

Your Question:

You asked for examples of state policy addressing current approaches, pilot approaches or previous approaches to a variety of assessment types, including:

- College entrance exams.
- Through-course assessments.
- Computer-adaptive tests.
- Multiple, distinct summative assessments.
- Performance tasks assessments.

Our Response:

Here are some resources that provide a picture of the assessment landscape. We also provide more information on the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority at the end.

Nationally Recognized College Entrance Exams

ESSA requires that high school students (grades 9-12) are assessed in reading and in math at least one time. There are a number of states that use a nationally recognized college entrance exam as the assessment for federal accountability. Education Commission of the States has the [50-State Comparison](#) on States' School Accountability Systems that includes a data point for all states' [assessments](#) for accountability. There are at least 20 states — including **Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Montana and Rhode Island** — that use a test such as the ACT or SAT as the assessment for accountability in high schools.

Recent changes to the use of nationally recognized college entrance exams include a 2021 bill, [L.D. 277](#), in **Maine** that removed the SAT as a method for assessing student performance. The proponents of the [change](#) cited several reasons to remove the SAT as an assessment:

- Decreased use of the test to evaluate college applicants.
- Criticism of the test as biased.
- Not a good measure of curriculum mastery.
- A poor predictor of college performance, among others.

Through-Year Course Assessment

Data Quality Campaign [describes](#) through-year assessments as a cohesive testing system that combines interim and summative assessments. Students take multiple tests throughout the school year, which are shorter in length than typical statewide assessments and may provide actionable data that teachers and families can use to support student learning during the school year rather than waiting for the results of a single summative test at the end of a school year. Students in a through-year model still receive a final, summative score in each subject at the end of the year, which can be used to inform high-level decisions and satisfy federal accountability requirements. Below are state examples of through-year assessment systems and details for each. This [report](#) from Education First provides additional information for states not featured below.

Nebraska recently implemented the Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS) using multiple measures throughout the year to support student learning. These [multiple measures](#) include formative, interim and summative assessments. Nebraska has adopted [NSCAS Growth](#), an adaptive through-year assessment model that combines [MAP Growth](#) and the state’s summative test. The interim assessments, NSCAS Growth for the 2022-23 school year, will be [administered](#) in the fall, winter and spring. However, the spring assessment is the only required assessment. All assessments are computer-adaptive with about 40 questions and expected to take roughly 90 minutes for students to complete.

Maine used [MAP Growth](#), which included three assessments, on an emergency basis during the pandemic to provide immediate, actionable data on student performance. Maine is transitioning to the Maine Through-Year Assessment beginning in spring 2023. Maine’s through-year assessment model is [described](#) as:

- A way to provide educators with information about student growth throughout the year.
- A computer-adaptive test.
- A more efficient model that leverages information about students’ performance from previous assessments.
- Providing immediate data about growth and a norm-referenced RIT score after each administration.
- Meets federal requirements with the spring assessment administration producing a summative score based on grade-level standards.

The through-year assessment program will consist of three assessments in the fall, winter and spring. The fall assessment will produce a report for readiness for on-grade expectations. The winter assessment will be optional. However, if it is administered, it will be a personally adaptive test taking into consideration the student’s fall results. The spring assessment will be a personally adaptive assessment taking into consideration either the student’s fall or winter assessment data. The spring assessment will include both a summative and a diagnostic portion. The summative portion alone will be used for federal accountability. The system is described as a through-year model because the spring assessment relies on data from the fall assessment to create the personally adaptive assessment. Maine also uses student growth in its accountability system and the fall-to-spring assessment results will be used to measure that indicator. Maine received a [letter](#) in February 2023 from the U.S. Department of Education indicating that the state’s assessments did not meet the requirements for aligned criterion-referenced achievement standards, indicating when a student is exceeding, meeting or below content standards.

In 2021, **Montana’s** Office of Public Instruction [announced](#) a pilot program for assessment designed to lessen the burden of federally mandated testing and provide locally-selected interim assessments. The Montana Alternative Student Testing ([MAST](#)) pilot program is a through-year assessment program designed to replace the traditional end-of-year summative assessment. The pilot program tests students in grades 5 and 7 in math and English Language Arts (ELA), and it began in the 2022-23 school year. There are four testing windows that will include three math and two ELA testlets. Testlets are assessments that are intended to take a student ten to 15 minutes to complete. The testlets may be administered individually or as a group in a single class setting. The testing will be administered on the computer. However, these tests are not computer-adaptive tests. The Center for Assessment provided this [report](#) for the Montana Office of Public Instruction that outlines the framework for transitioning to the through-year assessment program.

In 2019, **Texas** enacted [H.B. 3906](#) which requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop and pilot a through-year assessment model as a possible replacement for the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) summative tests. The Texas Through-year Assessment Pilot ([TTAP](#)) provides three progress monitoring opportunities that contribute to a summative performance level at the end of the year. Testing will take place three times per year

in the fall, winter and spring. Each progress monitoring opportunity will cover the full scope of the learning standards to ensure that districts can retain their local curriculum. Tests are designed to be shorter in length with greater accuracy to minimize disrupted instructional time. The pilot began in the 2022-23 school year in the following subjects:

- Grade 5 science.
- Grade 6 math.
- Grade 7 math.
- Grade 8 social studies.

All of the districts that participate in the TTAP will be [required](#) to take the summative STAAR test throughout the pilot.

The bill also requires TEA to transition the STAAR testing online. However, it is not a computer-adaptive testing model. Additionally, TEA is required to develop an optional STAAR interim assessment for progress monitoring and forecasting for the summative version of the STAAR test.

Computer-Adaptive Testing

Computer-Adaptive Testing uses an algorithm to adjust the difficulty and the number of questions on a test based on a student's response. CAT tests require fewer questions and can be completed in a shorter period. Smarter Balanced, a collaboration with state agencies to develop a comprehensive assessment system, uses CAT for its summative assessments. The Smarter Balanced assessment system also includes interim assessments. However, those [assessments](#) are fixed-form tests. Smarter Balanced state members include: **California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, South Dakota and Washington.**

Florida's Assessment of Student Thinking ([FAST](#)) is a progress monitoring system designed to measure student progress. All the assessments in the FAST system use CAT based on the Benchmarks in Excellent Student Thinking (BEST) standards. FAST assessments are administered to students three times per year; the first test is within the first 30 days of school, the second is in the middle of the school year and the third test is at the end of the school year. The first two tests administered are used for informational purposes only and not part of the accountability system. The final test administered at the end of the school year is a summative assessment used for accountability. [S.B. 1048](#) enacted in 2022 requires the commissioner of education to provide an independent review of the FAST progress monitoring system. Among other requirements, the review must include recommendations for the feasibility and validity of using the results from the first or second test in the school year in lieu of a comprehensive end-of-year assessment.

The **Maryland** Comprehensive Assessment Program ([MCAP](#)) began a transition to CAT after the 2019-20 school year. Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, [plans](#) were in place for CAT in all ELA and math assessments for grades 3-7 and algebra I. Additional information for MCAP testing can be found [here](#).

Virginia uses [CAT](#) for both growth assessments and Standards of Learning assessments. Virginia first introduced CAT in the 2014-15 school year to administer the summative SOL assessment used for accountability. In 2021, Virginia passed identical bills ([S.B. 1357](#) and [H.B. 2027](#)) that required the board of education to provide through-year assessments in lieu of a single end-of-year assessment. The department has created an assessment system that includes both [growth assessments](#) and the SOL assessment each year. Students take growth assessments in the fall and winter. These growth assessments are shorter tests that are aligned with the SOL test items. Beginning with the

2022-23 school year, both growth assessments and the SOL test will include test items from the student’s current grade level and test items from below and above grade level. The SOL assessment in the spring will continue to be a summative test used for state and federal accountability.

Multiple, Distinct Summative Assessments

ESSA provides flexibility for LEAs to use a nationally recognized assessment approved by the state for high school assessment. Education Commission of the States has this [ESSA: Quick Guide](#) that provides more information on the use of multiple, locally-selected assessments on page two.

Arizona [statute](#) requires the state board to offer a menu of options for high school assessment to use in place of the statewide assessment to measure student achievement. Local education agencies may select an [assessment](#) from the menu offered in addition to the statewide assessment test. The statute also requires that, no later than the 2023-24 school year, the board provide LEAs with grades 3 through 8 a menu of assessments to administer to students instead of the statewide assessment.

The U.S. Department of Education identified a non-compliant practice where student assessment scores for the ACT or SAT were used instead of the required statewide assessments. The **Tennessee** statewide assessments for secondary students are identified as end-of- course [assessments](#) in English I and II, algebra I and II, geometry, integrated math I, II and III, biology, and U.S. history and geography. Tennessee does use ACT and SAT assessments as an indicator in the School Quality and Student Success measure. According to this [article](#), the state will address its use of multiple assessments.

Performance Task Assessment

Massachusetts received approval from the U.S. Department of Education to participate in the Innovative Assessment and Accountability Demonstration Authority (more details below). As part of the application process, Massachusetts outlined the plans for its new assessment. The department [plans](#) to build a new form of assessment that incorporates technology-enhanced, performance-based tasks designed to be more engaging for students and help focus on deeper learning in the classroom. The initial plan will focus on science assessment for students in grades 5-8.

New Hampshire’s Performance Assessment of Competency Education ([PACE](#)) is an assessment and accountability system that uses a competency-based approach to ensure that students have meaningful opportunities to achieve knowledge and skills. The system uses a [combination](#) of assessments designed for deeper student learning. The system uses locally administered performance assessments tied to grade and course competencies, which are determined by local education agencies and aligned with state standards. Student proficiency for federal accountability is assessed by teacher judgements at the end of the year and end-of-year competency scores for each student. In a 2020 [evaluation](#) from the Center for Assessment, there is no evidence that students in the grade 8 science PACE assessment program demonstrated different outcomes compared with non-PACE students.

For secondary school assessment, **Rhode Island** [uses](#) the PSAT in grade 10 and the SAT in grade 11. However, Rhode Island has a proficiency-based learning [approach](#) for secondary school students. The approach provides multiple, flexible pathways for students to demonstrate mastery of learning outcomes. The system includes the following features:

- Clear expectations for learning.
- Meaningful assessments with support and feedback.

- Student advancement based on demonstrated proficiency rather than seat or instruction time.
- Opportunities for students to exercise choice in learning and assessment.
- Learning outcomes emphasize application and creation of knowledge.

The state education agency convened teachers to [develop](#) scoring criteria and specific performance tasks to support proficiency-based learning. Students are also required to complete an approved [performance assessment](#) as a graduation requirement.

Utah completed an accountability [redesign](#) intended to focus on personalized, competency-based learning (PCBL) with the intention that a new accountability system would be inclusive of additional initiatives, provide more comprehensive evaluation criteria, and be aligned with and support continuous school improvement. The recommendation of the redesign advisory committee provided to the state board of education can be found [here](#). Utah also completed a [review](#) of its assessment system. One of the recommendations to the state board was how to support implementation of the PCBL [framework](#). Utah currently uses the Readiness Improvement Success Empowerment ([RISE](#)) computer adaptive criterion referenced assessment system for grades 3-8 in ELA, math, science and writing for its accountability system. Secondary students are assessed using the [Utah Aspire Plus](#) which is a hybrid of the ACT Aspire and Utah Core test items.

Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority

The Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority ([IADA](#)), authorized by ESSA, gives up to 11 states in a consortia leeway to establish, operate and evaluate an innovative assessment system. The goal is to test out innovative assessment models that can then be continued following the demonstration authority. As of July 2019, four states had received approval for these pilots (**Louisiana, New Hampshire, North Carolina and Georgia**). **Massachusetts** is the most recent state to receive IADA approval.

For more information on these pilot programs, including the state applications and approval letters, visit the [U.S. Department of Education website](#). Also, see ECS' [ESSA: Quick guides on top issues](#) policy brief for more on the innovative assessment pilot authorized by ESSA.

In August 2022, the U.S. Department of Education announced 11 grant awards to 10 state education agencies to support innovative assessments that support student learning. These [Innovative Assessment Grants](#) were designed to encourage “high-quality, innovative and authentic assessments that advance teaching and learning and continue state efforts to provide timely and meaningful information to educators, parents, and students themselves.” This allows statewide summative assessments to be designed to incorporate multiple measures of student learning.