

**U.S. Department of Education  
Office of State Support  
State Assessment Peer Review Seminar  
Mayflower Hotel, Washington, DC  
August 1-2, 2018**

## **Day One**

### **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

***Patrick Rooney, Deputy Director, Office of State Support, U.S. Department of Education***

Mr. Patrick Rooney welcomed participants and stated that he appreciated their attending the seminar to discuss changes in state peer review requirements.

### **Plenary Session One: Updated Guide to State Assessment Peer Review**

***Donald Peasley, Supervisory Educational Research Analyst, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of State Support***

***Deborah Spitz, Education Program Specialist, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of State Support***

Mr. Donald Peasley stated that the entire seminar was being video recorded. The video will be posted on YouTube, and participants will be notified. All PowerPoint presentations will be made available for download. A list of participants will be posted on the seminar registration site. Mr. Peasley asked that participants complete an evaluation form after the seminar. He thanked the state representatives and the peer reviewers for their work.

In this opening session, U.S. Department of Education (ED) staff provided an overview of the updated Guide to State Assessment Peer Review (hereafter referred to as “the Guide”). A detailed discussion of ways the Guide is similar to and different from previous (2015) peer review guidance framed the session. An area of focus was the new requirements for state assessments found in the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA).

### **Context for the Seminar: The Updated Guide**

Mr. Peasley stated that the new ESSA requirements include English language proficiency (ELP) and alternate ELP assessments (AELPA) as part of assessment peer reviews. The Guide includes specific references to these requirements. Mr. Peasley noted that since peer reviews began again in 2016, states have been asking for opportunities to gain a better understanding of the expectations of peer reviewers, which was one of the reasons for holding the seminar.

The overall purpose of the seminar was to provide an opportunity for state assessment staff to interact with peer reviewers and other experts about the state assessment peer review process, ELP assessment peer review, and other new ESSA requirements. Mr. Peasley noted that the observations and opinions of the expert panelists were their own, not those of ED.

## Updated Peer Review Guide

Hard copies of the updated Guide were provided at the meeting. The online version is available at <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/saa/assessmentpeerreview.pdf>.

ED was considering minor clarifications and updates to the Guide and had not yet developed the index templates. Mr. Peasley said the changes would not affect the states' ability to plan for peer review. The purpose and role of peer review is as follows:

- Support states in meeting statutory requirements under Title I;
- Support states in developing and implementing valid and reliable coherent state assessment systems;
- Document technical quality; and
- Apply assessment results in a manner consistent with professional standards.

The updated guide to the peer review process reflects changes made to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act standards and assessment requirements by the ESSA (December 2015) and updated assessment regulations (January 2017). For the most part, the academic assessment provisions under the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, are similar to the prior assessment provisions under the ESEA, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. However, ELP assessments are now required under Title I. ELP requirements are integrated throughout the document because most academic assessment peer review criteria apply to ELP as well. The Guide will be in effect for assessments administered in 2017-18 and thereafter. Reviews in 2017 and 2018 have incorporated the new ESSA requirements for academic assessments in the feedback given to the states.

Mr. Peasley provided information about the new Guide as compared to the previous one.

### What Is the Same?

- Similar critical elements and structure;
- An evidence-based process;
- Use of independent experts;
- Submission process and index/evidence documentation;
- Feedback from experts and outcome letter from ED; and
- Similar requirements for changing an assessment system, i.e., when states need to resubmit evidence.

### What Needs to be Peer Reviewed?

- General mathematics and reading/language arts for grades 3-8 and at least once in grades 9-12;
- General science administered at least once in each of these grade spans: 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12;
- Alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) in mathematics, reading/language arts, and science for students with significant cognitive disabilities for the grades above;
- (NEW) ELP assessments for all English learners (ELs) in grades K-12; and
- (NEW) Alternate ELP assessments (AELPA) for ELs with the most significant cognitive disabilities in grades K-12.

New ESSA flexibilities:

- If applicable, locally selected, nationally recognized high school academic assessments;
- If applicable, the more advanced high school assessments used by students who take the state's high school math test in grade 8;
- If applicable, content assessments in a student's native language for ELs; and
- If applicable, content assessments in a Native American language.

Ms. Deborah Spitz addressed the new assessment requirements under ESSA, which include the following:

- Meaningful consultation in standards development;
- Universal design for learning (UDL) in assessment design;
- Equal benefits for students taking assessments with accommodations;
- Alternate academic achievement standards (AAAS) aligned with postsecondary education or employment; and
- Assessments that may be partially delivered in the form of portfolios, projects, or extended performance tasks, but *may not be completely delivered* in these forms (Section 1111(b)(2)(B)(vi) of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA).

The ELP requirements are integrated throughout the Guide.

A state must ensure that the use of appropriate accommodations does not deny students with a disability or ELs. These students must have the opportunity to participate in assessments, with all the benefits of participation afforded to non-ELs and students without disabilities. One example might be the benefit of receiving a "college reportable" score from participation in a nationally recognized high school academic assessment used as a state assessment.

### **ELP Assessments Now Must be Peer Reviewed**

ELP assessments are now part of ELP standards, and assessments are subject to peer review by ED and must meet all applicable requirements. This includes evidence suggestions specific to ELP assessments. There are still six primary sections of critical elements. Each state must submit evidence for peer review indicating that its ELP assessment provides valid and reliable results, is aligned with the state's ELP standards, and is consistent with nationally recognized professional and technical testing standards.

### **ELP Assessment: EL Students with Disabilities**

ELs with disabilities must be provided with accommodations on the ELP assessment (e.g., accessible formatting) so that these students are afforded the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do. A state must develop an AELPA for ELs with the most significant cognitive disabilities who cannot participate in the regular state ELP assessment, even with appropriate accommodations. A state may choose to implement an AELPA aligned with the grade-level/grade-band achievement standards, or it may choose to implement an AELPA aligned with alternate ELP achievement standards that the state has the option to develop. States must provide appropriate accommodations for ELs with disabilities. If an EL has a disability that precludes assessment in one or more domains of the ELP assessment and there

are no appropriate accommodations for the affected domain, states must assess the student's ELP based on the remaining domains in which it is possible to assess the student.

### **ELP Assessment: Consortium Considerations**

- The process used for academic assessment consortium will be applied to ELP assessment;
- "Common" evidence items for consortium will be reviewed by one panel of peers;
- There will always be some "state-specific" items reviewed by other peers, using notes from common evidence review;
- The map to critical elements outlines which are most likely consortium-specific.

Ms. Spitz noted that these considerations may differ between consortia.

### **New Requirements for Students with Disabilities**

- If a state administers an AA-AAAS in an academic content area for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, it must be aligned with the state's academic content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled and yield results relative to the state's alternate academic achievement standards;
- A state's AAAS must reflect professional judgment as to the highest possible standards achievable by such students and be designed to ensure that a student who meets those standards is on track to pursue postsecondary education or competitive integrated employment. ED realizes this is a new requirement and most, if not all states, cannot yet demonstrate evidence to meet it. The states are being given time to meet this requirement;
- A state must ensure that accommodations for all required assessments do not deny students with disabilities or ELs the opportunity to participate in the assessment and any benefits from participation;
- A state must, to the extent practicable, incorporate principles of UDL for all required assessments; and
- ESSA prohibits a state from precluding students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take an AA-AAAS in an academic content area from attempting to complete requirements for a regular high school diploma.

### **New Requirements for Assessing English Learners**

- Appropriate accommodations for ELs may not deny them the opportunity to participate in the assessments or any of the benefits afforded to students who are not ELs.
- To the extent practicable, academic content assessments (mathematics, reading/language arts, and science) must be administered in the language and form most likely to yield accurate and reliable information on what ELs know and can do to determine the students' mastery of skills in academic content areas until the students have achieved English proficiency.

### **Optional: Locally Selected Nationally Recognized Assessments**

A memo to the states in May 2017 set forth the requirements for locally selected, nationally recognized assessments. The memo is available at

<https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/saa/locallyselected72117.pdf>.

- State procedures for the use of locally selected, nationally recognized high school academic assessments before a local education agency (LEA) can use the flexibility:
  - Establish technical criteria;
  - Ensure comparability with the state assessments; and
  - Submit for assessment peer review; get “substantially met” or “meets”
- State monitoring of LEAs with regard to the use of locally selected, nationally recognized high school academic assessments:
  - Must follow parent notification requirements; and
  - All schools must administer the same test within an LEA.

### **Additional New Requirements**

A state must demonstrate that its challenging academic standards are aligned with entrance requirements for credit-bearing coursework in the system of public higher education in the state and relevant state career and technical education standards. A state also must conduct meaningful and timely consultation with stakeholders when developing the challenging academic standards and assessment systems and the ELP standards and assessment systems. This applies only to standards and assessments adopted after the passage of ESSA (December 2015).

### **When to Peer Review: Depends on Context and Extent of Change**

- New assessments (whether or not there are new content standards);
- Development of a technology-based version of an assessment;
- Development of a Native language version of an assessment;
- Changes to an existing test design;
- Changes to test administration;
- Assessments based on new AAAS or new ELP achievement standards;
- Assessments based on new or revised academic content standards or ELP standards; and
- Use of locally selected, nationally recognized high school academic assessments in place of state high school assessments.

Mr. Peasley discussed how consortia can prepare their evidence, as shown in Exhibit 3, “Evidence for Critical Elements that Likely Will Be Addressed by Submissions of Evidence that are State-Specific, Coordinated for States Administering the Same Assessments, or a Hybrid,” which is found on page 21 of the Guide. These suggestions are based on experience in reviewing consortium assessments; other consortium or “common assessments” may have different patterns of “who submits what.” It’s important that states make it clear who is responsible for which parts of the submission at an early stage of development.

Mr. Peasley explained that information in the Guide is organized so that there is a distinction between academic assessment references and ELP assessment references. The left-hand text in the Guide is updated to integrate ELP and AELPA:

- ***Bold Italic typeface is specific to ELP assessments***
- **Bold underlined typeface is specific to academic assessments**

The right-hand text is updated to specify ELP and AELPA examples:

- ***Bold Italic typeface specific to ELP assessments***
- **Bold underlined typeface specific to academic assessments**

### **Peer Review Recommendations**

Mr. Peasley emphasized that peer reviewers make recommendations to ED in peer notes, but ED makes the final decision about whether the assessment system meets the requirements in the statute and regulations.

### **Office of Elementary and Secondary Education Assessment Peer Review Submissions for General Assessments**

Ms. Spitz provided a status update on state assessment peer reviews. In 2016, 38 states were reviewed; in 2017, 11 states; and in 2018, 42 states. ED is working to expedite peer reviews; maps were displayed that showed which states were reviewed in which year. There are four possible outcome categories:

- Meets requirements;
- Substantially meets requirements;
- Partially meets requirements; or
- Does not meet requirements.

All outcomes are posted at <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/nclbfinalassess/index.html>.

Several states have demonstrated that at least one assessment met requirements and 28 state outcome letters were pending as of July 30, 2018. The outcomes as of July 26, 2018 were displayed in a chart; most states were in the “substantially met” category.

### **What’s Coming Up**

- December 6-7, 2018: Combined Federal Programs Meeting;
- Winter-Spring 2019: Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority Application/Award;
- Spring 2019: First opportunity for ELP Assessment Peer Review (including any Alternate ELP Assessments ready to be reviewed);
- Spring-Summer 2019: Competitive Assessment Grants (awards by September 30, 2019; see section 1203 of ESSA for program description);
- Summer 2019: State Academic Assessment Peer Review;
- 2020: Alternate ELP Assessment Peer Review; and
- Future peer reviews will likely be on a semi-annual cycle.

A participant asked when the spring ELP submission was due. Mr. Peasley said they were considering an end-of-March peer review, but it could be earlier if states are ready. He noted that ED needs about five months to prepare for a peer review.