to be viewed from a student perspective if testing online.

**Preview PDF** link allows you to preview or print the item or passage as seen by a student on a printed test booklet.

**Edit/View** link allows the item or passage to be edited—including realigning the item—or viewed. Once an item is approved it can only be viewed.

**Copy** link allows the user to make a copy of the item or passage and saves it as a draft. The user may then edit the copy of the item or passage and submit for approval.

**View Items Tied to this Passage** is only available for passages. This link is available if there are existing items associated with the passage.

**Status** provides the status of the item or passage. Valid values include: **Available for Use**, **Approved**, **Draft**, **Pending Approval** or **Rejected**. The reject status may include a reject reason.

**Status Date**—the date item or passage was given its current status.

**Source**—shows whether items/passages are **Authored** or **Imported**.

**Delete** checkbox. An item can only be deleted if it has not been included in a custom test. A passage can only be deleted if there are no items tied to the passage. Items and passages may be deleted by the creator, district administrator, or super user. Click the corresponding delete checkbox and click **Submit**.

**Disable** checkbox. This is available if an item tied to the passage has been used in a custom test. Marking a passage as disabled prevents users from finding the passage and adding additional items to the passage. Existing items tied to the passage are available in custom test.

Disabling an item prevents users from finding and using the item. It does not prevent users from finding the passage and adding additional items or using other existing items that are tied to the passage. Click the corresponding disable checkbox and click **Submit**.

# **Overview of Bulk Uploading Items**

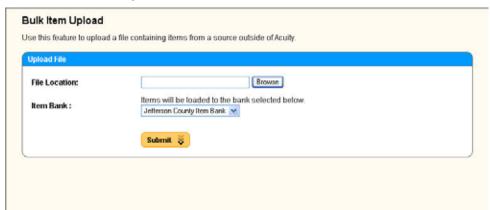
Bulk Item Upload is made available only to those school systems who request it as a custom configuration from CTB. This feature will be switched on at the district level, and the appropriate links for accessing this functionality will be visible in Acuity to users with permission to perform this activity. By default only a Super User has permission to perform the initial bulk upload. However, other users may be granted this permission using the Assign Permissions page, if they also have Item/Passage Author permission.

**Note:** You must have both Bulk Item Upload permission and Item/Passage Author permission or you will not see the needed links in the Tests/Authored Items menu and cannot perform this task.

Bulk Item Uploading provides the ability to bulk upload items using a .zip file. Currently this feature allows bulk uploading only for items exported from any program that exports items in WebCT CE 4-6/Vista 3-4 format.

## **Uploading Bulk Items**

- 1. Click **Tests** on the main menu, and then click **Authored Items**.
- 2. Click **Bulk Item Upload**.



- 3. Click **Browse** and locate the item.zip file wherever it was saved when exported from Exam View.
- 4. Select an **Item Bank** in which to place the items.
- 5. Click **Submit**. The system will perform a validation process on the file.

If the file does not pass validation, the page will display a message with useful information.

If the file passes validation, the page will display a message with the expected upload processing time.

## **Managing Bulk Uploaded Items**

Items that are created in Acuity using this Bulk Item Upload method will not be uploaded "as is," but will require that you align the items, and preview or edit the items for layout as needed. You must then submit the items for approval and publishing, just as when you create custom items.

There are some other differences between items created in Acuity and items that are uploaded using Bulk Item Upload that impact the appearance of items in the test and the order of the test structure. These will require that you reconstruct the test in Custom Test building, finding the items by alignment or item number (recommended), and manually reordering items to match the exported "test."

<u>Shared stimulus/shared passage</u>—items that are uploaded that use a shared stimulus or shared passage will be created with the stimulus/passage imbedded in each item. This means that

- -a separate, shared passage will not be created
- -when multiple items that share the same stimulus/passage are used in a test, that shared stimulus/passage will print multiple times, once with each applicable item.

<u>Test structure does not accompany items</u>—This means that items come into Acuity with no connection except that they are all included in a single upload file.

-in a test, there is no grouping of items that share a stimulus/passage; these items could appear randomly throughout the test instead of grouped together.

-in a test, all items will be handled individually without regard to alignments, edits, and approval.

## **Checking Status of a Bulk Upload**

Once the bulk item upload file is processed (either to completion or failure), the system sends a message to the home page of the user who uploaded the file that the file has completed processing. Click the message header to see detailed information.

Alternatively, you can check the status of your upload by clicking **Tests**, then **Authored Items**, and then **Bulk Upload Status**. This is the starting point for managing the bulk uploaded items as well.

### Edit, Preview, and Align bulk uploaded items

Use the Bulk Upload Status screen to edit, preview, and align the uploaded items, and send them for approval/publishing.

- 1. Click **Tests** on the main menu, then **Authored Items**, and then **Bulk Upload Status**.
- 2. Enter search criteria to locate an uploaded file by date or by filename.
  - -Click the check box to search for files only in uploads performed by you.
  - -Leave the check box clear to search for files uploaded by other users at or below your own level in the organization.
- 3. Click **Search**.

The **Status** column shows one of three statuses: **Processing**, **Failed**, and **Complete**. When a file status changes from **Processing** to **Complete**, the file name becomes a link. Click the file name link to open **Manage Bulk Upload Items** for the selected file.

- 4. Click **Preview** to view an item in test-taker view.
- 5. Click **Edit** to edit the alignment for an item.
- 6. Select the appropriate **Subject**, **Standard**, and all other criteria as appropriate for the item down to the skill level.
- 7. Click **Next** to go to the **Edit Item** page.

Edit the item as needed, and click **Update** or **Send for Approval/Publish**.

**Note:** Once that is done, the item can be managed using the Manage Items/ Passages menu option, as you do for custom items.

8. Continue aligning and editing items.

When the uploaded items have all been aligned and edited as needed, you must re-create the test, ordering the items to match the original test.

You can also "bulk align" items if you know enough about the alignments – you can select multiple items on the page and then click **ALIGN**. All items will be aligned to the info you select

but individual items must still be accessed to be previewed and sent for approval/published.