

## OVERVIEW OF THE PARTNERSHIP FOR ASSESSMENT OF READINESS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER

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*In January 2010, twenty-eight states signed an agreement to participate in the Common Assessment Partnership, facilitated by Achieve, and seventeen states signed with the Florida-led Common Assessment Consortium. Since then many leaders and assessment experts from these states have worked to develop a shared vision and set of design principles for a multi-state assessment system. The resulting consortium – the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers – is now working to develop an application for the Race to the Top Comprehensive Assessment System Competition; its work is guided by the Governing States of Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and the District of Columbia, and shaped by the work of the partnership’s additional design team states and the feedback of other participating states. Achieve continues to facilitate the work of these states. This document represents the current collective vision of the partnership as it works to develop its proposal. This design framework is preliminary and will continue to be refined as the partnership proceeds with its work over the next several weeks.*

The Race to the Top Assessment Competition presents states with an unprecedented opportunity to move from the state-led development of common core standards in mathematics and English language arts to a common measurement for student performance and growth. The Common Core State Standards will require students to demonstrate knowledge and skills in deep and meaningful ways, as well as to reason, synthesize, think critically, and solve problems. A compelling vision for common assessments demands fully measuring the depth and breadth of the concepts and skills represented in the Common Core State Standards. However, states recognize the tension between their desire for innovative, forward-looking assessments and the realities of limited resources available to them for ongoing test administration. States in this partnership have agreed to strike a balance between pushing ahead towards next-generation assessment systems while acknowledging the design and fiscal tradeoffs, including the ability to sustain these assessments over the long term.

#### **Purposes and Uses**

Partnership states have identified the following major purposes and uses for the assessment system results.

- The primary purpose is to measure and document students’ **college and career readiness** toward the end of high school and to measure students’ progress toward this target throughout the rest of the system. Students meeting the college and career readiness standards will be eligible for placement into entry-level credit-bearing, rather than remedial, courses in all public 2- and 4-year postsecondary institutions in all participating states.
- Additionally, the partnership is committed to ensuring that the assessments and results:
  - Are **comparable across states** at the student level;
  - Meet **internationally rigorous benchmarks**;
  - Allow valid measures of **student longitudinal growth**; and
  - Serve as a **signal for good instructional practices**.
- The results must be able to support multiple levels and forms of accountability including:
  - Decisions about **promotion and graduation for individual students**,
  - **Teacher and leader evaluations**, and
  - **School accountability** determinations.

## ***Preliminary Assessment Design Framework***

Partnership states envision common assessments that push beyond current state tests: assessing higher-order knowledge and skills, including the ability to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, reason, and problem solve; and raising the bar for content, rigor, and performance standards. The partnership's proposed design framework for assessments in both English language arts and mathematics in grades 3-8 and high school includes several performance-based tasks given throughout the school year as well as an end-of-year assessment.

- **Grades 3-8.** The assessment system for grades 3-8 will provide students, parents, and educators with clear signals about whether students are on track to acquiring the knowledge and skills foundational for success in and after high school. Reading, writing, and mathematics assessments will be administered at the end of each school year in all grades, and additional periodic components will be administered over the course of the school year.
- **High School.** The major focus of the high school assessment system will be to determine whether students can demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary for success in college and careers. The partnership is committed to **annual assessments** in high school in reading, writing, and mathematics, and is considering a number of approaches, including:
  - **End-of-course assessments** in mathematics and **end-of-year assessments** in English language arts.
  - **End-of-domain exams** to assess students at a key point during their high school experience in mathematics and/or English language arts.
  - **Modules** that would cover key topics in mathematics and offer states and districts flexibility around administration.
- The partnership is committed to college-ready determinations such that students meeting the standards will be eligible for placement into entry-level credit-bearing, rather than remedial, courses in public 2- and 4-year postsecondary institutions in all participating states.

The common assessments that states develop for elementary, middle, and high school will be characterized by the same key features. A comprehensive assessment system design will be used to ensure coherence among all components of the assessment system.

- **Measuring the full range of the Common Core State Standards.** The partnership will ensure that the assessments measure the depth and breadth of the Common Core State Standards and signal effective instructional practices to educators. Using a range of item types, including open-response tasks, the assessments will measure higher-order thinking skills and the complex performances required for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.
  - **End of year component.** The end-of-year component will include cognitively demanding items. In consideration of cost, scoring time, and test administration time, the partnership will pursue innovations in item types that are robust yet efficient in providing feedback to teachers, parents, schools, and districts.
  - **"Through-course" periodic components.** The partnership will develop performance task sequences to be administered throughout the course of the year that measure a broad set of knowledge and skills. For example, the performance tasks will include robust writing assessments for every grade 3-11 as well as components in mathematics that measure students' mathematical literacy. Through rigorous design, field trials, and standardization studies, the partnership will establish the technical defensibility of including these periodic through course tasks as part of the summative judgments of student performance.

- **Computer-Based Testing and Innovative Item Types.** The partnership is fully committed to moving to computer-based assessments both to enrich its measurement tools and to improve the efficiency of delivery and scoring. While the form of computer-based testing is still under discussion, all partnership states will strive to administer the initial operational assessment via computer in 2014-15 so that the partnership can maximize the potential of innovative computer-based item types. Some states may face challenges in migrating to computer-based testing that quickly; the partnership has set this timeline as a goal but still needs to determine the extent to which it is feasible for all participating states. If full migration to computer-based testing is not possible for all partnership states by that date, an alternate date will be established and paper and pencil versions will be made available for a limited period of time.
- **International Benchmarking.** The assessments will be designed to ensure that students are being held to internationally competitive expectations via:
  - tight alignment with the internationally-benchmarked Common Core State Standards;
  - benchmarking the actual assessments against assessments from high performing countries; and
  - pursuing empirically-based international comparisons at target grade levels.
- **Common Performance Levels.** In order to enable comparability of results across states, all partnership states will use common performance level descriptors and standard setting processes and will set cut scores to define common achievement levels. The college-ready assessments will include a “college-ready” performance level, informed by evidence about how well performance on the assessments predicts students’ success in credit-bearing postsecondary courses and in conjunction with postsecondary faculty and institution and system leaders. Assessments given in earlier courses and grades will include a performance level that signals whether students are on track to college readiness.
- **Student-Level Growth.** The summative assessments will provide valid inferences regarding individual student growth and progress toward college and career readiness. Partnership states are committed to exploring the use of a common student growth model in order to facilitate comparisons of growth across member states.
- **Released Items and Item Analysis.** The partnership will release operational items along with relevant student performance information (e.g., released-item reports). These released items help teachers, parents, and students understand what the standards mean, appreciate what expected performance looks like, and promote transparency of the standards and assessments alike. Released items will also provide important professional development opportunities and provide educators with actionable data to improve instruction.
- **Model Instructional Supports.** The partnership will develop model curriculum frameworks in grades K-8 and model course syllabi for high school that illustrate specific instructional options for educators targeting the Common Core State Standards, the common assessments, and embedded performance tasks. Partnership states are also interested in exploring the development of open educational resource platforms that allow teachers to share and vet tools for understanding and using the CCSS, common assessments, and formative assessment practices aligned to the CCSS, as well as banks of assessment items.
- **Special Populations.** The assessments will be as inclusive as possible, particularly for students with disabilities and English language learners. The partnership will also require—to the fullest extent possible—the use of uniform accommodation policies and practices in all member states.
- **Testing Conditions.** The partnership is committed to using the most uniform test administration policies and practices possible to enable meaningful comparisons of results across states.
- **Assessments in Grades K-2.** The partnership is interested in collaborating on some form of a K-2 assessment system.

## **Governance**

The partnership will employ a multi-level governance and management structure designed to guide the partnership through the submission of the proposal. A longer-term governance structure will be created as part of the proposal development process.

- The **Governing States** are comprised of a representative group of leaders from partnership states and will be responsible for guiding the proposal development process. Each Governing State will commit a team comprised of the chief, assessment director, and other key officials from the SEA, Governor's office, and higher education as appropriate. The chief's ongoing involvement and commitment to development of the proposal is a critical distinguishing feature from the commitment required of design team states.
- The **Proposal Design Team** will include officials from partnership states with expertise in assessment design and development. The team will work with an advisory group of national and international experts to create the assessment system design during the proposal development phase. The design team will include as many states as are interested in and capable of contributing to and shaping the design of a next generation assessment system.
- **Participating States** will include other partnership states that are unable to provide staff time to the design team but will provide rapid feedback on drafts of the proposal through the development phase.