



# Assessment Working Committee

## Georgia's State Plan: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

### Meeting Summary Monday, October 3, 2016

**Committee Members Present:** Melissa Fincher (Chair); Steve Barker (Co-Chair); Juan-Carlos Aguilar; Steve Flynt; Rodney Green; Lynn Holland; Rustin Howard; Beth Kieffer; Michael Lamont; Rochelle Lofstrand; Allan Meyer; Claire Miller; Allison Oxford; Anthony Pack; Michelle Purvis; Jennifer Rippner; Katesa Walker; Frank Williams

**External Expert:** Scott Norton, Council of Chief State School Officers

The meeting began with a review of the goals for the day's discussion and a quick review of the September 1 meeting outcomes.

The goals for the meeting included discussing potential ESSA flexibility in the following three areas:

- Nationally Recognized High-School Assessments;
- Multiple Statewide Interim Assessments;
- Innovative Assessment Pilot.

In reviewing the September meeting outcomes, a committee member who was unable to attend suggested an additional possible threat to achieving the goals of the assessment program: If teachers are unable to appropriately understand and analyze the data emanating from the assessment program, they will not be able to use it effectively to improve instruction.

#### Exploring ESSA Flexibility for Assessment

Scott Norton, Strategic Initiative Director, Standards, Assessment, and Accountability, for the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), provided an overview of the three areas of potential ESSA flexibility for assessment. After each topic, the committee discussed the advantages/disadvantages, barriers/challenges, and additional questions to be considered/answered.

#### *Nationally-Recognized High School Assessments*

ESSA includes a provision for states to allow local districts to administer a nationally-recognized college-ready assessment in high school in lieu of the state assessment. Such tests may include, but are not necessarily limited to, the SAT, ACT, AP, or IB. Such requests must meet specific criteria outlined in ESSA and developed by the state, including alignment, technical quality, comparability, and access (i.e., accommodations). Such requests must be submitted for federal peer review prior to their use and if approved, must be administered to all students in the district. Scott indicated the issue is not only 'Is the assessment high quality?' but also, 'Is it comparable and compatible enough?'

The committee discussed the following advantages: allowance of this option may meet a perceived local need given the allowable assessments (SAT, ACT, etc.) are well-known and well-regarded; allowance may also address the perception of too much testing. Disadvantages discussed by the committee

included concern that instruction could become focused on the test rather than the content standards; implications for instructional sequencing; equity issues; funding; additional confusion given multiple assessments would be in play; student motivation to do well.

Barriers/challenges included budget; possible procurement regulations; comparability; equity, given use of EOC as final exam and opportunity for students to take the tests on their own; accessibility for special populations and English learners (lack of accommodations); district resources to support implementation.

Additional questions to be answered included whether all students in a district would have to take the test (AP/IB) or just those enrolled in the associated course; what is the degree of alignment with Georgia content standards; is there vertical alignment with earlier grades; whether students would be allowed to take the test multiple times; would use of such test replace all EOCs or just some; when would the test be administered statewide?

The committee believed the local use of nationally-recognized high school assessments would be a heavy-lift for any district given the need to meet the technical requirements outlined in ESSA. The committee did not view administration of a college-ready assessment as something the state should pursue, but rather, such a decision should be local in nature – to include establishing the required technical evidence and funding – should a district wish to pursue this flexibility. Ultimately, approval must be contingent on the state’s ability to establish comparability within the accountability system. Consideration by the Accountability Working Committee is essential.

### ***Multiple Statewide Interim Assessments***

While ESSA requires the annual assessment of all students in the core content areas of reading, mathematics, and science, the law allows states to consider using a single statewide summative or multiple-interim assessments that yield a summative score. In introducing this topic, Scott provided an overview of several approaches a state may wish to consider. Benefits of such an approach may be that results are available in a timelier manner, during instruction rather than only at the end of instruction, and the potential to reduce testing burden if the interim assessments replace other formative assessments used at the local level. A key consideration is how multiple measures might ‘play-out’ on a statewide basis and how multiple measures would be combined for a summative rating.

In discussing this flexibility, the committee expressed concern that testing, in general, is not well understood – and specifically, the differences between formative, interim, and summative are not understood. Allowing multiple statewide interim assessments may likely have an unintended consequence of dictating curricular sequence, something that has historically been viewed as an important and valued district function. Communication would be a challenge, as would implementation.

The committee recommended that further study is needed and that this topic should be part of the innovative assessment opportunity offered by ESSA. The committee recommended that interim assessments not be pursued unless as part of the innovative assessment pilot opportunity.

### ***Innovative Assessment Pilot Opportunity***

ESSA introduces the opportunity of states to pursue, with district(s) partnership, innovative new approaches to assessment. The goal of this opportunity is to allow for ‘more valid, varied, and richer measures of student learning and progress.’ Such an approach should allow for a greater understanding of a broader set of skills and provide more timely and useful data allowing real-time adjustments to

instruction. Such an approach should also encourage better alignment with student-centered models of teaching and learning, such as competency-based education.

Scott provided an overview of the statutory highlights, which included the following:

- may pilot innovative assessments in a subset of districts;
- can be entirely performance-based – allowing an assessment or system of assessments that consist of performance tasks, portfolios, or extended learning tasks (singularly or in combination);
- can be administered when students are ready.

Importantly, the innovative assessment must be able to report grade-level proficiency for accountability purposes; the assessment must be scalable to be administered statewide; and it must provide comparable determinations for the state’s accountability system.

This approach is new and little is known/understood about how such an approach might work; draft regulations have been released for public comment. No additional funding is provided and the pilot is limited to 7 states. Innovative assessment pilots must be peer reviewed to ensure the assessment meets the technical requirements required by ESSA.

While Scott reported that many states have decided not to pursue this opportunity at this time, the committee requested discussing the possibility of linking the flexibility to offer multiple statewide interim assessments and the innovation assessment opportunity. Gwinnett County shared their interest in building curriculum/performance based assessments in grades 4 and 7. The committee expressed an interest in learning more about Gwinnett’s approach and plans at a future meeting.

### **Topics for Future Discussions**

Throughout the day’s discussion, the list of topics for future discussions was updated to include:

- Communication
- Opt-out
- Georgia’s local assessment inventory
- Flexibility for first year English-learners

### **Future Meetings**

Monday, October 31: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Monday, December 5: 12:30 pm – 3:30 pm