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This response was prepared for the Pennsylvania Legislature’s Joint Committee on the Every Student Succeeds Act

Your Questions:

You requested additional resources relating to assessments and teacher evaluations.

Our Response:

Assessments: Testing Time

➤ **How much time do students spend testing?**

In the Spring of 2014, the Council of the Great City Schools—an organization of the nation’s **largest urban school systems**—surveyed these districts’ assessment practices. [This report](#) presents the findings from that survey. Some of the key findings include:

- Testing time in districts is determined as much by the **number of times assessments are given** during the school year as it is by the number of assessments.
- There is **no correlation** between the amount of mandated testing time and the reading and math scores in grades four and eight on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
- Test burden is particularly high at the **high-school level**, although much of this testing is optional or is done only for students enrolled in special courses or programs.
- The average amount of testing time devoted to mandated tests among eighth-grade students in the 2014-15 school year was approximately 4.22 days or 2.34 percent of school time.
 - **Eighth grade** was the grade in which testing time was the highest.
 - This only counted time spent on tests that were required for all students in the eighth grade and does not include time to administer or prepare for testing, nor does it include sample, optional, and special-population testing.
- Some 39 percent of districts reported having to **wait between two and four months** before final state test **results** were available at the school level, thereby minimizing their utility for instructional purposes. In addition, most state tests are administered in the spring and results come back to the districts after the conclusion of the school year.
- The **total costs** of these assessments do not constitute a large share of an average urban school system’s total budget.

The High-Quality Assessment Project at Education First compiled research and state reports as of February 2015, finding a “surprising degree of agreement across studies” on testing time. Some [key findings](#) include:

- Total time devoted to testing (including all state and district tests) takes up a fraction of learning time. Two of the studies that tried to estimate the total time for standardized tests concluded the **average was about 1.7% percent of students' total instructional time**—although they also found this percentage **varies greatly** district to district (for example, urban districts appear to test more).
- State testing requirements **vary dramatically**, with some states expecting much more than others.
- **Locally mandated or administered** standardized tests take up more time during the school year than state tests.
- Students are **tested frequently**: They sit for a standardized test as frequently as twice per month and, on average, once per month.

➤ **How do states address testing time?**

In response to concerns about over-testing, states are taking several approaches to reduce the testing burden. From our resource on [Testing Trends](#):

Switch assessment provider

Ohio switched from PARCC to AIR-developed tests and has demonstrated that the switch reduced testing time by 39 percent to 50 percent compared to the previous year's tests. Additionally, the Ohio Department of Education has given schools flexibility to choose to administer an entire assessment in one day or break up the assessment into two parts administered over two days.

Eliminate certain assessments that are duplicative or unnecessary to meet federal requirements

By eliminating the performance task piece of the English-language arts test in certain grades, Michigan reduced testing time in certain grades by two-and-a-half hours per grade. The state has replaced the 11th grade math and English-language arts assessments with a high school exam that includes the SAT, effectively reducing 11th grade testing time by eight hours.

Indiana allowed the state Department of Education to waive the administration of the social studies part of the state assessment, given in grades 5 and 7, for 2015.

Limit administration time of state and local assessments

A 2015 Florida law permits assessments to take up no more than 5 percent of a student's total school hours each school year. Florida also eliminated the 11th grade English-language arts assessment.

South Carolina recently passed a [bill](#) prohibiting statewide summative testing from taking more than 8 days each school year.

A combination of actions

Colorado assesses social studies on a sampling basis by only testing schools once every three years. Colorado is able to propose this solution because social studies is not a federally required assessment.

Colorado also replaced the 10th and 11th grade PARCC assessment with the PSAT in 10th grade and the SAT in 11th grade.

Assessment Audits

- The organization Achieve provides a [Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts](#), which guides districts through the process of auditing and analyzing the usefulness of their current assessments.
- The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) released [a framework](#) to guide state and district leaders through an assessment analysis and potential reduction.
- [Sample Assessment Inventory Questions & Sample Assessment Survey Questions](#)

Assessments: Timing of Results

Parents, teachers and policymakers have expressed concern over the timeliness of receiving results, although consortia and vendors stress that the efficiency of scoring and returning results will improve over time. A couple of states have passed laws that essentially prohibit test scores from being used for certain purposes if they are not returned in a timely manner:

- In Georgia, certain criteria for promotion and placement of students in grades 3, 5 and 8 won't apply if the state Board of Education is unable to provide timely assessment results as the state rolls out new tests.
- Similarly, in Tennessee districts can opt out of including students' state test scores in their final grades if the district does not receive the scores at least five instructional days before the end of the school year.

Assessments: College Entrance Exams

➤ **Improving College Enrollment**

Several studies find that statewide college entrance exam testing in high school increased postsecondary enrollment:

- [The ACT of Enrollment: The College Enrollment Effects of State-Required College Entrance Exam Testing](#)
- [The Maine Question: How Is 4-Year College Enrollment Affected by Mandatory College Entrance Exams?](#)
- [ACT for All: The Effect of Mandatory College Entrance Exams on Postsecondary Attainment and Choice](#)

However, research is unclear about whether college entrance exams are the best predictor of college success.

➤ **Alignment with State Standards**

Prior to replacing their high school summative assessments with a college entrance exam, Connecticut and New Hampshire conducted independent reviews to determine that their college entrance exam aligned with each state's standards. The U.S. Department of Education has placed conditions on some states' Title I funds pending addressing some issues with using college entrance exams as accountability assessments, including the alignment of the test to these states' standards.

ECS recommends the following resources on assessment alignment to state standards:

- A 2010 [report](#) from ACT meant to help state leaders understand the relationship between the Common Core State Standards and the ACT College Readiness Standards;

- A 2014 [document](#) from College Board explaining the SAT’s relationship to state standards such as the Common Core (see p. 23);
- An Education First [policy brief](#): Key Questions for State Policymakers when Selecting High School Assessments;
- A Fordham Institute [study](#) that looks at the alignment between several multi-state tests (the ACT Aspire, PARCC, Smarter Balanced, and the MCAS) and the Common Core State Standards.

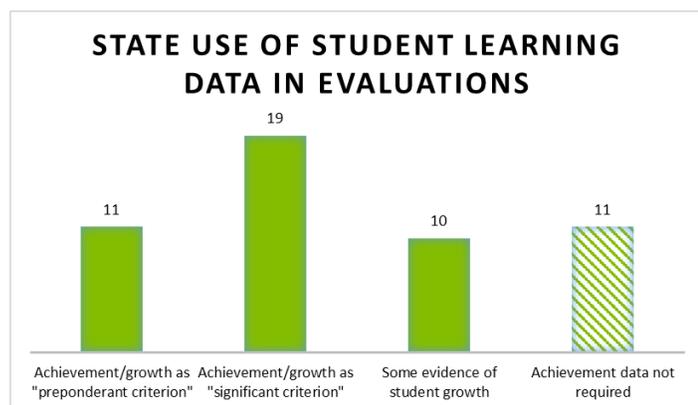
Teacher Evaluations: Links to Student Achievement

History: How did we get here?

2009-12 Federal Race to the Top (RTT) grants inspired states and districts to revamp outdated evaluation systems. RTT priorities for evaluations included using multiple measures and taking student achievement growth into account as a significant factor. Under their NCLB waivers, states were required to develop and implement teacher and school leader evaluation systems that used multiple measures including student growth for all students.

National Landscape

- As of Sept. 2016, **39 states and D.C.** require some objective measure of student growth in teacher evaluations (up from 15 in 2009).
- **11 states** (CO, CT, DC, HI, KY, LA, NJ, NM, NY, PA, TN) **require that student achievement/growth be used as the “preponderant criterion” in teacher evaluations**, up from only four states in 2009.
- **19 states include student growth measures as a “significant criterion” in teacher evaluations.** Eleven of those states (AZ, FL, GA, ID, IL, MI, MN, NV, OH, RI, VA) explicitly define what “significant” means. Eight states (AR, IN, KS, MD, ME, MO, OR, SD) do not provide these explicit guidelines.
- **10 states** (DE, MA, ND, SC, TX, UT, WA, WI, WV, WY) **require some objective evidence of student growth in teacher evaluations.** At one time, SC, UT and WI required student growth to be a “significant criterion.”
- Student growth data is **not required in 11 states** (AK, AL, CA, IA, MS, MT, NC, NE, NH, OK, VT).



Source: NCTQ, Sept. 2016

Implementation

Many states have **delayed implementing** new teacher evaluation systems, and are also **moving away** from including student growth in evaluation scores – whether that means postponing their inclusion, reducing their percentage in the evaluation formula, or eliminating the measures altogether (AL, MS, NC and OK). New evidence suggests many state evaluation systems **are not actually reflecting student growth** as intended.

The Every Student Succeeds Act

The Every Student Succeeds Act removes the teacher evaluation requirements established under NCLB waivers and instead permits states and districts to develop and implement evaluation systems.

Though the research is mixed, many experts conclude that while the use of student growth in teacher evaluations is imperfect, it should be included as one of multiple measures of teacher effectiveness, likely in addition to other metrics such as classroom observations and student surveys.

State Policy Examples

- **Indiana delays implementation.** [H.B. 1003](#) provides that ISTEP test scores or a school's category or designation of school improvement for the 2014-15 school year may not be used by a school district as part of an annual performance evaluation of a particular certificated employee unless the use of the ISTEP program test scores or a school's category or designation of school improvement would improve the particular teacher's annual performance rating. Requires that if ISTEP test scores or a schools' category or designation of improvement is not used in a particular employee's annual evaluation, the weight of all other measures be proportionately increased.
- **Louisiana reduces impact of VAM measure.** [S.B. 477](#) Instead of requiring that 50 percent of student growth be determined using a value-added model, requires that 50 percent of student growth be based on measures determined by the state board. Specifies that 35 percent of the overall evaluation be based on data derived through a value-added assessment model as a factor to determine student growth.
- **Oklahoma permits, but no longer requires, the use of student performance in evaluations.** [H.B. 2957](#) requires that for all evaluations, student performance, including performance on state tests, must be discussed with the teacher. Allows, but no longer requires, student performance to be a consideration for the teacher's rating.
- **Utah prohibits using assessment scores in evaluations.** [H.B. 201](#) prohibits the use of end-of-level assessment scores in educator and administrator evaluations.

Proposed Legislation

- At least nine states are considering changes to their teacher evaluation systems (AZ, CO, IL, IN, NM, NV, NY, UT, WY).
- Legislation to **reduce the impact** of student achievement/growth on teacher evaluations is being considered in at least eight states (AZ, CO, IL, IN, NM, NV, NY, and WY). Arizona is also considering legislation that would increase the impact of student achievement/growth on teacher evaluations.