

## High School Assessment Flexibility April 2019

**Background:** The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) affords states the opportunity to replace their statewide summative assessment at the high school level with another nationally recognized college entrance examination (such as ACT or SAT). As part of [Oregon's ESSA Plan](#) development, stakeholders asked ODE to look into options to replace the current high school summative assessment. Initial stakeholder feedback suggested ODE take a closer look at:

- Time spent testing at Grade 11;
- Options to reduce testing at Grade 11;
- How rapidly results are made available to students, teachers, and families; and
- How results could be used in a meaningful way.

**Exploring Oregon's Options:** ODE issued a Request for Information (RFI) in May 2017. The purpose of the RFI was to provide information about available assessment options to inform ODE's and stakeholders' consideration of the feasibility of switching high school assessments. Two vendors responded to the RFI: ACT and the College Board.

**Analysis of Findings:** The stakeholder engagement process that explored the possibility of switching Oregon's statewide high school summative assessment illustrated the following challenges:

- **Alignment:** Neither the SAT nor ACT are aligned to Oregon's adopted content standards for English language arts (ELA) or mathematics. In addition, neither SAT nor ACT use criterion-referenced score reporting, as established in ORS 329.485.
- **Accessibility** for all of Oregon's high school students, including students from historically underserved populations, students with IEPs/504s, and English learners: Both SAT and ACT offered limited accessibility supports and restricted their offerings to a smaller subset of the population compared with Oregon's current assessment.
- **Compliance** with ESSA and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements about identifying accommodations for students on an IEPs/504s: The process required by both the College Board and ACT for students to be eligible for accessibility supports presented potential violations of both ESSA and IDEA.
- **Equity:** college-reportable results for all students, including those who test with state-approved accommodations: College Board and ACT had policies in place that deemed tests administered with certain accessibility supports as non-college-reportable, per vendor discretion.
- **Time:** unlike Oregon's current assessment, which is not timed and provides districts great flexibility in when to administer the test, both SAT and ACT were limited to a single testing day, with limited make-up dates. In addition, both the SAT and ACT are timed assessments.
- **Essential Skills:** Students are required to meet graduation requirements related to the Essential Skills in reading, writing, and mathematics to earn a standard or modified diploma. Most students use the statewide assessment to meet this expectation (92% in reading, 67% in writing, and 81% in mathematics in 2015), 20-35% use Work Samples, and small percentages of students use the "other standardized assessment" option, which includes SAT and ACT.

**Cost Projections:** Implementing a replacement nationally recognized high school assessment is an estimated net increase in cost of approximately \$5.8 – 6.8 million more per biennium than the current high school assessment.

**Making Efficient Use of Testing Time:** In an effort to be responsive to feedback from stakeholders, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE)'s Assessment Team worked with our vendor to implement customized, shortened [test blueprints](#) for all our summative ELA and mathematics assessments effective for the 2017-18 school year. The new summative assessments:

- Reduced testing time, maintaining score reliability, standards alignment, and content validity, and
- Included reduction in testing time for English language arts (ELA) at all grade levels

**What we're doing now...**

- Limiting test preparation activities by focusing on students who have no experience with our online test system (primarily at Grade 3);
- Supporting a pilot of the Smarter Balanced Interim/Benchmark and Digital Library systems, in addition to districts who purchased the system, with technical services and supports (one benefit of this system is that it increases student familiarity with the online testing process and decreases testing time);
- Studying testing time to identify areas of concern and increase understanding of efficient test administration practices; and,
- Exploring the utility of allowing early testing at Grade 10 for students who meet criteria (to be determined) in the summer of 2019.