



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

January 6, 2016

Dear State Assessment Directors:

This letter provides several updates on the U.S. Department of Education's (the Department) work to ensure that each State meets the requirements in Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), to have valid, reliable, and fair assessments aligned to State-determined challenging academic standards. Specifically, this letter provides: 1) the schedule for peer review of State assessments in 2017; 2) information about the individuals who serve as assessment peer reviewers; 3) some considerations for States as they plan to transition between assessments; and 4) information about the webinar regarding the new assessment regulations, both those for Title I, Part A and for the innovative assessment demonstration pilot in Title I, Part B, published on December 8, 2016.

Assessment Peer Review in 2017

Thirty-eight States submitted evidence for their assessment systems in 2016. We want to thank you for your hard work preparing for peer review and diligence in assembling the documentation around the quality of your assessment systems and your patience as we developed the process for providing feedback, which is laid out in the letter from Ann Whalen on [October 6, 2016](#). The Department has begun to provide feedback to these States.

We know that many of you have new assessments that were administered for the first time in the 2015-2016 school year and that need to submit evidence for peer review in 2017. Additionally, some States receiving peer review feedback from the 2016 peer reviews may be able to resubmit additional evidence in 2017. The Department has planned for two rounds of assessment peer review to occur in June and August 2017. States submitting evidence for a June review would need to complete their submission by late May. States submitting evidence for an August 2017 review would need to complete their submission by mid-July 2017. More details about these reviews will be provided later this year. As was the case last year, a State submitting its assessment component for review for the first time in 2017 will need to complete the [State peer review submission cover sheet and index template](#). Please indicate by March 15, 2017, whether you will be submitting for either of these windows by emailing your Office of State Support program officers at [OSS.\[State\]@ed.gov](mailto:OSS.[State]@ed.gov) (e.g., OSS.WestVirginia@ed.gov).

Assessment Peer Reviewers

The Department relies upon expert peers to review the evidence submitted by States. These peers are educators, researchers, and experts in educational assessments with knowledge of technical

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

aspects of large-scale assessments and experience with the operation of State assessment systems, and relevant specialized expertise, such as developing accessible assessments for special populations such as students with disabilities and English learners, designing technology-based assessments, developing alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards, scoring and reporting assessments, or English language arts, mathematics, or science content knowledge. Many of these individuals have worked in State educational agencies. Collectively, these individuals have deep knowledge and expertise regarding large scale student assessments. The Department issued a call for peer reviewers in fall 2015 and reviewed the experience of these individuals to establish the roster of persons who could serve as peer reviewers in 2016. The peers who reviewed the 38 States in 2016 were selected from this roster. Prior to selecting a peer to review any State's assessment system, the Department checks to ensure there are no conflicts of interest. Enclosed with this letter we are providing the full list of eligible peer reviewers to provide information about the peer review process and shed light on the overall qualifications of the peer reviewers. In order to protect the integrity of the peer review process, the Department will not provide the names of peer reviewers for a given State.

Transitioning Between Assessments

The Department is aware that many States are continuing to make changes to their assessments, including periodically reviewing State academic content standards. When that happens, States develop or revise their assessment systems to align to the content standards. We want to remind States that historically when States undertake this work, they work to revise or develop new assessments while continuing to administer their current assessments. States are required, under both the ESEA, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and as amended by the ESSA, to annually assess all students in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school in reading/language arts and mathematics and once each in grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12 in science. This is vital to provide needed information to parents and educators about how individual students and schools and districts are doing. While the Department approved a one-time waiver to States that were transitioning from their old reading/language arts and mathematics assessments to new, college- and career-ready assessments so that they could administer a field test of the new assessments in 2013–2014 due to the unique circumstances that year (i.e., the large number of States impacted and the significant change from the old to the new assessments), the Department's general expectation is that requirements for annual assessments are met, and that the data from annual assessments continues to be reported annually. The Department encourages States to plan carefully for any necessary transition between assessments to ensure the State is continuing to assess all students and providing individual assessment results to parents and educators. Our colleagues at the National Center for Education Statistics prepared a short brief on some options to consider when transitioning assessment programs. We have enclosed this document with this letter for your consideration. We encourage you to consult with your technical advisory committee to develop a transition plan as you develop new assessment systems to ensure data are available each year to inform decision making and provide useful, actionable data to parents and educators.

New Assessment Regulations Webinar Opportunity

High-quality assessments are essential to effectively educating students, measuring progress, and promoting equity. Done well and thoughtfully, they provide critical information for educators,

families, the public, and students themselves and create the basis for improving outcomes for all learners. Done poorly, in excess, or without clear purpose, however, they take valuable time away from teaching and learning, and may drain creative approaches from our classrooms. In October 2015, President Obama announced a [Testing Action Plan](#) to restore balance to America's classrooms by ensuring fewer, better, and fairer tests.

Consistent with the President's plan, and as the Department supports States in implementing the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, we are focused on promoting a high-quality, well-rounded education for every student while ensuring critical protections and equity of opportunity for all students. On December 8, 2016, the Department released two Notices of Final Regulations (NFRs) that implement provisions of Title I of the ESSA – one for the requirements for State assessments under [Title I, Part A](#), which went through negotiated rulemaking in spring 2016, and one for the innovative assessment demonstration pilot in [Title I, Part B](#) – that together seek to ensure States administer high-quality, annual assessments that are worth taking and provide meaningful data about student success, while also encouraging States and districts to continue to push the field of assessment forward through innovation. As we previously announced, we are hosting a webinar on these new regulations on Wednesday, January 11, 2017 from 2:00-3:30 p.m. Eastern time. You may register [here](#).

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students. If you have any questions, please contact Don Peasley of my staff at Donald.Peasley@ed.gov. I look forward to our continued partnership as we move ahead with this critical work.

Sincerely,

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Patrick Rooney
Deputy Director
Office of State Support

cc: Council of Chief State School Officers
State Title I Directors
State Special Education Directors

Enclosures:

State Assessment Peer Reviewers

NCES Recommendations regarding the transition of large scale student assessment programs

Appendix A: List of Eligible Assessment Peer Reviewers as of December 2016

State Assessment Peer Reviewers (List of All Eligible Peers)		
Last name	First name	Organizational Affiliation (as of April 2016)
Abbott	Amy	Old Dominion University
Abell	Rosemary	ROSE Consulting Inc.
Airola	Denise	University of Arkansas
Albano	Anthony	University of Nebraska
Allen	David	Texas A&M International University
Ames	Allison	James Madison University
Auty	William	Independent Consultant
Beck	Michael	Independent Consultant
Bezruczko	Nikolaus	Chicago School for Professional Psychology
Bowles	Melissa	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Bradshaw	Laine	The University of Georgia
Broadus	Angela	The University of Kansas
Buchanan	William	Minneapolis Public Schools (MN)
Buckley	Sean (Jack)	College Board
Carlson	Ralph	University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Chadwick	Dianne	Iowa Department of Education
Chen	Jing	Independent Consultant
Choi	Youn-Jeng	The University of Alabama
Cobitz	Chris	Independent Consultant
Collins-Ayanlaja	Carol	Eastern Illinois University
Colvin	Kimberly	University at Albany
Cook	H. Gary	Wisconsin Center for Educational Research
Croft	Michelle	ACT, Inc
Dadey	Nathan	The National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc.
Dai	Shenghai	School of Education, Indiana University
Davidson	Anne	Lake Tahoe Community College
Davis	Elizabeth	Odell Education
Deeter	Thomas	Iowa Department of Education
Duong	Minh	Pacific Metrics Corp.
Edyburn	Dave	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Englert	Kerry	Seneca Consulting
Fabrizio	Louis	North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Farley	Dan	University of Oregon
Filbin	Janet	University of Colorado at Denver
Foy	Valorie	Nebraska Department of Education
Galeshi	Roofia	Radford University
Gholson	Melissa	West Virginia Department of Education
Goldberg	Gail	Independent Consultant
Goldschmidt	Pete	California State University, Northridge
Hall	Sharon	NCEO, University of Minnesota
Hardy	Assunta	Hezel Associates, LLC
Harmon	David	Independent Consultant

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Harmon	Michael	Radical Disciples, Inc
Hauger	Jeffrey	New Jersey Department of Education
Hembry	Tracey	Alpine Testing Solutions
Henly	George	Independent Consultant
Hennings	Sara Strouss	Independent Consultant
Henry	Steve	Independent Consultant
Herrick	Michael	Herrick Research LLC
Hogan	Tiffany	BluePrint Consulting, Decatur, Georgia
Hott	Brittany	Texas A&M University-Commerce
Howard	Tammy	North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Insko	William	Houghton Mifflin Harcourt - Assessment Studio
Katims	Nancy	Independent Consultant
Kehe	Martin	GED Testing Service, LLC
Kettler	Ryan	Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
King	James	University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg
Kocher	A. Thel	Independent Consultant
Kroening	James	ELA and Social Studies Group
Lakin	Joni	Auburn University
Lawrence	Barbara	Genealogical Consulting and Research
Lima	Vincent	Professional Testing, Inc.
Lindner	John A.	St. Paul Public Schools
Loomis	Susan Cooper	Independent Consultant
Lorie	William	Independent Consultant
Martineau	Joseph	The National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc.
Matlock	Ki Lynn	Oklahoma State Univ.
Matter	M. Kevin	Independent Consultant
Matthews-Lopez	Joy	Professional Testing, Inc.
Maxcy	Horace	Independent Consultant
Meyer III	J. Patrick	University of Virginia
Molock	Jeanine W.	Independent Consultant
Morse	Phil	Independent Consultant
Moy	Ray	University of New York
Muehsler	Hans	Professional Educator
Okan	Bulut	University of Alberta
Olson	John	Independent Consultant
OMalley	Kimberly	Pearson's Research and Innovation Network
Payton	Tameka L.	Maryland State Dept. of Education
Phillips	Gary W.	American Institutes for Research
Piper	Carrie	NW Evaluation Association
Poggio	John P.	University of Kansas
Pooja	Shivraj	Southern Methodist University

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Porter	Justin	Texas Education Agency
Reeves	Todd D.	Northern Illinois University
Reiss	Patricia	Hawaii Dept. of Education
Rhudy	Vaughn G.	West Virginia Department of Education
Rodeck	Elaine	Independent Consultant
Roeber	Edward D.	Independent Consultant
Russell	Lynette E.	Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Saez	Sharon Marie	WestEd
Sappington	Terri A.	West Virginia Department of Education
Schafer	William D.	Independent Consultant
Schulz	Matthew	Independent Consultant
Secolsky	Charles	Independent Consultant
Shaw	Kris Lynn	Kansas State Department of Education
Sheinker	Jan	Independent Consultant
Shneyderman	Aleksandr	Miami-Dade City Schools (FL)
Shultz	Pohai	University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
Sinclair	Norma	Independent Consultant
Sinharay	Sandip	Pacific Metrics Corp.
Snow	Judy	Montana Department of Education
Song	Hao	National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners
Staniewska	Dorota	Questar Assessment, Inc.
Stevenson	Jose	Independent Consultant
Stone	Clement A.	University of Pittsburgh
Sukin	Tia	Pacific Metrics Corp.
Swaffield	Suzanne	South Carolina Department of Education
Talento-Miller	Eileen	Graduate Management Admission Council
Taylor	Melinda	Pearson Educational Measurement
Templin	Jonathan	University of Kansas
Thacker	Arthur	HUMRO, Inc.
Thorstensen	Beata	Albuquerque Public Schools (NM)
Toland	Michael	University of Kentucky
Traynor	Anne	Purdue University
Triscari	Robert	Florida Gulf Coast University
Verges	Vincent	Florida Department of Education
Walker	Cindy	University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee
Walker	Michael	College Bd. Newtown PA
Wang	Ze	University of Missouri
Wanser	Teresa	Lincoln (NE) Public Schools
Warkomski	Fran	Independent Consultant
Warner	Zachary	New York State Education Department
Wayne	Charlie	Pennsylvania Department of Education
White	Carole	Independent Consultant
Wiley	Andrew	Alpine Testing Solutions

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Last name	First name	Organizational Affiliation (as of April 2016)
Winter	Phoebe	Independent Consultant
Wright	Heather	School District of Polk County (FL)
Wright	Keith	Secondary School Admissions Test Board
Yu	Lei	Measured Progress
Zack	June E.	American Institutes for Research
Zenisky	April	Independent Consultant
Zhang	Liru	Delaware Department of Education
Zheng	Yi	Arizona State University
Ziker	Cindy	Independent Consultant
Zyskowski	Gloria	Texas Education Agency

Appendix B: Recommendations regarding the transition of large scale student assessment programs.

A brief prepared by the National Center for Educational Statistics for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, December 2016

Developing assessments aligned to new content standards requires creating and field testing a sufficiently large item pool that can yield reliable scores for reporting purposes. Below we discuss three specific options to consider in field testing items for an assessment that is aligned to a new set of content standards. The common purpose behind all three is to enable field testing of a large pool of items aligned to new content standards while avoiding or minimizing the number of students who need to take more than one State assessment (i.e., “double testing”) during the year of transition between assessments.

Option 1: Embedded field test

Field test items for the new assessment can be embedded in the last administration of the old assessment. Most states already conduct embedded field testing to replace released items in their existing assessments. If an old assessment is to be transitioned out, there would be no reason to field test additional items for that assessment. Table 1 below illustrates how this option would play out before, during and after the transition.

Table 1. Form design for embedded field testing before, during and after transition

		Old assessment	New Assessment
Before transition	Operational block	x	
	Field test block	x	
During transition	Operational block	x	
	Field test block		x
After transition	Operational block		x
	Field test block		x

Note. Operational and field test items need not to be administered as intact blocks. We use the term “block” to mean a collection of items with a certain expected testing time.

Before the transition year, each form would be composed of operational and field test items measuring the old standards. The transition year is the year in which operational results would be based on the old assessment for the last time. Therefore there would be no need to field test more items measuring the old standards during the transition year. This allows you to use this portion of the forms to field test items for the new assessment¹. The items field-tested during the transition year become the operational items in the following year. After transition, the forms would be composed of operational and field test items measuring the new standards.

This option does not involve “double testing” of any student. In addition, total testing time per student can be kept the same if a larger number of forms can be developed and administered in the transition year. An additional consideration for this option is that it will require additional planning in test administration if the mode of the old and the new assessments is different.

¹ In order not to increase the testing time while field testing a large pool of items during the transition year, a larger number of forms would need to be created in that year than would otherwise be needed.

Appendix B: Recommendations regarding the transition of large scale student assessment programs.

Option 2: Embedded field test with split sample

If individual items to be field tested for the new assessment take longer to complete (e.g. essay, scenario based items, multi-part items etc.) compared to the field test items typically given with the old assessment, the operational part of the old assessment may need to be shortened during the transition year in order to avoid an increase in total testing time per student. However, shortening the operational part of the old assessment may result in subscale scores that are not sufficiently reliable to be reported. If a State desires to maintain reporting at the subscale level, it can consider administering forms with a smaller portion of operational items to a subsample of students selected within each school. In this case subscores would be reported only at the school level using data from the remainder of the student sample who take the full-length version of the old assessment. Both samples would need to be representative at the level the subscores would be aggregated (e.g., school or district). Table 2 below illustrates the form design for each of these two samples during the transition year. Sample 1 takes the full-length operational block for the old assessment. Reliable subscores can be generated for this sample. Depending on the sample size, these subscores, in turn, can be used for reporting purposes at the school or district level. Sample 2, on the other hand, takes a shorter version of the operational block for the old assessment and a longer field test block featuring items for the new assessment. This shorter operational block would still need to be long enough to yield reliable overall scale scores. Similar to Option 1, this option will also require additional planning in test administration if the mode of the old and the new assessments is different.

Table 2. Assignment of blocks to two samples of students during the transition year

	Old assessment	New assessment
Operational block - full length	Sample 1	
Field test block		Sample 1
Operational block - shorter	Sample 2	
Field test block - longer		Sample 2

Note. Subscale scores will not be generated for students taking the shorter sets of operational items during transition year.

Option 3: Small stand-alone sample-based field test

The field test for the new assessment can be administered to a small subsample of students that is representative² of the student body at the state level. Depending on the equating design and the scaling method, a sample of as few as 500 students (per item) may be sufficient for field testing purposes. Ideally, the field test would be a small sample of items per student and take place directly after the operational administration of the old assessment in order to minimize burden on schools in terms of test scheduling and administration. This option can be carried out even if the testing mode (i.e. paper versus digital) of the old and the new assessment is not the same. While some students would take a slightly longer test (administering the old assessment and field testing items for the new assessment), the schedule could be set to minimize this impact to a small number of students and with minimal impact to instruction or scheduling.

² Certain subgroups (e.g., students with disabilities) may need to be oversampled.