

### Questions researched for the 50 states

1. *Has the state adopted a system of college and career readiness assessments?*
2. *If yes, which college and career readiness assessment(s) has the state adopted?*

To determine whether high school students are college and career ready (CCR) — and to be eligible for an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver from the U.S. Department of Education — states are adopting and implementing CCR assessments. For purposes of this section, CCR assessments are defined as exams administered to high school students statewide and that are aligned to CCR standards.

ECS identified 46 states and the District of Columbia that, as of Sept. 22, 2014, will administer one or more CCR assessments to students in grades 9-12 in 2014-15. CCR assessments vary across states, but include:

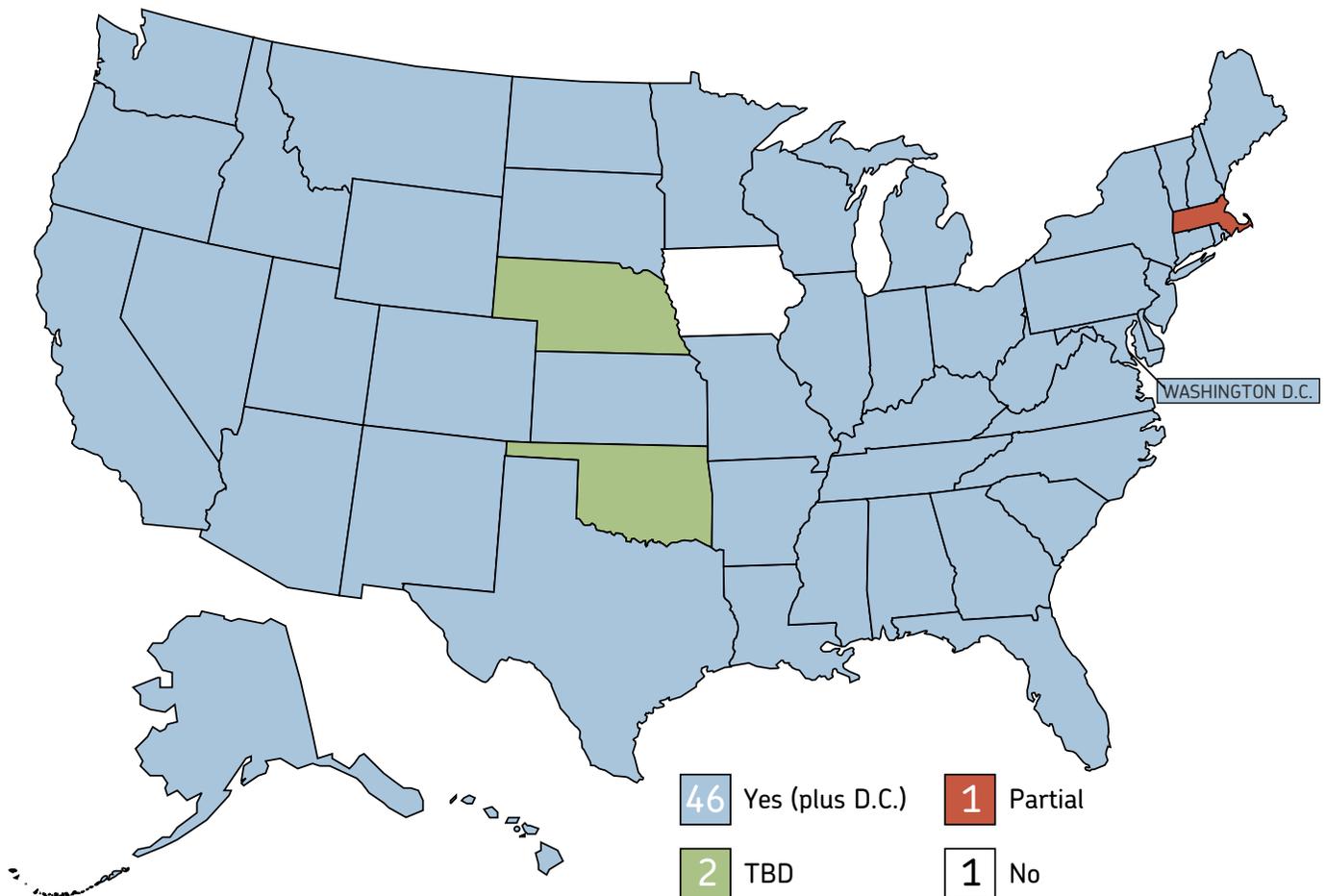
- ✦ Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), ACT or SAT for all 11th graders.
- ✦ College-ready end-of-course assessments.
- ✦ State-developed or contracted college-ready assessments, and others.
- ✦ The Blueprint database identifies states that will administer the various CCR assessments to high school students in 2014-15.

## POLICY GOALS

In recent years, high school-level assessments in nearly every state have shifted from testing high school-level standards and skills generally to assessing knowledge and skills policymakers and practitioners deem necessary for students to succeed in entry-level postsecondary mathematics and English coursework and the workforce. This transition to elevate expectations for students has been driven by several factors:

- ✦ Adoption of the Common Core State Standards or other CCR standards. The goal of state standards is to put students on a trajectory toward achieving college and career readiness upon high school graduation. Therefore assessments must change to measure students progress on that trajectory.
- ✦ States wishing to receive an NCLB waiver from ESEA mandates must adopt CCR standards and assessments aligned to those standards.
- ✦ High postsecondary remediation rates nationally.
- ✦ Outcry from business and industry leaders that high school graduates lack the knowledge and skills they need to successfully enter the workforce.
- ✦ The need to provide clear and consistent messaging to students, parents, teachers, administrators, policymakers and the general public on the college and career readiness of high school students.

## Which states have adopted a system of college and career ready assessments?



## STATE ANALYSIS

As of Sept. 22, 2014, 46 states and the District of Columbia will administer CCR assessments to high school students in 2014-15. (Note: several states plan to administer PARCC or SBAC in grades 3-8 but not at the high school level.) Of these 46 states administering CCR assessments in any grades 9-12 in 2014-15, almost half of the states plan to administer two or more types of CCR assessments during this grade span.

Of the CCR readiness assessments developed by the assessment consortia, in 2014-15, 14 states will administer SBAC at the high school level while eight states and the District of Columbia will administer PARCC to high school students. A ninth state, Massachusetts, is asking districts to administer either the PARCC or MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) in 2014-15. The commonwealth will determine whether to adopt PARCC statewide for 2015-16 after the 2014-15 "test run."

Eleven states will administer home-grown or off-the-shelf CCR end-of-course assessments in any grades 9-12. These states include New York, which is modifying the Regents exams to integrate CCR metrics, and Alabama and Kentucky, which will administer the ACT QualityCore end-of-course assessments. Nine states have contracted for the administration of off-the-shelf assessments, or state-developed assessments that are not end-of-course assessments, but that are designed to gauge students' college and career readiness.

Twelve states will require all 11th graders to take the ACT. Three additional states — Illinois, North Carolina and North Dakota — require juniors to take either the ACT or WorkKeys. Delaware is the only state that requires all 11th graders to take the SAT, while three additional states — Alaska, Idaho and Tennessee — require students to choose between ACT or SAT. In Alaska, students may elect to take WorkKeys instead of ACT or SAT, and in Idaho, students may take the Compass instead of ACT or SAT.

Nine states require all students at specified grade levels to take the ACT Explore and ACT Plan — usually in grades 8 and 10, respectively. Delaware is the only state to require all 10th graders to take the PSAT. Four states — Alabama, Michigan, South Carolina and Wisconsin — require all students to take WorkKeys.

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## KEY POLICY ACTIONS

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In determining which CCR assessment to administer, policymakers must weigh multiple considerations:

- ✦ Identify benchmarks on CCR assessments that will trigger targeted, appropriate interventions in English language arts and math.
- ✦ Alternatively, set benchmarks on CCR assessments to identify students likely to succeed in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment and other advanced opportunities. Also ensure information about these opportunities is communicated to all students, including but not limited to those achieving CCR benchmarks.
- ✦ Consider opportunities for students to demonstrate college and career readiness through more than one state-administered assessment. For example, if a student misses the mark on ACT, allow the student to substitute a score indicating college readiness on a state-developed end-of-course assessment.
- ✦ When providing students and parents with the results of CCR assessments, ensure clear information is also provided on whether scores are used in admissions to public institutions of higher education in the state, and how student results align with benchmarks for placing into entry-level, credit-bearing English and math courses at institutions across the state, or a sampling of institutions if placement measures are set entirely at the local level.



## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

When implementing a CCR assessment, policymakers may consider a number of challenges and opportunities. Each challenge is matched with opportunities for further study.

### *The Challenge: Mismatch between high school assessments and postsecondary admissions and placement measures*

#### Opportunities for how to address the challenge

- ✦ Encourage K-12 and higher education leaders to collaborate with two- and four-year institution leaders to identify cut scores on CCR assessments that allow students priority consideration for admission to institutions and that automatically place students into credit-bearing coursework in the discipline upon college entry.

### *The Challenge: Negative public perceptions of CCR standards and assessments*

#### Opportunities for how to address the challenge

- ✦ Provide ongoing public communications on the annual cost of delivering remedial coursework at public higher education institutions in the state — and on participating students' lower likelihood of finishing a degree.
- ✦ Develop and widely publicize tools to help parents of high school students understand the knowledge and skills they will be expected to demonstrate on assessments.

### *The Challenge: Perception of overemphasis of assessing 'college readiness' and inadequate emphasis on assessing 'career readiness'*

#### Opportunities for how to address the challenge

- ✦ Offer WorkKeys at no cost to all students, or to all CTE concentrator students.
- ✦ As appropriate, allow passing scores on industry certification or licensure exams to substitute for assessments required for high school graduation.
- ✦ Incorporate metrics on percentages of students earning CTE industry certifications into high school and district accountability metrics and public report cards.
- ✦ Encourage business and industry representatives to weigh in on any assessments that indicate career readiness and ensure assessments meet workforce expectations.

# EXAMPLES OF STATE POLICIES

## Approaches to consider

### OREGON

*Multiple measures for students to demonstrate college and career readiness*



In addition to completing course requirements, Oregon students must demonstrate **Essential Skills** to show proficiency. As part of the essential skills, students must either develop a work portfolio to demonstrate mastery of reading, writing and math skills, or achieve minimum scores on either the SBAC or another assessment chosen from ACT, Plan, WorkKeys, Compass, Asset, SAT, PSAT, AP/IB or Accuplacer.

Oregon's approach provides avenues for students in academic as well as career/technical education pathways to demonstrate their college and career readiness. Integrating the SBAC as well as other assessments used for college admissions and placement raises student and parent awareness of college placement measures — which many studies suggest parents and students are unaware of. The Other Assessment option likewise sends students a message about the importance of performing well on these college and career readiness assessments, and allows students multiple avenues to demonstrate their college and career readiness.

### VIRGINIA

*A comprehensive package of standards, assessments and supports*



In February 2011, the leaders of the Virginia Department of Education, Virginia Community College System and State Council of Higher Education for Virginia signed a resolution recognizing their **College and Career Ready Mathematics and English Performance Expectations** as establishing the levels students must attain to be prepared for entrance into credit-bearing college courses or technical training after high school.<sup>1</sup>

Once these expectations had been set for all students, Virginia began developing capstone course content for college-intending students. This was intended for students who had attained minimum proficiency in English language arts on the end-of-course English reading and writing assessments, or had completed the required mathematics courses based on the Standards of Learning including Algebra, Functions, and Data Analysis or Algebra II, but were not college ready.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than define a set curriculum in mathematics, the commonwealth took the approach of giving schools and teachers flexibility to address the needs of their students. The goal was to ensure mathematics capstone courses provide relevance to students by providing a problem-based and project-based approach.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly to mathematics, the English capstone course provides problem-based units and is very much local-control: there is no statewide reading list, nor any test of particular elements of literature. Capstone content can be integrated into a senior-year English course or be taken as a standalone senior year elective.<sup>4</sup>

## ENDNOTES

- 1 College and Career Readiness Initiative, Joint Agreement on Virginia's College and Career Ready Mathematics and English Performance Expectations, February 2011, [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/college\\_career\\_readiness/expectations/joint\\_agreement.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/college_career_readiness/expectations/joint_agreement.pdf).
- 2 Virginia Department of Education, English Capstone Course and Mathematics Capstone Course, n.d., [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/english/capstone\\_course/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/english/capstone_course/index.shtml).
- 3 Interview with Tracy Robertson and Michael Bolling, Virginia Department of Education, January 9, 2013.
- 4 Ibid.