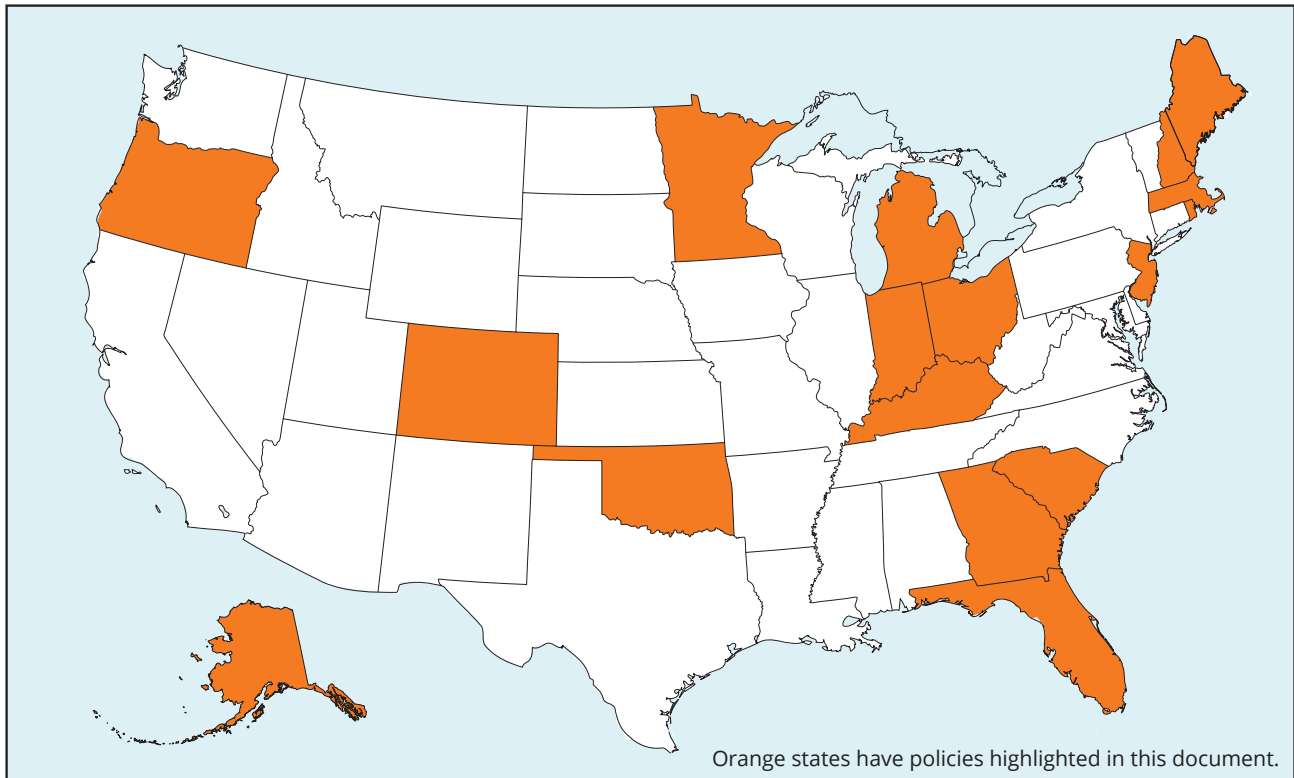




# A Supporting State Policy Framework for Next Generation Assessment Systems

States should develop a compelling vision and theory of action for thoughtful assessment reform as they begin to explore what is possible under the newly enacted Every Student Succeeds Act, including new assessment flexibility in Section 1111(b)(2) and Section 1204, the Innovative Assessment and Accountability Demonstration Authority. As state leaders build out their vision and theory of action, they should also consider the state policies that will enable the implementation of a system of next generation assessments.



Below is a set of policies, informed by existing state laws, which create the policy conditions necessary for states and districts to successfully implement a next generation assessment system at scale, increasing student and stakeholder engagement.

## Assessment Policies

### Credit through Assessment

States should, as part of their innovative assessment system designs, consider awarding learners credit if they are able to demonstrate mastery of academic standards through assessments. In Florida<sup>1</sup> and Indiana,<sup>2</sup> students are able to earn credit towards a high school diploma by achieving a passing score on assessments aligned to academic standards, without being enrolled in the course for which they are earning credit.

<sup>1</sup>[http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&Search\\_String=&URL=1000-1099/1003/Sections/1003.4295.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=1000-1099/1003/Sections/1003.4295.html)

<sup>2</sup>[http://iga.in.gov/static-documents/f/3/3/f/f33fa8ef/TITLE20\\_AR36\\_ar36.pdf](http://iga.in.gov/static-documents/f/3/3/f/f33fa8ef/TITLE20_AR36_ar36.pdf)

## Graduation Based on Mastery

Several states include credits based on mastery of academic standards rather than simply seat time as part of high school diploma eligibility. Students in Oklahoma<sup>3</sup> have the option to earn high school diplomas based on assessments that demonstrate competency rather than on the number of credits earned through seat time. High school diplomas for all students in New Hampshire<sup>4</sup> and Maine<sup>5</sup> are awarded solely on demonstration of mastery of academic content and skills.

## Performance-based Assessments for Credit

Kentucky<sup>6</sup> and Michigan<sup>7</sup> both allow districts to award credit towards graduation through the completion of performance-based assessments in an effort to more accurately measure students' learning. State policy permits these performance-based assessments to include portfolios, performances, papers, projects, and presentations. Similarly, New Jersey<sup>8</sup> encourages students to have a voice in choosing the method of demonstrating mastery based on their interests and academic and career goals.

## Multiple Testing Windows

Innovative assessment systems should allow students the opportunity to take assessment when they are ready and provide them the opportunity to demonstrate mastery multiple times if necessary. States and districts should use these flexibilities to build an assessment system that responds to the needs of each student and not to perpetuate ineffective test preparation strategies. This can be accomplished by permitting districts to offer assessments at different times of the year, allowing for multiple testing windows. In Oregon,<sup>9</sup> districts are able to offer summative assessments multiple times to high school students in order to provide multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery. In order to better meet students' individual needs and circumstances, districts in Alaska<sup>10</sup> are required to offer assessments at least twice per year, though many districts offer assessment more often than required.

## Involvement of District Partners

States may need to remove policy barriers to district participation if a state intends to create an assessment system in which districts play a role in the creation or selection of state-approved next generation assessments. In New Jersey, districts are able to choose from a menu of state-approved assessments, including department-approved, locally developed competency-based assessments. This allows districts to measure competency as students move towards proficiency while also aligning assessments to students' own interests and goals. It is incumbent on the state to work with districts to build local capacity to develop and implement assessments or assessment items that will successfully measure complex demonstrations of learning.

<sup>3</sup>[http://oklegal.onenet.net/oklegal-cgi/get\\_statute?99/Title.70/70-11-103.6.html](http://oklegal.onenet.net/oklegal-cgi/get_statute?99/Title.70/70-11-103.6.html)

<sup>4</sup>[http://education.nh.gov/innovations/hs\\_redesign/background.htm](http://education.nh.gov/innovations/hs_redesign/background.htm)

<sup>5</sup><http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/20-A/title20-Asec4722-A.html>

<sup>6</sup><http://www.lrc.ky.gov/kar/704/003/305.htm>

<sup>7</sup>[http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(p313k3xar5dvt0gavpff1pqx\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-380-1279b](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(p313k3xar5dvt0gavpff1pqx))/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-380-1279b)

<sup>8</sup><http://www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap8.pdf>

<sup>9</sup>[http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/admin/2016-17\\_tam.pdf](http://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/teachlearn/testing/admin/2016-17_tam.pdf)

<sup>10</sup>[https://education.alaska.gov/regs/4AAC\\_06\\_065.pdf](https://education.alaska.gov/regs/4AAC_06_065.pdf)

## Additional Enabling Policies

States must also consider the wider policy context to ensure the entire education system aligns with the new system of assessments. This system-level alignment is particularly important as states begin to think about scaling innovative assessments statewide. Below are examples of state policies states should consider to maximize the impact of a next generation assessment system on student learning outcomes.

### Curriculum and Instruction

Modernizing the statewide teacher credentialing process would allow states to rethink how adults in the system contribute to a student's learning. For instance, in Ohio, a Contributing Professional<sup>11</sup> is any professional who works with a student. This designation allows for the professional to have access to the Instruction Improvement System and permits numerous educators to be linked to a student. Under Colorado's graduation guidelines,<sup>12</sup> school districts have the opportunity to create their own graduation requirements as long as they meet the bar set by the state. This includes measuring credit by mastery rather than seat time and selecting from a menu of options as to how students demonstrate they are college and career ready.

### Student Supports

States can empower districts to provide data-driven supports in an as-needed manner if they do things such as increasing flexibility in the use of time during the school day and school year, as well as how districts calculate daily instructional hours. The Tiered System of Supports<sup>13</sup> in Massachusetts allows students to receive the individualized academic and social-emotional supports they need to be successful. Minnesota's Experimental and Flexible School Year Programs<sup>14</sup> allow for school districts to pilot "an experimental program of study, a four-day school week, or a flexible school year program" with the purpose of improving quality of instruction, increasing cost-effectiveness, maximizing community resources or available technology, or establishing alternative methods to identify students in need of special education services.

### Learning Environments and Partnerships

Districts can provide learning experiences outside of the school building and, in some cases, outside of the traditional school day by providing waivers from seat-time requirements. Further, allowing districts to award credit for those learning experiences empowers students to pursue learning experiences that best meet their needs and interests. Rhode Island's 21st Century Community Learning Centers<sup>15</sup> provide high-quality after-school and summer programs to supplement the learning that takes place in the classroom. New Hampshire's Extended Learning Opportunities<sup>16</sup> give students the chance to earn credit towards graduation by leveraging learning outside of the classroom setting.

### Technology and Data Systems

States can make it easier for districts, teachers, and students to make data-driven decisions that improve student academic performance by providing flexibility in the procurement process as districts work to improve technology infrastructure and data systems. This is especially true when districts are permitted to use data systems that meet their specific needs. Georgia uses The Georgia Information Tunnel<sup>17</sup> to link directly to district-level student information systems, allowing the state to collect data from districts' existing platforms. In South Carolina, text book funds may be used for acquisition of instructional technology and similar materials that have been approved by the State Board of Education.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>11</sup>[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/finding\\_common\\_ground/2013/04/why\\_do\\_we\\_need\\_teacher\\_of\\_record.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/finding_common_ground/2013/04/why_do_we_need_teacher_of_record.html)

<sup>12</sup><https://www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/graduationguidelines>

<sup>13</sup><http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/mtss.html>

<sup>14</sup><https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=3500.1000>

<sup>15</sup><http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/EducationPrograms/After-School21stCenturyCLCs.aspx#12121-21st-century-cclcs>

<sup>16</sup><http://education.nh.gov/innovations/elo/>

<sup>17</sup><http://dataqualitycampaign.org/resource/georgia-information-tunnel-linking-district-ingenuity-state-resources-make-data-matter/>

<sup>18</sup><http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t59c031.php>

## About Us



KnowledgeWorks is focused on ensuring that every student experiences meaningful personalized learning that allows them to thrive in college, career and civic life. We develop the capabilities of educators to implement and sustain competency-based and early college schools, work with state and federal leaders to establish aligned policy conditions and provide national thought leadership around the future of learning. Our subsidiary, StriveTogether, manages the national cradle-to-career network and helps communities to improve student outcomes through collective impact. [www.knowledgeworks.org](http://www.knowledgeworks.org)



The National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc. (Center for Assessment) is a Dover, NH based not-for-profit (501(c)(3)) corporation that seeks to improve the educational achievement of students by promoting enhanced practices in educational assessment and accountability. The Center for Assessment does this by providing services directly to states, school districts, and other organizations regarding the design, implementation, and evaluation of assessment and accountability systems. As a non-profit organization committed to the improvement of student learning, the Center for Assessment maintains a strong “open-source” ethic in terms of distributing its many creations and inventions. For example, the Center has developed many tools related to alignment methodology, student growth analyses, student learning objectives, comparability methods for innovative assessment systems, and validity evaluation that it provides freely to its clients and other non-commercial entities. [www.nciea.org](http://www.nciea.org)



The Nellie Mae Education Foundation is the largest philanthropic organization in New England that focuses exclusively on education. The Foundation supports the promotion and integration of student-centered approaches to learning at the middle and high school levels across New England—where learning is personalized; learning is competency-based; learning takes place anytime, anywhere; and students exert ownership over their own learning. To elevate student-centered approaches, the Foundation utilizes a four-part strategy that focuses on: building educator ownership, understanding and capacity; advancing quality and rigor of SCL practices; developing effective systems designs; and building public understanding and demand. Since 1998, the Foundation has distributed over \$180 million in grants. For more information about the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, visit [www.nmefoundation.org](http://www.nmefoundation.org).