

## Ending the culture of excessive testing

ESSA still requires that states test students. Tests must be administered in reading or language arts and in math annually in grades 3-8, once in grades 10-12 and in science once in each of the following grade spans: 3-5, 6-9 and 10-12. Federal law no longer requires high stakes decisions based on these tests, but Ohio has failed to change state laws around testing. Because high stakes decisions are still attached to testing in Ohio, students are still subject to repeated testing – not to inform instruction or monitor student progress, but rather just to produce data to sort, label and rank students, teachers, schools and districts.

With ESSA, Ohio can reduce the amount of unnecessary testing by focusing on creating an assessment system that gives teachers the flexibility during the course of the year to use formative assessments to monitor progress and make instructional decisions. State standardized tests should be used only for a snapshot view of how far students have progressed at that point in time which can inform local decisions a district might need to make to help students continue to progress in the upcoming year.

The Center for American Progress explains that the law makes significant changes to the role of tests in state education systems. For example, ESSA requires states to include a broader set of factors in school accountability systems rather than just test scores; provides funding for states and districts to audit and streamline their testing regimes; and allows states to cap the amount of instructional time devoted to testing. It also eliminates the requirement under the Obama administration's NCLB waiver program that states evaluate teacher performance based on, in part, student test score growth. Read more from the Center for American Progress (<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2016/01/29/130115/implementing-the-every-student-succeeds-act/>).

Specific changes Ohio can make with ESSA:

- De-link testing from teacher evaluations.
- Reduce the number of report card indicators that are solely dependent on test scores.
- Eliminate any tests that are given only to produce data for high stakes decisions.
- Make sure that state tests are high quality, aligned with standards, age-appropriate and that the data generated is returned in a timely fashion.
- Determine if local districts can use a nationally recognized test such as the ACT or SAT instead of state tests.

Questions to ask state decision makers about testing:

- How are the results on the required tests being used? Does the use of the results align with what the test was created to do?
- Are high stakes decisions attached to the state tests? Do these high stakes decisions have a negative impact on the teaching and learning environment?
- Are there other tests mandated at a state, district or school level that are only being given as practice for the state tests?
- How can the amount of non-ESSA required testing be reduced to rely more on formative assessments generated by a classroom teacher?
- Are the tests being mandated high-quality, aligned to the curriculum and age-appropriate?
- Are the results returned within a timeframe that will allow the data to inform instructional decisions?
- Are the tests testing content knowledge or computer skills?

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