

Session C-2: Assessment Reporting in Peer Review

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Moderator: Joseph Suh, U.S. Department of Education, Office of State Support

This session focused on the requirements for assessment reporting as found in the updated Guide. ESSA added several new requirements for assessment reporting, and most states missed at least one part of this critical element in the 2016-17 peer reviews. Peers discussed the evidence needed to address all critical elements and focused on the items most commonly missed by states. This session addressed critical element 6.4 of the updated Guide (page 70), which was read to participants.

Moderator Joseph Suh introduced the panel and led the group in a discussion of questions that had been prepared in advance by peers.

What kind of narrative from states would you suggest accompany the evidence?

The states that are in transition need the most narrative. One state explained the circumstances that led to its provisional reports. One report was in a semi-final transition and addressed standard setting; the state's explanations helped the peer reviewers understand why the report was not final. When there are budget constraints or other challenges, it helps peer reviewers to know about them. Overall, the advice was to explain specific constraints and transition timelines.

A peer reviewer said one state included a PowerPoint file on the training of test administrators. The PowerPoint included a good information, but it wasn't included anywhere else in the submission and would have been more helpful in the narrative. States were encouraged to make it easy for peer reviewers to get an accurate picture of what's going on.

Should states submit supplementary evidence beyond what is necessary to demonstrate that the assessments meet requirements?

When additional information is provided, it is not always necessary, and this taxes the peer reviewers' patience. It helps to be selective about the evidence that addresses each critical element.

Must a state submit copies of every single report per grade and subject?

A peer reviewer said ED was aware that the Guide needs to clarify whether states should submit evidence for every grade and subject. To be on the safe side, examples for every grade can be provided.

How can a state that does not release items or test forms after the assessment period is completed address the requirement for "itemized score analyses"?

A peer reviewer said he had never been in a panel where they interpreted "itemize" to mean "item by item." There is nothing in the federal law that requires releasing test forms.

Does a state have to include each of the individual school and LEA timetables or schedules for the release of testing data to parents if each LEA sets its own schedules within parameters established by the state? What does the state need to do to ensure that this happens?

A common issue is for states to document their rules but not necessarily check to make sure the test reports were provided to parents within a specific number of days. Many LEAs have different starting and ending times, so it can be difficult for a state to establish a calendar that can be used by everyone. In addition to states saying, “These are the rules we put together,” they need to demonstrate that they’re checking to make sure the rules are followed.

What should a state do if its legislature determines the total time allowed for testing and therefore limits the number of assessment items that can be administered within that time?

Laws may be passed that require a certain time limit on testing, which affects the number of items that can be included. The state should let the peer reviewer know about the limitations imposed by legislators and quantify the impact in terms of the assessment instrument.

Additional Questions and Comments

Are there submissions where you wish more information was provided? What is usually missed?

One peer noted that states in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium have generally met the requirements; other states can look online to see examples of their submissions. Ohio is also instructive. Another stated that, in a peer review, they go through the critical items in the order they’re numbered, and reporting is last. If they see something unexpected, they will go back to the earlier sections to see if the reporting is defensible, not misleading, and has sufficient generalizability and reliability. Mr. Peasley said the peers have the task of reviewing what is submitted, but ED decides what they want the state to fix. Peers give advice to ED based on their expertise and knowledge, and for various reasons, ED may or may not follow the advice.

How can states meet the requirement for making reports understandable by parents?

Not everything can fit in the report. Many states provide a link to a detailed document. Also, reports can be submitted for educators only, as long as that is made clear. One peer said they look for evidence that parents are informed, such as a number to call or a video to watch. If links are used, states should make sure they’re working.

Because the Guide says states are not supposed to include links as evidence, clarification from ED may be needed. The states should provide documents, not links, as the primary submission. The state could then say, “For additional information, go to this link.” Some peer reviewers don’t go to links because they’re not supposed to be used. It’s better to send a copy of the report instead; i.e., what the parent would see if they went to the link. Another reason links are not allowed is because they can change over time. In addition, some parents can’t read English, so LEAs should collaborate in terms of translating reports into the languages most often spoken in the state. If parents can’t read the information, it’s of no use. The states need to consider this.

Mr. Lou Fabrizio was asked for examples of what worked and didn’t work to help peers see the big picture. He replied that it’s helpful for peer reviewers to know who developed the items, and who the vendor is.

Mr. Vince Verges was asked about live links on the parent reports and whether they had any data on the use of the links. He responded that although it's possible to get information on the traffic for these links, they haven't checked for this, but they do have anecdotal information.

What about states that use nationally recognized assessments? They have their own reporting mechanisms. What is required in addition? Would additional reports confuse parents?

The Guide does not address that issue. The best thing to do is talk to the TAC and ED. Determine how it fits in your accountability system. Ms. Spitz can be contacted about the requirements.

If we do not report on evidence for subscores in reporting categories to the public because of legislation, is it sufficient to give peers our business rules and indicate what is suppressed?

Let the peer reviewers know about the suppression. Knowing cell size is important. If you had a prior discussion with a TAC, that can be very influential during the peer review process. You can say you consulted with your TAC and this is what they advised you to do. However, be specific about the date, and submit the agenda or other documentation of the meeting; don't just say that you met.

How do you demonstrate that you have a state report card if you can't use a link? Should the state submit print screens?

ED will give this some thought. Another issue was also noted: Links can be problematic because the page reached asks for personal information and peers need to be unidentified. Therefore, they can't log in.

Some states that adopted Next Generation Science Standards use a cluster-based item design in their tests and keep testing time to a minimum. They're not sure what they can report just yet (total science score; not sure what subscores can be reported or by discipline). Is there a minimum expectation for peer review on what is reported? What is the advice for Next Generation Science Standards?

States have to submit something, such as, "Here's what we're reporting, here are our plans for further research, and we're going to meet with our TAC." Submit the plan, even if it is incomplete.

What is most important?

Organize the materials well, have someone outside your area look at what you've pulled together, and double check the page references. Don't do it at the last minute. As you go through the test development process, keep the requirements for peer review in mind. Look at decision letters and see where states were lacking. Look at sample reports to see what worked.