NCARB Live Follow-Up: Digital Whiteboard

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Michelle Cohn [00:00]: Hi, everyone. Thanks for checking out this video. We received a lot of questions about online proctoring on our recent NCARB Live, and we didn't have a chance to answer all of them during the webinar. So today we're going to walk through a whole bunch of questions we got about the digital whiteboard. So stay tuned, hopefully you'll hear your question answered here. Our first question here today:

What other options aside from a digital whiteboard were explored in lieu of the paper and pencil?
Great question. We started with, "Can we just keep paper and pencil in both modalities of testing?" So obviously at the test center, things would remain as is. In an online proctored setting, however, there were really a lot of security concerns around using paper and pencil at home, particularly with shredding or otherwise disposing of the scratch paper. NCARB did not feel like we had a good level of assurance that that could be ... that we could maintain the security that we need to maintain for the exam.

We next looked at actually a physical whiteboard. We've all seen them. They come in all different sizes, pretty easy to obtain. We know some of you have seen whiteboards in use at your local test center with other exams, not the ARE. We did look at doing that. Again, the challenge though is really in that home setting.

One thing I didn't mention about paper and pencil, it applies actually to paper and pencil and the whiteboard, is that when you as a candidate are testing and you look down to write something on your whiteboard and then look up again, that raises some flags for the online proctor. And what would happen is that that proctor would start to call out to you, "Hey, Michelle, what's going on? What are you doing down there?" And really start to break a candidate's concentration.

The proctor has to do that because when they notice any anomalies—the candidate not looking at the screen—they have to raise that concern with the candidate and understand what is happening. And we felt that, again, from a security standpoint, but also from just a candidate standpoint, that that would just be overly disruptive and not fair to you as a candidate, who's wanting to just be able to take your exam.

So the advantage of having the digital whiteboard built into the software is that as a candidate, you'll be able to maintain focus on the screen at all times. That certainly makes the proctor's job easier—but also for you as a candidate, you're not going to get interrupted. As you're working out your formulas or sketches on that digital whiteboard, you'll be able to just keep

going with your work and you won't have to worry about the proctor seeing your eyes, looking down, looking to the side and asking you to provide some feedback about what's happening.

Jared Zurn [02:50]: Great. Our next question says:

Many candidates are concerned that using a digital whiteboard will increase the likelihood of the exam crashing. How will NCARB reassure candidates that using the whiteboard won't cause additional problems?
So what we can tell you is we've been testing the whiteboard for several weeks now already in a bunch of different settings. What I can state is we've never had the whiteboard cause or crash at all. I'm trying to turn everything on and turn everything off and move things around on the screen. The whiteboard is very stable. It's not creating any technical issues with the rest of the delivery of the ARE.

Michelle Cohn [03:25]: Great. Next question.

How will NCARB ensure left-handed people have an equal experience if they're required to use a right-handed mouse for the digital whiteboard?
So if you're testing from home, then you can use the same mouse that you're always used to using. If you have a left-handed mouse and that's what you're comfortable with, you can continue to use that in your online proctored test. If you are testing in a test center, there is an existing accommodations process. If you feel that other equipment might be helpful to you during your exam, you can certainly reach out to NCARB. The accommodations process is described in our *ARE Guidelines* on our website. So take a look at that. You can reach out to our Customer Relations team and they can help you go through that application process so that you can get the equipment you need at the test center.

Jared Zurn [04:11]: So our next question is:

How is NCARB responding to candidate concerns about the digital whiteboard?
And, well, one way we're doing it is actually answering these questions right here, letting you try to really understand some of the thoughts behind it and what it's going to function like. But more importantly, what we're going to be doing is we're going to be turning on a new demonstration exam coming up shortly that's going to allow you to play with a digital whiteboard for several weeks before anybody ever goes in and has to use it in a test environment.

Michelle Cohn [04:40]: Next question is:

What exactly will be available to make myself familiar with the whiteboard?
So Jared started to answer this already, is we'll have a new demonstration exam launching in November, and that will have an exact copy of the whiteboard that you can expect to see at the test center or in your online proctored examination. The digital whiteboard—as well as other

tools in the demonstration exam—they're exactly the same tools and it's set up so that you can try those all out ahead of time to, again, familiarize yourself with the tools prior to test day.

Jared Zurn [05:16]: So our next question is what more technical. It says:

Can we use a stylus, an Apple Pencil, or something similar with the new whiteboard to use the scratch paper?
The answer to that is likely no. The reason being is that the secure test browser that you have to use when taking an online exam locks down all the other applications on your computer besides the operating system. So the problem with the stylus and those types of additional tablets that people do use sometimes is there's another layer of software that allows that stylus to work effectively. So you're going to have to not use your stylus because if you attempt to use it, the secure browser is going to block it. So the best thing you can do is practice using a digital whiteboard with your keyboard and your mouse. That way, you're good to go when you sit down to take your exam.

Michelle Cohn [06:04]: **Okay. Can you provide information on how scratch paper during the in-person exam is a security risk? Have there been any documented examples of someone cheating within that system?**
Well, unfortunately, yes, there have been examples of candidates cheating using the current pencil and paper system. Can't go into specific details on that, but it is a security risk that NCARB has been aware of for some time, and we have been exploring possibilities for how to ... what our next steps in terms of increasing security for the exam are. It's really critical to NCARB because that's critical for our Member Boards and their ability to really rely on the ARE as a valid assessment. So that pencil and paper is something that we had been thinking about for some time, not just with this current move to online proctoring, but certainly it sped up that process of making that change.

Jared Zurn [07:00]: So our next question says:

Can candidates type into the digital whiteboard?
And the answer there is absolutely. So you're going to be able to add text inside of your drawing. You're going to be able to edit the text, do whatever you need to do.

Michelle Cohn [07:13]: **And will the whiteboard be erased after a break?**
No, it will not. I know we've talked in other videos about what will happen with breaks, with items being locked. However, the whiteboard will not be locked. It will not be erased. The whiteboard will be there to assist you throughout the entire exam and notes, drawings, whenever you put into that whiteboard will be available to you either until you erase it or until your exam ends.

Jared Zurn [07:40]: So the next question is:

How are candidates supposed to sketch with a mouse?
And what I would say, so what you're going to see in the whiteboard is you are going to see a pencil tool where you can free hand sketch if that's what you want to do, just by moving the mouse around, click, hold down your button, move your mouse around. It's going to draw like a pencil will on a piece of paper.

There are also geometric tools built into the whiteboard. So if you're drawing a rectangle, you want to draw a triangle, you want draw circles, you're going to want to use the geometric tools for that. You're not going to be sketch a rectangle. You can just draw using the rectangle tool.

Again, I think the thing I'll point out is, remember, you don't need perfect sketches. Sketches are there to help you understand the concepts of the question you're trying to answer. So however you sketch, whether it's beautiful or whether it's ugly, as long as you're understanding the concept and processing the information, you have a tool that allows you to do what you need to do.

Michelle Cohn [08:32]: **How has the new whiteboard been tested? Have NCARB staff and leadership tried it?**
Well, Jared just mentioned, he's been testing it out. Actually numerous people on staff at NCARB, including those of us who are licensed architects, have been testing it, really working at looking at all of the features in the whiteboard, attempting to break it, but also really looking at opportunities and working very closely with the developers behind the whiteboard to ensure that it truly is a useful tool for our candidates.

We've actually recently had some volunteers on one of our exam-related committees working with the whiteboards to understand better how that will be used so that they can ensure that the exam asks the questions that candidates can really solve using the whiteboard. So there's been a lot of testing that's gone into that within the NCARB community. And we are, again, excited to release that to candidates coming up soon in November.

Jared Zurn [09:30]: So the next question is:

Will the whiteboard always be on screen?
So the answer is no, but you can keep it on screen if you want to. So when you turn on the whiteboard for the first time, it's a floating window, you can move it and you can reposition it however you want on your screen. If you prefer, you can leave it up the entire time. You can advance to the next question and the whiteboard is still going to be sitting there. You can advance to the next question, and the whiteboard is still going to be sitting there. Or what you can do is simply close the whiteboard, and then when you reopen it, it's going to reposition exactly where you left it. So personally in the testing I've been doing, I do not leave the whiteboard on all the time, just because I think it gets in the way. So I bring it up when I need it, and I turn it off when I don't.

Michelle Cohn [10:14]: Next question:

Will NCARB ever considered going back to paper and pencil scratch paper?
Well, this follows up on some of the security concerns that I mentioned earlier, and I'm going to say no. I don't foresee NCARB going back to pencil and paper. I think it is just another evolution of the exam, as we know, continues to evolve over time, and so this is just one of those changes that will be with us moving forward.

Jared Zurn [10:38]: Next question:

Will candidate scheduled for an in-person exam on December 14th be able to use scratch paper?
The answer is no. On Monday, December 14th, everything switches over. The whiteboard tool is available in test centers, as well as for anyone who schedules an online appointment after that date, and the paper is no longer available in a Prometric test center.

Michelle Cohn [11:03]: **If I have a laptop that has a touch screen, can I use the touch option to draw in the whiteboard with my finger?**
Great question. Unfortunately, the answer to that is also no. The exam delivery is not compatible with touch screens. And so, in fact, if you have a Microsoft Surface or another type of computer that can operate in a hybrid of being in tablet mode or PC mode, you will need to turn off that tablet mode in order to test in the online proctored environment.

Jared Zurn [11:36]: Next question is:

Can you zoom in and out from the whiteboard?
Yes, there are zoom functionality built into the whiteboard. So candidates can zoom in and out of different regions if they want to get more or less detailed.

Michelle Cohn [11:48]: Our next question:

How do you plan to address the difficulty to draw and sketch with a mouse for candidates with carpal tunnel?
So this is a great question, and really it goes back to that accommodations process, which we have in place today in fact. So if that's something that you're wondering about for currently testing in a test center, certainly reach out to NCARB's Customer Relations team. The process for applying for an accommodation is detailed in the *ARE 5.0 Guidelines*. And so absolutely moving forward, if you require an accommodation due to carpal tunnel or another condition, whether you're planning to test in a test center or in the online proctoring mode, certainly reach out to NCARB and we can assist with getting an accommodation in place.

Jared Zurn [12:31]: The next question:

Can you view the calculator and whiteboard simultaneously?
Yes, you can. They're both floating on screen so you can move them where you want. You can put the calculator here, you can put your whiteboard right there, have access to both at the same time.

Michelle Cohn [12:45]: **Will NCARB and Prometric work on creating a digital pen option for the whiteboard?**
So that's not in place right now. As Jared was mentioning, the digital pen is not something that's compatible with the software, but I think it's a great idea and something that we can certainly consider moving forward and possibly a future phase of development.

Jared Zurn [13:08]: Next question:

Is there an undo button if you hit clear on the whiteboard by accident?
So there is a function that's going to be built into the whiteboard that allows you to clear the entire, they're calling it the canvas. If you clear the canvas, it's clear, it's gone, and there isn't an undo in that case.

So the other thing we did build though, is you have basically unlimited canvases to work on. So as a candidate, if you're working on question 17 and you bring up the whiteboard and you do a sketch or you type some numbers. And then let's say by question 23, you want to work on the whiteboard again, you can if you want. You can clear that canvas, or I find it much easier to just add another canvas. There's a little plus button up at the top, you hit plus, you get a new fresh screen and you just work on that one.

So I've gotten in a habit personally in my testing that every time I go and need to use the whiteboard, I open up a new canvas and I don't even bother ever clicking the delete canvas button.

Michelle Cohn [14:09]: **Will the floating window dock on the lower task bar when we move it out of the way? I'm nervous about not being able to find it when I need it without wasting time.**
So again, in the demonstration exam, when that launches in November, you'll be able to see the whiteboard and familiarize yourself with all the tools and it'll look exactly as the same in your actual test. So you won't be able to ... You won't forget where things are, hopefully. And the whiteboard button is actually on the top bar right next to the calculator button. The highlight, the strikethrough, all of those tools are in one place and the whiteboard is right up there with all of them. So it should be pretty easy to find. As Jared had mentioned, you can close that whiteboard, open it back up again, position it where you need it. And so you can make it smaller, position it where you want it to be, and it'll open right back up in that same place.

Jared Zurn [15:09]: So next question:

Has the digital whiteboard been used with success on other certification exams?
And the answer is yes. NCARB is not the inventor or creator of the concept of a digital whiteboard. Digital whiteboards have been around for quite some time in the testing world. NCARB's just stuck with paper and pencil because it's what we've always done. So the idea to turn on a digital whiteboard for the ARE is not a new concept in the world of testing. And so, yeah, digital whiteboards have been around for quite some time. As Michelle had mentioned, there's been an evolution in testing away from the dry erase boards and an evolution away from scratch paper for quite some time.

Michelle Cohn [15:46]: **In a previous NCARB email, it said there would be less math because of the whiteboard. Is that true?**
Well, not exactly. We had said in the previous email that there would be fewer calculation items. That actually has nothing to do with the whiteboard. That was actually, we can say a psychometric decision. So in other words, our psychometricians or our testing consultants, who we had worked with pretty closely on ... We work with them on a regular basis, I should say, on just how the exam is assembled. So what are the number of questions, the amount of time that you have, all of those decisions that we work on.

In this most recent go around, one of the decisions was to reduce the number of calculation items just on the forms, the version of the exam that you see in the test center or in an online proctored delivery. So that decision was made really on that forms assembly basis, and I think even before we even started developing the whiteboard, really just looking at what is that future timing that we want to get to with the exam?

Jared Zurn [16:57]: So our final question on the whiteboard is:

Can we take a screenshot and use it on the whiteboard to study a site or visual questions?
And the answer there is absolutely not. Taking a screenshot while taking a test would be a huge potential risk from a security perspective, because if you're taking a screenshot, that's trapping into your memory on the computer. So that would be a bad thing. So unfortunately, no. I understand the logic of wanting to quickly transfer over. I think it's kind of a smart idea. Right now, though, that's not something that's going to be supported by the whiteboard tool.

So thank you for listening to our answers to your questions about the digital whiteboard tool.