U.S. Department of Education
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
School Support and Accountability

2023 State Assessment Conference
September 26–27, 2023 • Arlington, VA

The 2023 School Support and Accountability (SSA) State Assessment Conference will offer a plenary session, networking opportunities, and a variety of engaging breakout sessions. The conference is centered around three focus areas that include a number of breakout sessions to choose from. You can attend any breakout session.

Focus Area 1: Assessment Peer Review in the Context of Supporting Multiple Approaches to Student Assessment

This area will provide the opportunity for open conversation about how the **current** assessment peer review process can support multiple approaches to student assessment, including through-year assessment, portfolio, project based or performance assessment, and assessments that matrix sample content. Through a series of breakout sessions, a panel of subject matter experts and State staff will discuss how a State considering any of these approaches might address key assessment peer review topics and what kind of evidence the State could assemble. Recommendations are also given for evidence collection strategies. These breakout sessions will draw on current assessment programs, where they exist, as well as imagine what new assessment programs might look like that meet the variety of requirements of assessment peer review.

Breakout Sessions for Focus Area 1

- <u>Test Design and Development</u>: This session will focus on how purpose and use drive test design and development. Several topics will be addressed by State and national experts, including the reasons to use multiple approaches to student assessment, the kinds of trade-offs needed when considering this kind of new assessment, and what practices from prior test development initiatives can be applied to the new assessment design and development. Concrete considerations include the development of test blueprints and specifications, designing backwards from alignment criteria, and clarifying and articulating purpose and use.
- <u>Alignment</u>: Alignment methods used for multiple approaches to assessment may look different than those used for more traditional approaches to assessment. This session will connect validity arguments, theories of action, claims, inferences, as well as test design to alignment questions and methods. Concrete examples will be provided on how these factors can affect the alignment questions investigated, and

how those questions inform the resulting alignment evaluation processes. This session will illustrate how alignment criteria, as well as alignment methods, can and often should be adapted to fit the context of a particular approach to assessment.

- <u>Fairness and Comparability</u>: The use of multiple approaches to student assessment can introduce variation into what students are assessed on, when they are assessed, or both. Matrix sampling approaches provide each student with a subset of the test blueprint while maintaining content representation at the aggregate level. Approaches like through-year assessment and performance assessment often involve multiple test administrations throughout the school year on various aspects of the content domain. Whenever these kinds of variations are introduced, comparability and fairness can become a concern. This session will focus on ways to ensure that students are assessed fairly, and that student, school, and district scores are comparable at the necessary levels of inference.

- <u>Overall Validity</u>: This session will address how to develop and implement a validity argument compatible with different intended goals, purposes, and uses of assessment results for multiple approaches to student assessment. Practical ideas for collecting and providing information for different sources of validity evidence will be discussed. Presenters will share promising practices for synthesizing evidence to provide a holistic look at all sources of evidence and an appraisal of the strength of the overall argument and need for additional evidence. This session will also illustrate how a comprehensive and tailored validity research agenda can be established early on in program development and implemented sequentially over the lifespan of the assessment program.

- <u>Test Administration</u>: The use of multiple approaches to student assessment can introduce unique challenges into the test administration process. For example, some approaches to student assessment involve multiple test administrations across the school year on various aspects of the content domain. The structure of test administration (as well as the ongoing monitoring and related detection and prevention of test irregularities) may change as a function of these varying approaches. Some processes and procedures may simply need to be **done more often**, while other processes and procedures may need to be **done differently** or even **created anew**. This session will consider the common and unique challenges associated with various approaches to student assessment. This session will also

provide a summary of strategies to meet the test administration, monitoring, and security requirements of assessment peer review generally.

- Achievement Level Descriptors and Score Reporting: Reporting, and the achievement level descriptors (ALDs) that support them, are the primary means of communication with the field. This session will highlight the need to concentrate on these aspects of an assessment program early, and iteratively, within test development. The key is to connect what will be reported and how it will be reported, to the theory motivating the assessment program. That is, addressing the questions of **"What will be reported?", "Who will it be reported to?"**, and **"What should be done with the assessment results?"**, in real and concrete terms, is critical to every assessment program. This session will explore a number of factors that inform reporting and ALD development in light of these questions for the kinds of assessment approaches considered here.

- Preparing for Assessment Peer Review: This culminating session will summarize themes across the previous breakout sessions. The presenters will reflect on common and unique challenges regarding assessment peer review, provide recommendations on how to address these challenges, and offer high-level recommendations for States considering or engaging in the types of multiple approaches to assessment considered here. One of the key features of these recommendations involves the presenters asking themselves **"What do they wish they knew when their States began preparing for assessment peer review?"** The presenters will also offer practical advice on planning for assessment peer review beginning with the early stages of an assessment program and concluding with suggestions for compiling and framing the assessment peer review evidence.

Focus Area 2: Best Practices for Reducing and Maintaining Appropriate Alternate Assessment based on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (AA-AAAS) Participation Rates

This area will focus on how States can improve the implementation of their guidelines for participation in the AA-AAAS, refine their definition of "student with a most significant cognitive disability", support and provide appropriate oversight to each district that the State anticipates will assess more than 1% percent of its assessed students with an AA-AAAS to ensure that only students with the most significant cognitive disabilities take an AA-AAAS (including methods for reviewing IEPs, tiered interventions, and district action plan requirements), address any disproportionality in the percentage of students taking an AA-AAASs, and demonstrate a reduction in the rate of AA-AAAS participation. This area will also discuss ways to facilitate collaborative efforts across offices to reduce and maintain participation rates, address the 95% assessment participation requirement, and how to effectively transition students from the AA-AAAS to the general assessment upon reclassification, including selecting and providing appropriate accommodations for these students, as well as instructional considerations. States that have successfully reduced their AA-AAAS participation rates will be highlighted. These States will discuss their data, strategies and resources used, challenges faced, and plans for the future.

This area offers bootcamp-style breakout sessions that include back-to-back breakouts for each topic as described below. These breakouts will benefit State staff who are new in their positions or who want to learn the basics about reducing and maintaining appropriate participation rates for AA-AAAS. The root cause analysis and continuous improvement breakouts will dig deeper into the issues and allow participants the opportunity to draft a plan for addressing AA-AAAS participation in their States.

Breakout Sessions for Focus Area 2

- 1% Cap Bootcamp Part 1 and Part 2: This bootcamp is divided into two back-to-back sessions and will cover topics such as legal requirements and dear colleague letters, showing substantial progress in implementing the State's plan and 1% initiative work timeline, hot topics regarding the 1% cap (developing and improving participation guidelines, 1% cap waivers, providing oversight to districts, addressing disproportionality, etc.), and practices/resources that work. The sessions are

designed as workshops and participants will leave with draft plans to implement 1% initiatives in their States.

- Eligibility for Participation in the AA-AAAS: This session will cover topics such as eligibility guidance on AA-AAAS participation; defining/refining the term "student with a most significant cognitive disability"; and concepts of disposition, high expectation, least dangerous assumption, and start with the end in mind.

- Root Cause Analysis and Continuous Improvement Part 1 and Part 2: This bootcamp is divided into two back-to-back sessions and will cover topics such as root cause analysis on how to meet the 1% cap, using a continuous improvement approach for reducing AA-AAAS participation (showing substantial progress in reducing 1% rates), high quality 1% cap waiver requests, and using data driven decision making to effectively instruct students who have been reclassified to take the general assessments (working with parents to support their child during this transition, and selecting and providing appropriate accommodations for these students who now take the general assessments).

- Monitoring AA-AAAS Participation Rates: This session will cover topics such as monitoring districts (who, what, when, where, why, and how; reviewing data and IEPs; tiered systems of support; and district action plans), addressing disproportionality in AA-AAAS participation, and the justification/assurances process for districts explaining why they have or will exceed the 1% cap.

- Addressing the 95% Assessment Participation Requirement: This session will cover topics such as strategies and resources to assist States in meeting the 95% assessment participation requirement and talking to parents about the importance of involving their children in statewide assessments.

Focus Area 3: The Past, Present, and Future of the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA)

This area will focus on key features of the IADA requirements and explore the opportunities and challenges associated with participating in an IADA. In addition to addressing key technical, inclusion, and practical issues, there will be a chance to learn from individuals who have implemented the authority in their States. More specifically, subject matter experts will discuss approaches for meeting the comparability requirements in IADA, considerations for the inclusion of students with disabilities and English learners, and how to make an orderly transition from a legacy statewide assessment to a new IADA assessment.

Breakout Sessions for Focus Area 3

- The Basics of IADA: This session will provide an overview of the IADA, including key requirements, flexibilities afforded, and common misconceptions.
- Lessons Learned about the Implementation of IADA: This session will provide a brief overview of the recent Institute of Education Sciences (IES) evaluation report of the first four States granted the IADA. Most of the time will be spent hearing from States that were granted the IADA, their lessons learned, and next steps.
- Planning and Implementation of IADA: This session will provide an understanding of key issues around the planning and implementation of the IADA, including gathering stakeholder feedback, creating the conditions necessary to support successful implementation, considering the needs of all student groups in the initial planning and design phases, scaling up considerations, and planning orderly transitions from legacy assessment programs. This session will also discuss strategies for States to plan for implementation without a formal planning period in the IADA.
- Addressing Comparability of IADA: This session will provide an overview of the challenges associated with the IADA comparability requirements. Drawing on some of the Request for Information (RFI) responses and previous recommendations, there will be an in-depth discussion of options for meeting the IADA comparability requirements.
- Including all Students in IADA: This session will provide considerations and guidance for including all students in the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation components of the IADA with a particular focus on the inclusion of students with

disabilities, English learners, and English learners with disabilities. Additionally, panelists will share examples of what they have done to proactively design for all students in both the general assessment program and the IADA program, as well as talk about their challenges and opportunities around inclusion with respect to the IADA.

- Meeting the Requirements of Assessment Peer Review for IADA (combined session between Focus Areas 1 and 3): This session will provide an overview of the tensions and challenges between the assessment peer review requirements and the IADA program, as well as goals and strategies for producing and explaining compelling assessment peer review evidence.
- Addressing Comparability of IADA: This session will be a repeat of a previous session.