



## Summary of Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority

April 2018

### OVERVIEW

April 2, 2018 was the U.S. Department of Education's deadline for applications for the innovative assessment pilot. We're excited to dig into applications submitted by Louisiana, New Hampshire and Puerto Rico to test out new approaches to assessment. We expect the Department to offer states a second opportunity to apply in the next several years. We'll learn a lot from watching this initial round of states. In the meantime, states and other partners may benefit from a refresher that addresses key questions including:

- What is the innovative assessment pilot?
- How should states considering the pilot proceed?
- What can ALL states do now to improve and streamline their assessment systems?

### ExcelinEd's Vision for the Future of State Assessment Systems

ExcelinEd's vision is that future state assessment systems will better support the growing transition to student-centered learning. Ideally, these systems will be adaptive, easy-to-access, and provide multiple, real-time measures of student progress toward mastery of state standards. It is our hope that these assessments will be designed to complement new and different forms of teaching and learning as they evolve, including personalized learning.

We recognize that overhauling assessment systems must be done incrementally and requires a long-term commitment. The Innovative Assessment and Accountability Demonstration Authority ("Innovative Assessment Pilot") under the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides states with an opportunity to take a crucial first step toward next generation assessments.<sup>1</sup>

### Q&A

#### What *is* the innovative assessment pilot? <sup>2</sup>

ESSA requires states to administer statewide assessments in reading/English language arts and math in grades 3-8 and once in high school, and science at each grade span. These assessments must be valid, reliable and aligned to the state's academic standards and "provide coherent and timely information" about student attainment of the standards with grade-level proficiency determinations.

Under the new innovative assessment pilot, ESSA provides flexibility for states, if approved, to "test drive" next generation assessment systems in a subset of districts and use the results of those assessments in their state accountability system. The U.S. Department of Education can initially approve up to seven states to participate, including consortia of states, with additional states permitted to join later.

<sup>1</sup> Phillips, K., (2017). *Policy, Pilots and the Path to Competency-Based Education: A National Landscape*, Foundation for Excellence in Education and Education Counsel.

<sup>2</sup> Id.



Applications for the pilot are due April 2, 2018.<sup>3</sup> Application requirements are extensive and require a significant commitment on the part of participating states as no additional federal funds are available for this pilot. States may propose assessment systems that include competency-based or performance-based assessments, among other models. Regardless of the assessment type, states' proposed assessment model must:

- Result in an annual, summative, grade-level proficiency determination for each student.
- Meet the same peer review requirements for alignment, rigor, reliability, validity and comparability as the state's traditional statewide assessment model.<sup>4</sup>
- Include a plan to scale statewide use of the assessment within the pilot period of 5 to 7 years. (States may begin implementing the innovative assessment in a subset of districts.)

The Innovative Assessment Pilot does NOT replace or affect assessment flexibilities already available to states under ESSA. These flexibilities provide states with the ability to:

- Design a state assessment system that includes multiple ways for students to demonstrate knowledge and reasoning skills that may include portfolios, projects or extended performance tasks.
- Use computer-based adaptive testing that includes out-of-grade-level items while still reporting grade-level proficiency.
- Evaluate independently the alignment of nationally recognized college entrance tests (e.g., SAT or ACT) to state standards in high school to determine if they meet all requirements of the federal law and peer review, including accessibility for all students.
- Explore the administration of a set of interim assessments that can be rolled up into a single annual result for each student. States should determine the cost effectiveness of this approach and whether it would reduce duplicative testing and how it will impact overall student assessment time.

### How should states considering the pilot proceed?<sup>5</sup>

1. Identify the goal and vision for the assessment overhaul. The application requirements for consultation with all stakeholders statewide are extensive. States must be able to clearly articulate how this proposal is responding to stakeholder concerns and supports the state's vision for student outcomes.
2. Perhaps most importantly, determine if participation in the pilot is necessary considering that ESSA already provides states with multiple options for assessment innovation. This [tool](#), developed by the Council of Chief State Schools Officers, may help states consider whether there is sufficient flexibility under ESSA to implement their ideas for a new assessment system without applying for the pilot.
3. Carefully weigh the short- and long-term costs for developing and implementing the pilot, as well as the demands it will place on the state and its school districts in the form of capacity and commitment of key stakeholders. The pilot will take time to prepare for and require considerable technical and financial investments to succeed.

<sup>3</sup> [Innovative Assessment Pilot Application](#), based on [Title I, Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 \(ESEA\), Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority, 34 C.F.R. § 200 \(2016\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> States can plan to prove comparability by: (1) administering both the innovative assessment and the traditional statewide assessment to all participating students; (2) administering both assessments to a representative sample of students; (3) including in the innovative assessment, common assessment items or performance tasks from the statewide assessment; (4) including in the statewide assessment, common assessment items or performance tasks from the innovative assessment; or (5) an alternative method developed by the state.

<sup>5</sup> Phillips, K., (2016). "[Opportunity Ahead: The Innovative Assessment and Accountability Demonstration Authority](#)", *Getting Smart*.



4. Consider taking a “bite-sized” first step into the pilot. For example, seek flexibility to innovate with the state’s middle school science test, rather than experimenting with the state’s entire math or reading assessment system.

### What can ALL states do now to improve and streamline their assessment systems?<sup>6</sup>

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Many states may not be ready to embark on the pilot, or depending on their long-term plans, the federal pilot may not be the right first step toward reinventing their assessment systems. Fortunately, there are incremental steps that states can take to improve and streamline their existing assessment systems and better support innovative learning models. [ExcelinEd’s Fewer, Better Tests](#) policy provides states with a set of best practices that can help ensure that the hallmark qualities of personalized learning – transparency and flexibility – are reflected in their state assessment systems. These best practices include:

1. Procure summative assessments to allow for flexible administration for students to demonstrate mastery when they are ready. This may mean allowing districts or schools to administer the state summative assessment once per quarter or on demand once students have completed the content.
2. Utilize online assessments to enable the acceleration of both delivery and scoring of assessments as well as the use of innovative item-types to measure higher order skills that paper-and-pencil tests may not be able to assess.
3. Develop strategies to streamline state and district assessment systems (e.g., taking an inventory or audit of existing assessments) to eliminate duplicative, low-quality or unnecessary tests.
4. Provide technical assistance to LEAs for the development or procurement of interim or benchmark assessments.
5. Ensure teachers and parents receive useful, clear, concise and timely results from all statewide assessments.

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<sup>6</sup> Phillips, K., (2017). [Policy, Pilots and the Path to Competency-Based Education: A National Landscape](#), Foundation for Excellence in Education and Education Counsel.