



The National Center for Fair & Open Testing

## **Recommendations for Statewide Assessment Reform: 2023**

Given federal requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act, the National Center for Fair & Open Testing recommends the following actions – through legislation or state administrative action – to move public school assessment and accountability systems toward goals of deeper learning and equity for all student groups:

1. **Limit standardized testing to the minimum federal requirements.** ESSA requires that states administer 17 standardized tests in order to measure student progress and disaggregate the data among subgroups of students every year in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics in grades 3-8, once in grades 3-5 and 6-9 in Science, and once in ELA, Mathematics and Science in high school. Limiting standardized testing to those federal minimums would protect the time and energy of students and teachers for the important work of learning and the demonstration of knowledge and skills through authentic performance-based assessments.
2. **Remove high-stakes consequences from standardized tests.**
  - a) Decouple standardized exam requirements from granting high school diplomas. Course completion and demonstration of state-required skills and knowledge through authentic assessment should be the criteria for graduation.
  - b) Eliminate use of standardized test results to rate teachers, principals and superintendents.
  - c) Eliminate use of standardized test results as the sole criteria to trigger school remediation or state receivership of a school or district.
  - d) Eliminate retention in grade based on standardized test scores.

**3. Support innovative assessment.** States should promote development of local performance based assessments and scaling to a statewide system of performance-based accountability that accounts for local models. Such support could include:

a) Develop a pilot network of districts and schools that will develop effective performance-based learning and assessment models and take part in intensive research, development, and implementation processes focused on scaling assessment and accountability systems statewide.

b) Support shared communities of practice.

c) Create banks of performance tasks and assessments using models developed by local education agencies (LEAs).

d) Facilitate professional development opportunities, including demonstrations of effective teaching and performance-based assessment practices by pilot network members.

e) Support rubric design and standard setting by LEAs to develop systems of assessment and accountability. This includes sponsoring rubric creation, conducting inter-rater reliability exercises to ensure commonality of scoring, and engaging in an iterative process of setting benchmarks for various competencies and content and skill mastery.

f) Partner with universities and research institutions to study and support practice and performance-based assessments and their use for the purposes of accountability.

g) Develop, together with LEAs and their communities, criteria for competence and mastery in core areas that secondary school graduates statewide must attain and that will be effectively demonstrated through performance-based assessments.

h) Develop a “system of systems” model that will achieve vertical coherence between local and state systems through the implementation

of a governance structure that supports state-and-local co-creation of an accountability system.

#### 4. **Accountability**

States should not rely exclusively on individual student standardized test scores, or the collective standardized test scores of a school, as the criteria for holding districts and schools accountable and/or as the trigger for state intervention and remediation. States should be encouraged to create dashboards of multiple criteria that are indicators of school quality. Categories of quality indicators could include: resources and inputs; quality of teaching staff; leadership; school culture; academic learning (including performance); health and well-being; community engagement.