

## Every Student Succeeds Act Innovative Assessment Pilot

**AGENCIES:**

New Mexico Center for School Leadership

**DATE:** December 14, 2016

**PURPOSE OF HEARING:**

Every Student Succeeds Act Innovative Assessment Pilot Requirements

**WITNESSES:**

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**EXPECTED OUTCOME:**

To understand the Every Student Succeeds Act Innovative Assessment pilot opportunities and requirements and explore how the New Mexico Center for School Leadership has currently been piloting innovative assessments.

A core guiding principle from the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is supporting the needs of every student through local innovation and location-specific interventions. A prime example of this is the ESSA Innovative Assessment Pilot which presents a unique opportunity to pilot an assessment framework with local student success and educator input in mind.

**Assessment as a Tool for Teaching and Learning.**

Assessment in its intended form is a key component of teaching and learning. Both learners and teachers rely on a constant stream of feedback in various modalities to identify and address gaps in understanding. Assessment takes on many forms in the classroom: teacher feedback on in-class assignments, informal observation of student dispositions, engagement and progress, common formative assessments, end of course exams, portfolios of student work, midterms, course grades, etc. Since the advent of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, and therein the pointed reliance on a standardized assessment of academic achievement to define adequate yearly progress, assessment has taken on a new role in education. Retention decisions are oftentimes based on state assessment results, teacher evaluations across the nation now include growth in student achievement on state assessments as a central element, and in New Mexico schools are graded in large part based on student performance on the state assessment. At the extreme, the percentage of students attempting the state assessment is a key requirement to continue receiving federal title funds.

As presented to the Legislative Education Study Committee by the National Conference of State Legislatures, many high performing countries' year-end standardized assessments are used to test the education system using a sample of students as opposed to being the basis of assessing individual student performance. The ESSA Innovative Assessment Pilot is an opportunity to rethink current practice and explore innovative assessment ideas that could save the state funds in the long-term, and provide educators with more timely and actionable feedback as a tool for positive impact on student learning.

In theory, a state educational agency could implement a common formative assessment that gives immediate results to teachers and learners both as an instructional tool and as the statewide assessment and supplement this assessment with statewide end of course standardized tests using a sample of students to test the system or even

**To qualify, state proposals for innovative assessment systems must include:**

- Evidence of consultation with experts and support from stakeholders;
- Demonstration of alignment, quality, and fairness of the test;
- Assurances that standards and assessment requirements of ESSA are met;
- Demographic related information from participating school districts;
- Descriptions of state rationale;
- Performance metrics for the test to ensure validity and reliability; and
- Availability of technology, expertise, funding, professional development, and other resources for implementation.

create a tool and evaluation process that can be used to determine the quality of student learning through real-life projects.

| Current Practice  | Example Pilot Opportunities  |
|---|--|
| Statewide End of Year Summative PARCC Assessment<br>Grades 3-11<br><br>Statewide End of Year Summative NMSBA Science Assessment<br>Grades 4, 7, and 11<br><br>Istation Early Reading Assessment<br>Grades K-3         | Assess a sample of students in selected grade levels for system accountability purposes and implement common, statewide short-cycle assessments to inform student learning.  |
| End of course exams developed by groups of teachers at the state level to assess statewide course level benchmarks and to evaluate teacher effectiveness for subjects not assessed on the state assessment.           | Question banks with items submitted by teachers and vetted by groups of teachers at the state level as effectively assessing benchmarks. Teachers then locally select, either at the district or classroom level, items that fit their needs from the item bank for each course specific standard and benchmark. |
| Alternative demonstration of competency for students not yet proficient on the state assessment. Includes: end of course exams, college and career readiness assessments, ACT, SAT, PSAT, portfolios of student work. | Utilize college entrance exams, career readiness assessments, competency based tests, holistic assessments of student development, capstone course products, portfolios of student work, etc. as a suite of options to demonstrate competency as opposed to secondary measures.                                  |

**Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority.**

Section 1204 of ESSA allows the U.S. Department of Education (ED) secretary to give “innovative assessment demonstration authority” (IADA) in the first three years of ESSA to up to seven participating state educational agencies (SEA) or consortia. The consortia can include up to four state educational agencies.

IADA gives flexibility to develop a new innovative assessment system (IAS) to test student progress toward challenging state academic standards. SEAs are encouraged to start small, piloting the IAS in a limited number of districts and schools before implementing statewide. These districts and schools may use the IAS for accountability and reporting instead of the statewide test during the pilot.

**Section 1111 of the Every Student Succeeds Act requires states to continue statewide tests for students:**

- Language arts and Math:  
Yearly in grades 3-8  
Once in high school
- Science:  
Once in each of grades 3-5, 6-9, 10-12
- States must implement high-quality, valid, reliable, and fair annual assessments that are the same for all students
- States may partially assess academic achievement in the form of portfolios, projects, or extended performance tasks

**State assessments must provide for:**

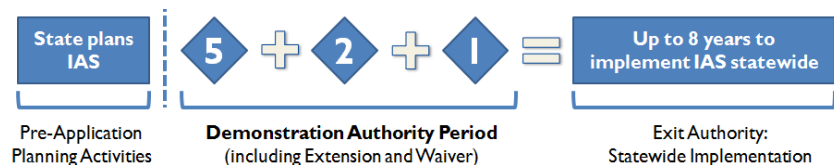
- 95 percent participation of students;
- Appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities and English learners;
- Alternative assessments for students with significant cognitive disabilities;
- Individual student interpretative, descriptive, and diagnostic reports regarding achievement; and
- Results that can be disaggregated within each state and local education agency and school.

Innovative assessment demonstration authority states may propose a variety of innovative assessment practices including performance tasks, simulations, competency based assessments, multiple assessments (ie. curriculum embedded, interim, or through-course tests) given throughout the year as opposed to a standalone, summative evaluations at the end of the year. The IAS must produce an annual summary of grade-level achievement aligned to state standards and may include all required grades and subjects or a subset of required grades and subjects. For example, implementing an innovative science assessment in each grade span and an innovative reading assessment only in elementary schools would meet this requirement.

A state must continue administering its statewide assessments in all schools in any grade or subject not using an IAS. The IAS must generate results that are valid, reliable, and comparable for all students and subgroups of students. To demonstrate comparability with the statewide assessment the IAS must use at least one of the following options:

- Assess all students using statewide tests in each grade span with IAS;
- Assess a representative sample of students in the same school year on both the IAS and statewide test in each grade span;
- Incorporate a significant portion of common items on both tests; and
- Use another state-determined methodology that will provide an equally rigorous, statistically valid comparison for all students and subgroups.

**Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority Timeline.** IADA states must scale up the system to statewide implementation over a period of five years. If the IAS has not been implemented statewide at the end of the five-year period, IADA states may request a two-year extension. After the extension, IADA states may request a one-year waiver to submit evidence for federal peer review of the IAS. States must return to ESSA requirements if the timeline is violated or successful implementation is not demonstrated.



**According to the Learning Policy Institute:**

ESSA provides an important opportunity to create new accountability strategies that seek to view students and schools more holistically. Taking advantage of this opportunity will require clarity about what the act permits and requires, as well as creativity in developing new measures, processes for school diagnosis and improvement, and evidence-based interventions that support deeper learning in contexts that further equity goals.

A redesigned accountability system that accomplishes key goals for students would rest on three key pillars:

1. A focus on meaningful learning.
2. Professionally skilled and committed educators.
3. Adequate and appropriate resources that enable and support the first two pillars.

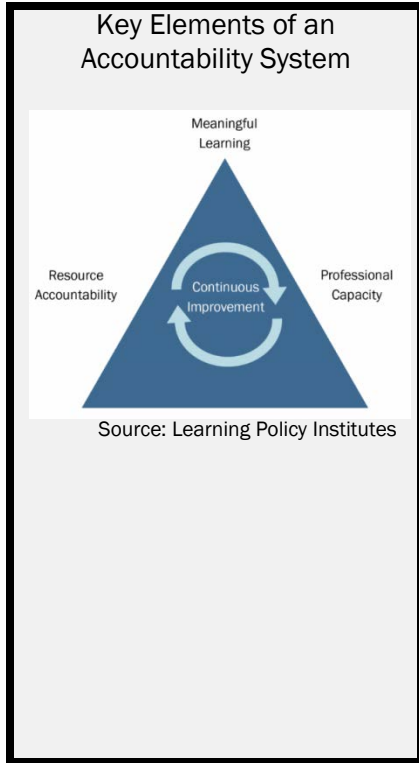
After statewide implementation, states must submit the IAS for federal peer review. This review determines if the IAS may be used to meet federal Title I, Part A requirements for statewide assessments and accountability. The peer review team will consist of practitioners and experts who are knowledgeable about the IAS being proposed. It is key to note that the IAS must be rolled out in all schools and districts in the state by the end of the implementation period. Also, the ED secretary has the authority to withdraw demonstration authority at any time if the state cannot demonstrate the validity, scalability, or comparability of the innovative assessment system.

**Enhanced Assessment Instruments.** In addition to the Innovative Assessment Pilot, ED offers a grant for Enhanced Assessment Instruments. The grant has been offered nearly every year since 2002, and will likely be offered next year. In 2015, five states received funding under the grant (see Table 1, below). ED estimates \$8.9 million will be distributed between three and six states in 2016. Applicants are generally partnerships between state departments of education and research centers. The partners submit a detailed proposal to ED, and each proposal is evaluated on its potential to improve the quality, validity, and reliability of state assessments.

**Table 1: 2015 Enhanced Assessment Instrument Awards**

| State      | Award Amount | Abstract   |
|------------|--------------|--|
| Arizona    | \$1,977,086  | Develop an English proficiency exam to track growth of English learners with cognitive disabilities.   |
| California | \$2,690,672  | Index results of assessments to include measurements of career readiness.                              |
| Kansas     | \$5,816,159  | Use learning maps to link curriculum, instruction, and assessment.                                     |
| Michigan   | \$4,341,835  | Develop set of technology-interactive assessment tools aligned with Next Generation Science Standards. |
| Minnesota  | \$2,961,888  | Use classroom progress data to evaluate individual accessibility needs of students.                    |

Source: ED



**An Opportunity to Create a Shared Vision.** How standardized assessment results are leveraged has shifted around the nation as these scores are used for increased accountability purposes. Academic achievement and proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science is a shared goal of most educators. However, National Assessment of Education Progress scores remain stagnant and the United State’s position compared to other industrialized nations has slipped with respect to educational outcomes.

The ESSA Innovative Assessment Pilot offers an opportunity for a state to take a new approach to assessment in an effort to revive its purpose as a tool for teaching and learning while still positioning the results as guideposts for progress in student learning. When done with fidelity, the state-created assessment system can continue to feed accountability programs in schools and school systems and also provide relevant information about student learning beyond reading, mathematics, and science.