



# MAXIMIZING ASSESSMENT FLEXIBILITY Pt.2

## *Transitioning to Student-Centered Learning: Policy Solutions for States September 2018*

*While working with states to implement innovative student-centered learning policies and programs, ExcelinEd has identified policies and practices that hinder new student-centered learning models. **Transitioning to Student-Centered Learning: Policy Solutions for States** is a policy brief series dedicated to addressing these challenges.*

### THE CHALLENGE OF EVOLVING ASSESSMENTS

*As we outlined in [Maximizing Assessment Flexibility Part 1](#), as more innovative, student-centered models emerge, our traditional, state-level standardized assessments will eventually need to evolve to measure proficiency and progress in new ways.*

#### A Vision for the Future of Testing

In the future, we expect that all 50 states will have systems of next-generation assessments that are built around student-centered learning. These systems will be technology enabled, more efficient, adaptive, available to students whenever they are ready and will provide multiple, real-time measures of student progress toward mastery. These systems will better support new forms of teaching and learning without sacrificing our ability to safeguard and monitor accountability, quality and equity.

Although most states are not yet ready to adopt this vision of testing, every state has the opportunity to make significant improvements to their assessment systems with the flexibility provided by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). These improvements will build the foundation for a next generation system of assessments and address some of the pushback against assessments many states have experienced.

Of note, ESSA requires any assessment to provide evidence of valid, reliable and comparable results.

### POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS TO BEGIN THE TRANSITION TO INNOVATIVE ASSESSMENT MODELS

An evolution of state assessments will be incremental and take time. Developing new assessments requires substantial technical and financial investment, as well as political will. Many of the assessment strategies required for this vision remain untested and unproven, but there are practical steps states can consider to explore new options carefully and thoughtfully.

#### Recommendation: Maximize the Flexibility and Opportunity to Innovate Provided by ESSA

##### Leverage Technology

- Continue the transition to online assessments to accelerate 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 cannot assess.
- Explore a transition to adaptive testing that includes out-of-grade-level items while still reporting grade-level proficiency thus maximizing a state's ability to capture range of learning and measure growth.

##### Modify the Approach

- Consider administering a set of interim tests throughout the year that can be rolled up into a single annual result for each student. Ideally, this approach will decrease overall student assessment time. States will need to determine the cost-effectiveness of this approach and ensure there is no duplicative testing.
- See [Maximizing Assessment Flexibility Part 1](#) for recommendations on flexible testing windows.
- Determine if the state's vision for a new state assessment system will warrant application for the [ESSA Innovative Assessment and Accountability Demonstration Authority](#). Under this umbrella, states can begin to test drive next generation assessment systems in a subset of districts in lieu of the statewide assessment. The flexibility afforded to states with approved applications allows for a deliberate and phased in rollout.