

NATIONAL
ACADEMY
of
EDUCATION

Educational Assessments in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond

March 4, 2021

National Academy of Education

**COVID-19 and Inequities in Education
Forum Series**



National Academy of Education COVID-19 and Inequities in Education Forum Series

Steering Committee Members

Michael J. Feuer (Chair)

The George Washington University

Hyman Bass

University of Michigan

Dorothy Espelage

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Gloria Ladson-Billings

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Susanna Loeb

Brown University

Annemarie Sullivan Palincsar

University of Michigan

William F. Tate IV

University of South Carolina

Frank Worrell

University of California, Berkeley

Stanton Wortham

Boston College

Assessments Roundtable Panelists (December 10, 2020)

Moderator

Michael J. Feuer, The George Washington University*

Roundtable Panelists

Randy Bennett, Educational Testing Service

Debbie Durrence, Gwinnett County Public Schools

Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Connecticut State Department of
Education

Edward Haertel, Stanford University*

Gerunda Hughes, Howard University

Peter Leonard, Chicago Public Schools

Scott Marion, Center for Assessment

Kent McGuire, Hewlett Foundation

Scott Norton, Council of Chief State School Officers

James Pellegrino, University of Illinois at Chicago*

Kenneth Shores, University of Delaware

Jim Soland, University of Virginia

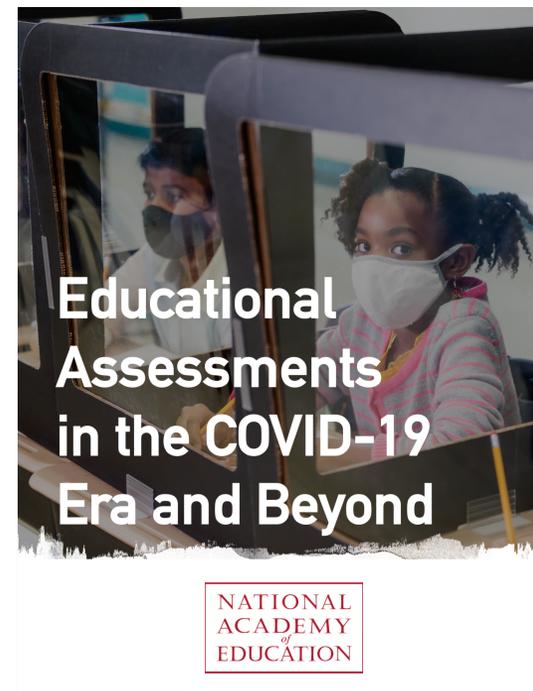
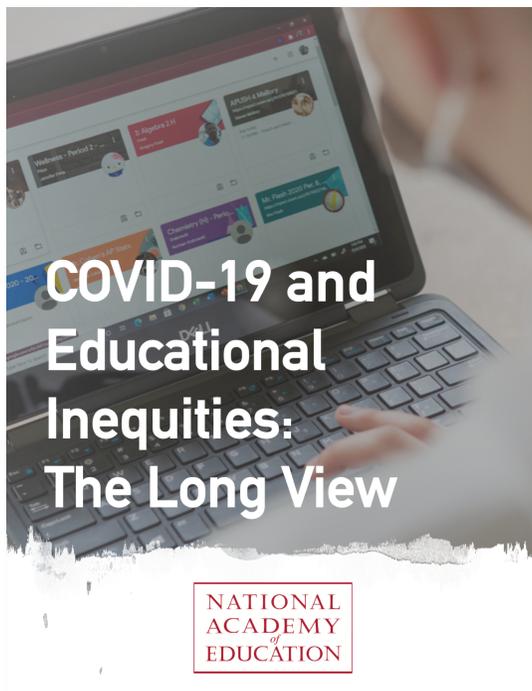
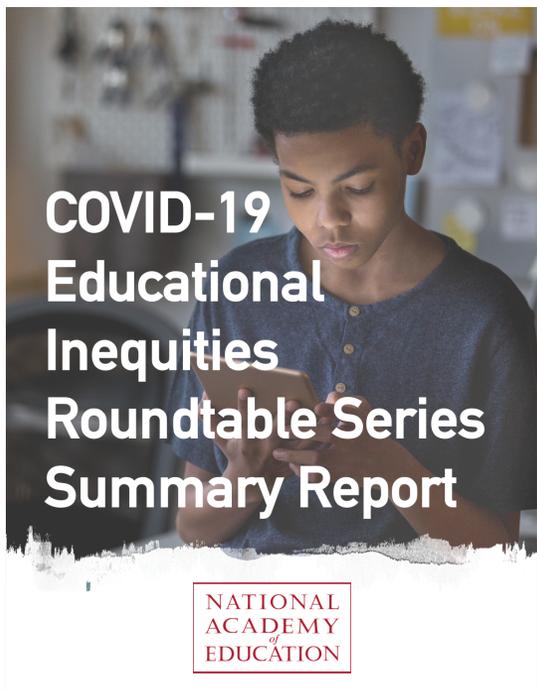
Lynn Vasquez, New Mexico Public Education Department

Vince Verges, Florida Department of Education

** denotes assessments roundtable planning committee member*

National Academy of Education COVID-19 and Inequities in Education Forum Series

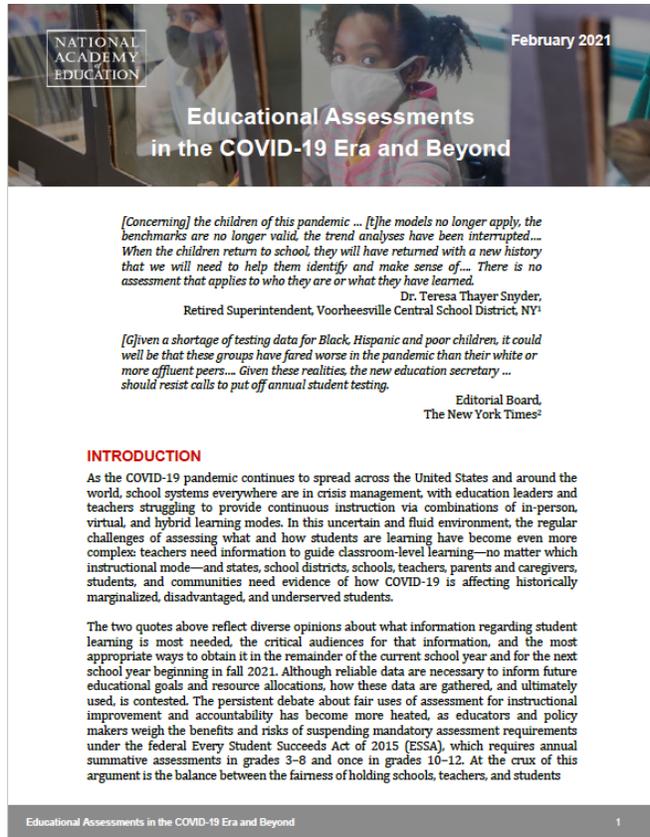
Summary Reports



Summary reports available at naeducation.org

Contact Information: Amy Berman (ABerman@naeducation.org) and Dian Dong (DDong@naeducation.org).

Educational Assessments in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond



- The National Academy of Education (NAEd) convened a group of scholars, policy leaders, and educators for a discussion of testing in 2021 and beyond.
- We have four key members of the original panel here with us today...

- Summary report available at [naeducation.org](https://www.naeducation.org)

National Academy of Education COVID-19 and Inequities in Education Forum Series

Educational Assessments in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond



Randy Bennett

Norman O. Frederiksen Chair in
Assessment Innovation
*Research & Development Division
Educational Testing Service*



Ajit Gopalakrishnan

Chief Performance Officer
Connecticut State Department of Education



Gerunda Hughes

Professor Emeritus
Howard University



Lynn Vasquez

Division Director of Assessment and
Learning Management Systems
*New Mexico Public Education
Department*



Moderator

Scott Marion

President and Executive Director
*National Center for the Improvement
of Educational Assessment*

Educational Inequity

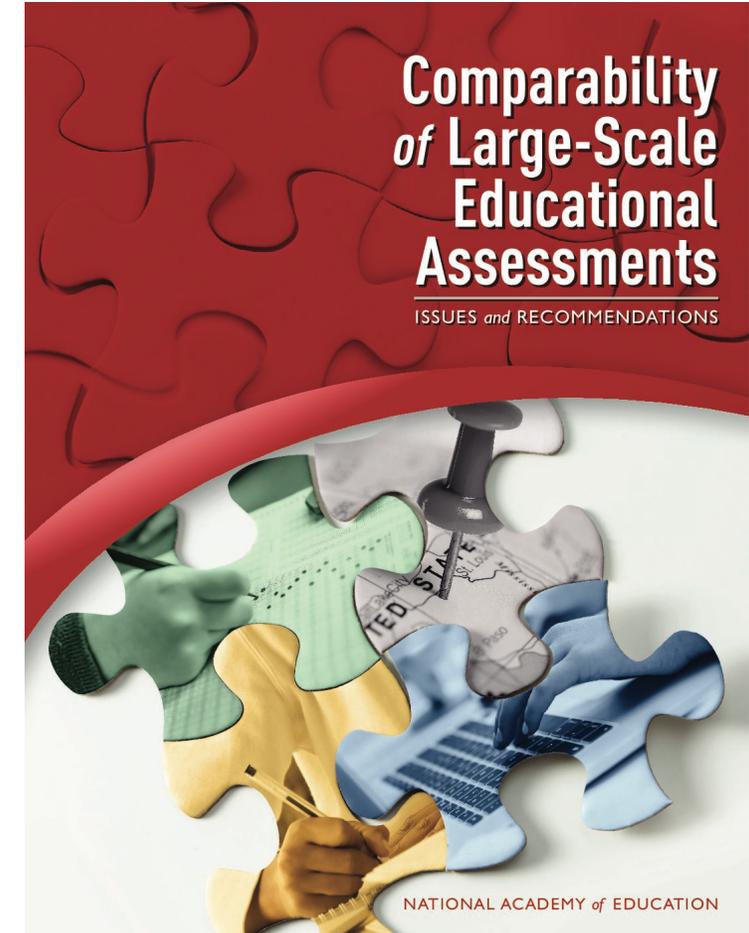
- The NAEEd discussion was framed to address the exacerbated inequities brought on by disruptions in normal school due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the far too late racial reckoning in the wake of public killings of too many African Americans and other People of Color
- The panel sought to address the role of large-scale assessment in both trying to shine a light on these inequities and, conversely, assessment's role in perpetuating racist ideologies

Focusing on 2020-2021 Statewide Testing

- The panel addressed several key aspects of testing in 2021:
 - Intended Use-Cases
 - Administration
 - Interpretation
 - Positive and Negative Consequences
- The panel also addressed other forms of data collection to understand the pandemic effects on student learning:
 - Opportunity-to-Learn
 - Classroom- and district- level assessments
- All are critical, but I focus briefly on the interpretation issues

Threats to Valid Interpretation in 2021

- Valid interpretations of test scores is challenging in the best of conditions. This year, we must consider at least these additional factors:
 - Content of instruction (reduced standards)
 - Instructional mode (remote/in-person)
 - Length of instruction (time on task)
 - Contexts and conditions of test administration
 - Test participation rates, especially by subgroup
 - Social and emotional well-being
 - Opportunity-to-learn



U.S. Department of Education (ED) Letter

- ED released a letter to States on February 22, 2021 outlining assessment and accountability flexibility for the 2020-2021 school year.

ED noted:

- State assessment and accountability systems play an important role in advancing educational equity.
- **The pandemic requires flexibility** for the 2020-2021 school year



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

February 22, 2021

Dear Chief State School Officer:

In these challenging times, we at the U.S. Department of Education stand with you and are committed to doing everything in our power to support the students, educators, and schools in your state. Please know that we are grateful for your leadership and for the extraordinary work of educators across the Nation.

Quotes from the ED letter

- It is critical to understand the impact of COVID-19 on learning. Therefore, the Department **will not offer blanket assessment waivers this year.**
- **However, the Department does not believe students should be brought to school for the sole purpose of test administration.**
- We recognize that individual states **may need additional assessment flexibility** based on the specific circumstances across or within the state.

Quotes from ED Letter (cont'd)

- States are encouraged to consider assessment flexibilities such as:
- Administering a shortened version of its statewide assessments;
- Offering remote administration, where feasible; and/or
- Extending the testing window to the greatest extent practicable... extending the testing window into the summer or **even the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year.**

A Window, But Not a Door

...we are not inviting blanket waivers of assessments. **We also recognize that individual states may need additional assessment flexibility based on the specific circumstances across or within the state, and we will work with states to address their individual needs and conditions while ensuring the maximum available statewide data to inform the targeting of resources and supports.**

The Future of Educational Assessments

- Develop and Implement Culturally and Racially Responsive, Curriculum-Embedded, Balanced Assessment Systems
- Implement Equitable Educational Assessments
- Communicate Clearly (and Often) the Intended Purposes and Uses of Particular Assessments as Well as Any Relevant Context
- Reframe Test-Based Accountability from a Deficit Lens to an Improvement Perspective
- Measure Opportunity to Learn
- Expand Assessment Literacy
- Examine the Equity Concerns Inherent in Other Assessments
- Encourage Innovation and Flexibility

Our Panel

- Our state leaders:
 - Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer, *Connecticut State Department of Education*
 - Lynn Vasquez, Division Director of Assessment and Learning Management Systems, *New Mexico Public Education Department*
- Our research partners:
 - Gerunda Hughes, Professor Emeritus, *Howard University*
 - Randy Bennett, Norman O. Frederiksen Chair in Assessment Innovation, *Educational Testing Service*



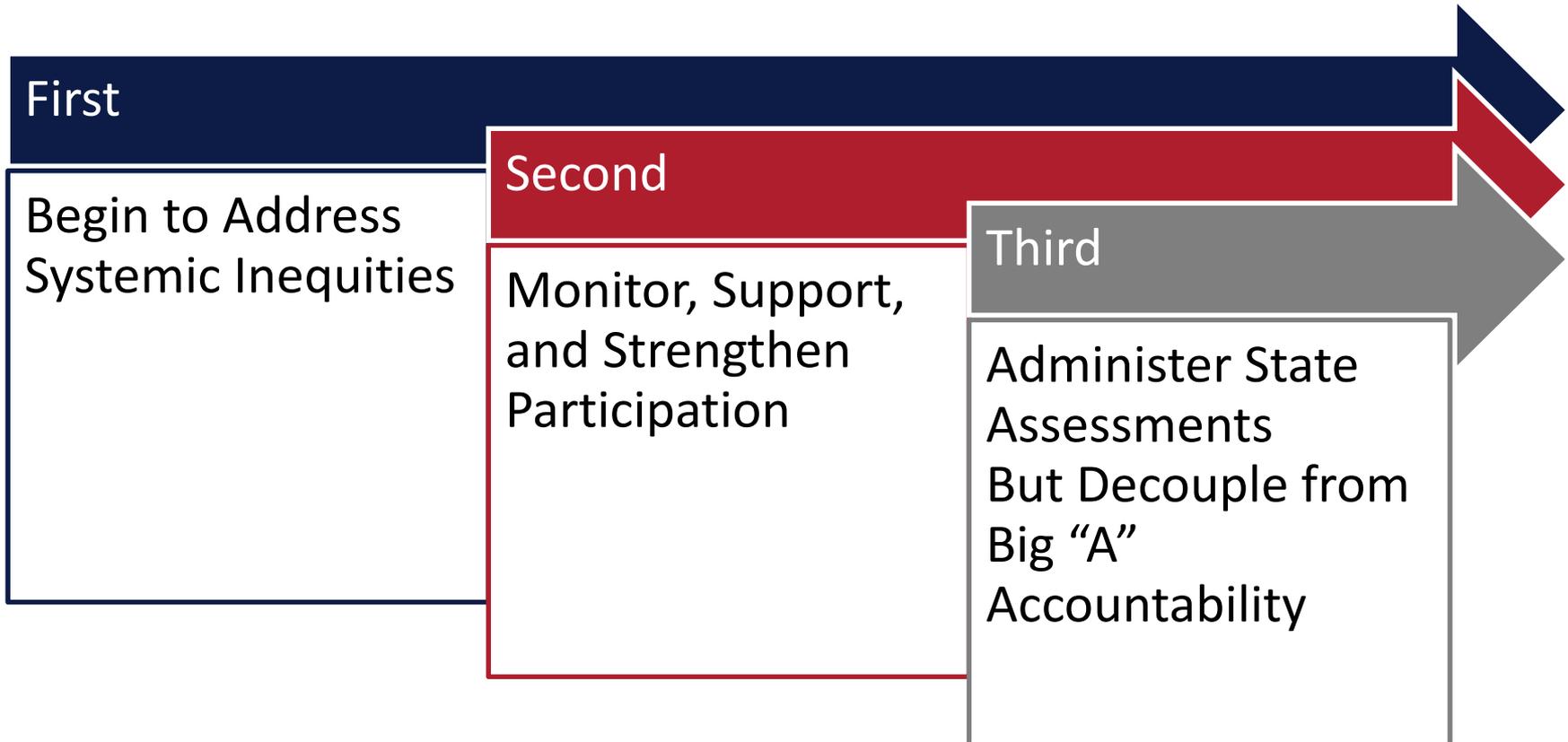
CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Educational Assessments and Inequities in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond

National Academy of Education

March 4, 2021

Connecticut's Approach



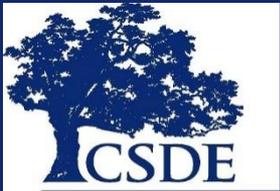
First:
Begin to
Address
Systemic
Inequities

- Devices and connectivity ([press release](#))
 - 142,000 Chromebooks and laptops – more than three-quarters to highest need districts
 - One-year of free internet (hotspots and cable broadband)
- Food Insecurity (e.g., [nutrition guidance](#), [pandemic EBT](#))
- Fiscal resources to support school reopening, adherence to health/safety measures, etc. (using ESSERF, CRF, GEER and funds)



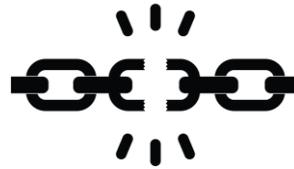
Second: Monitor, Support, and Strengthen Participation

- Provide guidance and supports
 - health and safety (e.g., [re-open guidance](#), [learning model selection](#), [contact tracing](#), [scenarios in schools](#))
 - educational (e.g., [reimagining classrooms](#), [sensible assessments](#), [reframing school discipline](#), [supporting attendance and engagement](#))
- Offer flexibilities (e.g., [remote school days](#), [staffing](#), [contracting](#))
- Collect [learning models](#) on a weekly basis, student-level attendance on a [monthly basis](#), and an [analysis](#) of declines in preliminary 2020-21 enrollment
- Conduct webinars, roundtable discussions, customized district-level technical assistance to increase student participation and engagement
- Promote good instruction and sensible assessment practices



Third: Administer State Assessments But Decouple from Big “A” Accountability

Assessment



Accountability

- ✓ Use [short, small-scale, fine-grain tests](#) (e.g., interim blocks) before the state tests to help teachers inform instruction during the year
- ✓ Eliminate off-the-shelf “summative” tests during the year – they are sending the wrong signals
- ✓ [Assess ALL students](#) on state summative tests – they are by far the best measure available
- ✓ Use results to evaluate the full impact of the pandemic on student achievement and growth and plan for 2021-22
- ✓ Administer state tests remotely as last resort if feasible and defensible

- ✗ Do not report summative rating for schools based on 2020-21 data*
- ✗ Do not place schools in categories or identify schools based solely on 2020-21 data*
- ✗ Do not use state assessment results in educator evaluation
- ✓ Continue to support schools that were previously identified for state support
- ✓ Publicly report data when feasible and defensible to ensure transparency and support

*Pending federal approval



In Closing...

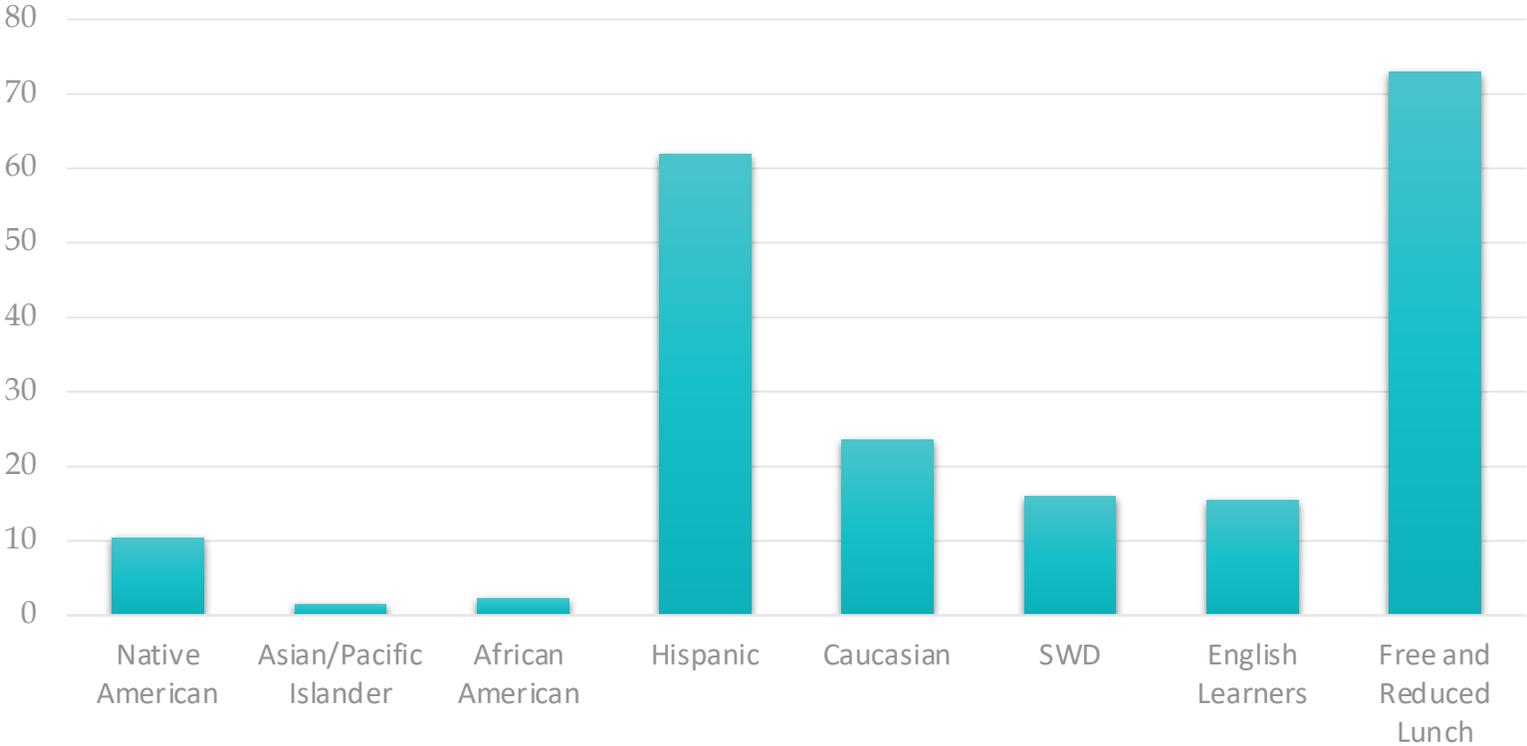
- The impact of the pandemic will not be uniform. So first we must do our very best to address the inequities, provide supports, and strengthen participation in learning.
- Don't use the results for formal accountability in 2020-21 – CT submitted “addendum” + waiver but will now use newly announced USED template
- Be extremely thoughtful about public reporting because that too is a form of accountability.
 - Make accurate and defensible inferences explicit
 - Include clear instructions to discourage inappropriate inferences
 - Illustrate appropriate vs inappropriate responses



Our Core Values

Student-Centered	We center our decision-making process and policy platform on providing relevant educational pathways for every student's chosen future.
Responsive	We recognize students in New Mexico have varying social and cultural backgrounds and individual communities in New Mexico have different assets and unique needs.
Collaborative	We value partnerships with the Legislature, other state agencies, non-profits, local businesses, labor organizations, educators, parents, students, families, and communities.
Transformative	We aim to engage in a process of racial healing that is built upon truth, equity, intentional learning, and sharing of lived experiences within the context of race, identity, belonging, and justice.
Innovative	We value creating spaces for educators to design, develop, and create new ways of thinking about education. We aim to provide support and resources for new policies that promote innovative learning models rooted in the strengths of New Mexico that meet the needs of all students.
Reflective	We believe learning is a continuous improvement process involving intentional self-awareness and reflective practice to encourage thoughtfulness, personal growth, profound learning, and meaningful change.

Our Students & Schools



- 336, 069 Students
- 89 Districts
- 98 State & District Charters
- 848 Schools
- 50,773 Educators & Support Staff



Location of Learning & Opportunity-to-Learn

FALL OF SCHOOL YEAR

Grades 3-5

8% at school

33% at school and at home (hybrid)

59% fully remote

Middle and High School

3% at school

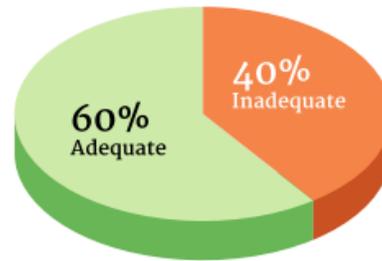
13% at school and at home

85% fully remote

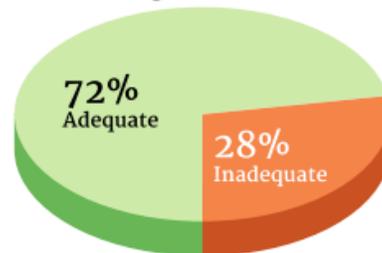
MID OF SCHOOL YEAR

- All schools, hybrid allowance
- Over 25% remain fully remote

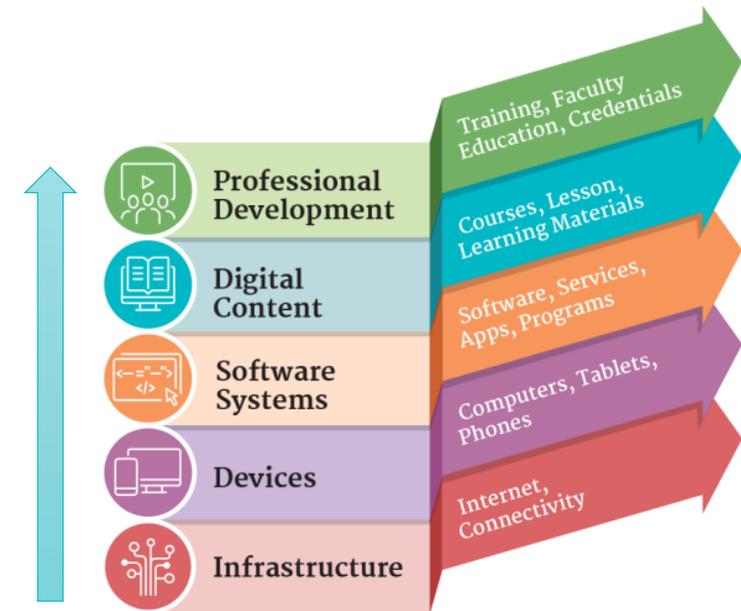
New Mexico Student Internet Access



New Mexico Student Distance Learning Device Access



The Hierarchy of Digital Learning Needs



New Mexico's Waiver Request

Step 1



The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) is initiating a formal request to the U.S. Department of Education to waive federally required statewide assessment activities for the 2020-21 school year. Prior to submitting a waiver, the PED seeks to gather statewide input from New Mexico stakeholders. The purpose of this communication is to solicit your feedback on the state's plans to request a waiver for spring 2021 state summative assessments.

Why Is New Mexico Seeking This Request?

HEALTH & SAFETY FIRST

The burdens associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have in and their ability to fully participate in and benefit from a stable | states, New Mexico closed schools in spring 2020. New Mexico starting the 2020-21 academic year with a conservative approach hybrid model for reentry. However, most elementary schools in have been restricted from operating in-person for the vast part have indicated that unless there is a significant improvement in continue remote instruction for the entirety of the academic year window, New Mexico finds itself in a situation parallel to spring

VALIDITY ISSUES

Given the lack of standardized summative test administration - assessments uniformly given the various operating status of schools experiences and opportunities. If New Mexico were to administer the results face severe validity threats. In other words, it will be gathered will mean what users think they mean.

Additional conditions that support valid and reliable data include

- Standardized testing environments (e.g., testing is proctored)
- Students have had the opportunity to learn tested skills and academic standards during instruction.

- Accessibility and accommodations considerations for all students and English learners to be provided with supports during test

FOCUSED PRIORITIES FOR REMAINDER OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR

If state health and safety guidance allows students to return to physical and socioemotional needs will be addressed first. If an instructional calendar is focused on acceleration and bridging academic need, teachers must be able to leverage the assessment classroom instruction and that inform parents of their students designed to provide this level of support for teachers or families monitoring tools will need to be leveraged.

How Do I Provide My Input On This Request?

Please participate in the statewide survey for public comment. All public comment needs to be submitted by January 20, 2021.

Step 2



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
300 DON GASPAR
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87601-1786
Telephone (505) 827-8900
www.ped.state.nm.us

RYAN STEWART, ED.D.
Secretary of Education

MICHELLE LUAN ORSHAM
GOVERNOR

February 17, 2021

The Honorable Phil Rosenfelt
Acting Secretary of Education
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Acting Secretary Rosenfelt,

I am writing to request a waiver allowance for flexible test administration for the state of New Mexico, pursuant to section 8401(b) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA).

This waiver request would permit New Mexico to provide flexible testing options to students and families. The state will provide to all families and schools the invitation to participate in the English language arts, mathematics, and science assessments, as well as the English language proficiency, and alternate (1%) summative assessments in the spring of 2020-21, as long as such assessments are administered under standardized testing conditions. For families that elect to remain remote, the state will direct districts to administer an end-of-year interim assessment that is available for remote administration. Appendix A describes the specific details of our request.

If approved, New Mexico will be able to continue to prioritize the safety of our students and staff and minimize classroom disruptions. Our educators can focus on core instruction and acceleration for the remainder of the school year while still allowing our schools to glean the most pertinent data to inform decision making at the classroom and local level. The state plans to use available summative and interim data to support state-level inferences and decisions to the extent representative data is available.

STEP 1: SEEK PUBLIC COMMENT

- 716 responses
 - 406 Educators
 - 142 Parents
 - 66 School Administrators
- 93% supported PED seeking a waiver
- 356 comments

STEP 2: WAIVER LETTER SUBMISSION

- **Safety:** First obligation is to protect our vulnerable populations
 - Acknowledges our inability to meet 95% participation
 - Flexible option extended to LEAs & families
 - Unable to apply conditions needed for standardized test administration
- **Equity:** Emphasis on spending remainder of academic year on acceleration and interventions; address socioemotional needs
- **Meaningful Data:** Aim to still gather meaningful data to the greatest extent possible through use of interims
- **Innovation:** Focus energy on USED & other grant-funded innovative assessment initiatives
- **Accountability:** summative data likely not to be valid or comparable
 - Remote proctor, piloted during mid-year interim

A Case for High-Utility Assessments

Leverage assessments that have greater impact for students & families

- provide immediate & actionable data
- Inform planning for extended & summer tutoring

State-Funded

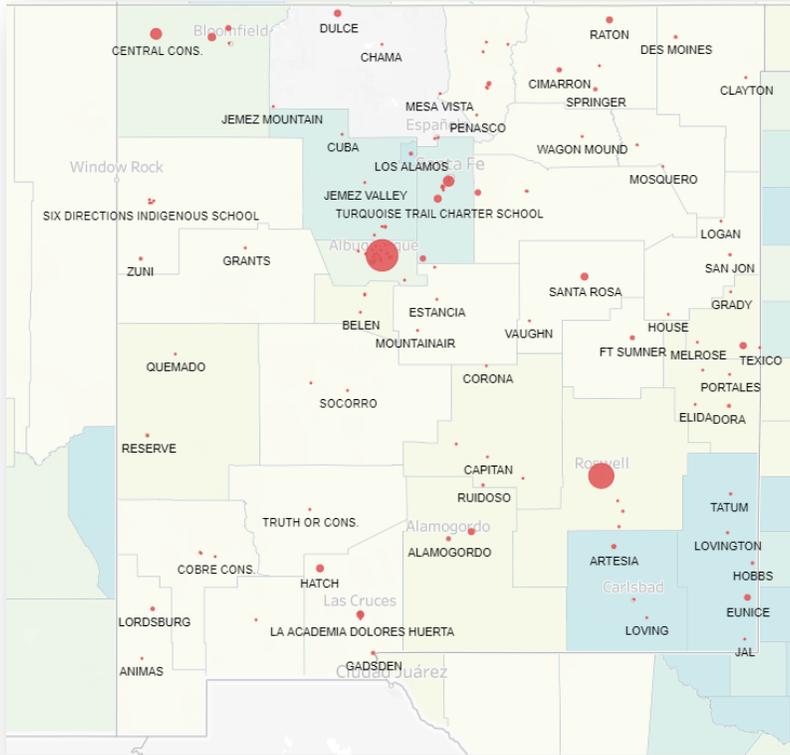
- Progress monitoring math, ELA, SLA (K-2)
 - ✓ **Required**
- Interim assessment math, ELA (3-8),
 - ✓ **Optional**, 20% LEAs utilize state funded interim assessment
- End of Course Exams (HS), Not required

LEA-Funded

- 70% LEAs have local interim assessments



LEAs' Response to Spring Testing Flexibility

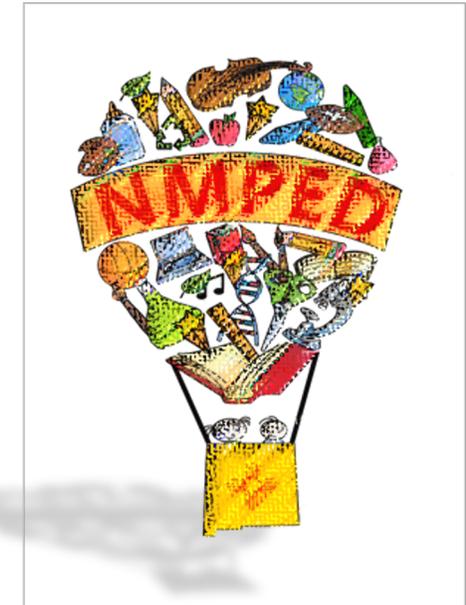


CURRENT LEA PLANS

- 67 % of LEAs will administer 1 or more ESSA assessments
 - 20% of students
 - Highest anticipated participation in ELPA
 - Second highest participation college entrance exam
- 78% committed to using local interim assessment in lieu of ESSA
 - 45% willing to share data with PED
- 4 LEAs not testing

Opportunities

- **Planting & pruning** our balanced assessment system
- **Intentional assessment literacy** around COVID's impact on testing, formative assessments & progress monitoring for summer programming, reentry, and acceleration
- **Parents as partners** in support of learning
 - 100,000+ assessment administered, mostly remote
 - Parents had to facilitate most
- **Newly acquired LMS** as a vehicle for professional learning and micro-credentialing
- **Lessons learned** from remote interim pilot & informing the future
- **Decoupling** standardized testing from high-stakes uses
- **Remodel** accountability system; “greatest sense of possibility”



Moving Toward a More Equitable Future



Walton & Gates Initiative: Capstone Projects

New Mexico Problem Statement:

“To address the education system’s history of structural and inherent racism, New Mexico’s high school students need a more expansive learning and assessment system that honors their cultural and linguistic strengths while providing feedback and other engaging opportunities allowing them to take ownership of their learning, build strong identities and see a rich future ahead.”

Educational Assessments in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond:

Research and Equity Perspective

Gerunda B. Hughes

Professor Emerita, Howard University

National Academy of Education: COVID-19 Educational Inequities Roundtable Series

March 4, 2021

Educational Assessment and Equity

Educational assessment is a process for obtaining information that can be used for making decisions about students; teachers, curricula, programs, and schools; funding; and educational policy.

National Academy of Education (2021). *COVID-19 and educational inequities: Assessments*. Washington, D.C.: Author

Equity speaks to fairness and social justice and the acknowledgement of differences. It references the differential or (un)equal distribution of resources or inputs for the purpose of meeting a specific need to address a particular purpose or outcome.

Gordon, E.G. (Summer, 1995). Toward an equitable system of educational assessment. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 64(3), pp.360-372.

Attributes of Equitable Educational Assessments

- ***Fair*** – Fair assessments are sensitive to the characteristics of different groups being assessed and thereby, where appropriate, employ equitable strategies in the design, development, and delivery of the assessment and in the reporting, interpretation, and uses of assessment results.
- ***Accurate measurement*** – Accurate measurement occurs when measurement error is minimized for all groups of test-takers.
- ***Valid interpretations and uses*** – Equitable measures are aligned and validated with their interpretations and uses of assessment results.

Validity of Inferences and Uses of Assessment Results

“There are several levels of inference that can be made from a test. Consider a reading comprehension test built on several passages drawn by an appropriate random sampling procedure from the articles appearing in *Reader’s Digest*. Comprehension of each passage is tested by a set of multiple-choice questions, and [the] score is the number of correct answers chosen.”

A low group mean score on this test might lead to any of the following inferences. Given each inference, how might the assessment results be used?

1. The individuals in this group have a low level of understanding of these passages.
2. The individuals in this group will have difficulty in understanding the contents of *Reader’s Digest*.
3. The individuals in this group are, in general, poor readers.
4. The individuals in this group are not likely to do well in college.

Inequities in Public Education

- Societal inequity
- Socioeconomic inequity
- Cultural inequity
- Familial inequity
- Programmatic inequity
- Staffing inequity
- Instructional inequity
- Linguistic inequity
- **Assessment inequity**

Source: <https://www.edglossary.org/equity>

Equity in Educational Assessments

Stages of Test/Testing Process

- Purpose
- Sampling
- **Design & Development**
 - Content, Item formats
- **Administration**
 - Accessibility, Accommodations, Standardization
- Scoring
- **Analysis of Data**
 - “Mirror/Thermometer”, “X-Ray”, “MRI”, “Biopsy”
- **Reporting and Interpretation of Test Results**
- **Use of Test Results**

Characteristics of Test-Takers

- English Learners
- Economically Disadvantaged Students (SES)
- Culturally Diverse Students
- Students with Disabilities
- Gender
- Racially/Ethnically Diverse Students

Expand Assessment Literacy *for ALL*

- **Teachers**
 - **Pre-Service Training** and In-service Professional Development
- Students
- Parents/Caregivers
- School-based Personnel
 - Principals, Counselors
- District-level education professionals
- State-level education professionals
- State Legislators/Education Policy makers
- U. S. Department of Education personnel/Policy makers
- Members of Congress/Education Policy makers
- **Test/Assessment Professionals & Developers**

EQUALITY



EQUITY



The 5 E's of Equitable Educational Assessment

- Empathy
- Engagement
- Equity
- Evaluation
- Equality



Closing Thoughts

- *“Equity is the input; equality is the output.”*

(<https://www.edglossary.org/equity>)

- *“There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequal people.”* (Thomas Jefferson)

Suggestions for the Future of K-12 Assessment and Accountability

Randy Bennett
ETS
Princeton, NJ 08541
rbennett@ets.org

Opening statement as part of the National Academy of Education webinar,
Educational Assessments in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond, March 4, 2021

Design Assessment to Promote Equity

- Standardized tests bring the sociocultural influences of those who create, score, and interpret the results
- Those influences and perspectives may not align with the sociocultural background of all students
 - Misalignment means that we must:
 - Change the *test* by creating an experience more aligned with students' sociocultural backgrounds
 - Change the *students* by familiarizing them with the tools, knowledge representations, and sociocultural characteristics of the test
 - Change the *interpretation* of results for the individuals or group(s) for which misalignment exists



Design Assessment to Promote Equity

- US public-school population racial/ethnic demographics (2018)
 - 47% White
 - 27% Hispanic
 - 15% Black
 - 5% Asian
 - 6% Other



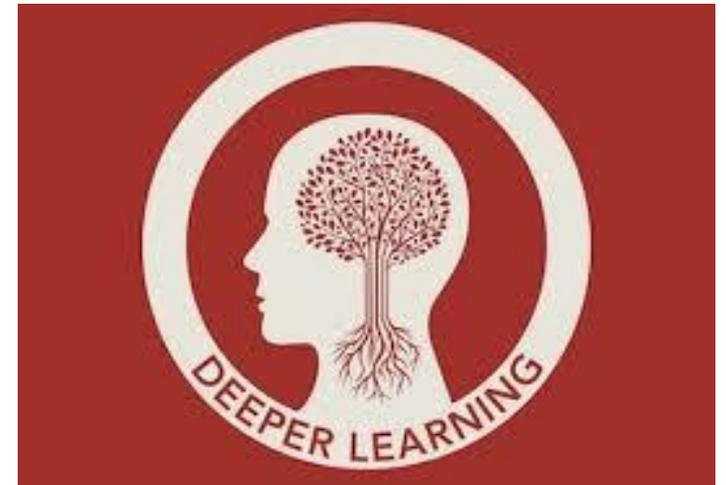
Design Assessment to Promote Equity

- Can we construct tests that better account for this diversity?
 - Build on the cultural knowledge and identity that diverse students bring to school
 - We know how to make assessments “born accessible”
 - Can we make tests that are suited to the variety of sociocultural contexts from which students come?
 - “Born socioculturally responsive”



Principles for Socioculturally Responsive Assessment

- Ideas from the literature and other assessment systems
 - Present reasonably realistic problem situations that connect to learner experience, culture, and identity
 - Allow for multiple forms of representation/expression
 - In problem stimuli
 - In responses
 - Promote instruction for deeper learning by design
 - Calls for integrated performances
 - Allows some degree of student agency
 - Provides consultative resources



Principles for Socioculturally Responsive Assessment

- Ideas from the literature and other assessment systems
 - Recognize that performance is situated
 - An interaction of person, their OTL history, the task(s), and the environments in which they must perform
 - Not a *characteristic* of the person (or group)
 - Gather additional evidence to contextualize and triangulate assessment results
 - Other outcome indicators
 - Measures of learning processes
 - Measures of OTL

Support for Improving Equitable Teaching and Learning

- Presumes assessments that educators respect
- Describe and use a wide range of accountability measures to initiate improvement actions that help teachers instruct and students learn
 - Deep-dive, development-oriented audit and action plan done collaboratively with school staff
 - Whole-school intervention
 - Coaching in leadership skills
 - Mentoring in socioculturally responsive teaching skills
 - Demographically matching identified schools with more successful schools
 - Demonstration proof
 - Transplant effective practices
 - Making connections with philanthropic partners, local corporations, and other knowledge or financial resources to build an improvement ecosystem

