![CCSSO logo — Council of Chief State School Officers]

States' Commitment to High-Quality Assessments Aligned to College- and Career-Readiness

Introduction

CCSSO, on behalf of the states, hereby commits to further states' proactive leadership in promoting college and career readiness for all students by establishing or adopting high quality systems of assessments, including summative, interim, and classroom assessments, based on college- and career-ready (CCR) standards. These assessments will **align** to internationally benchmarked CCR standards and the evidence on which they are based, **report** annually on each student's progress toward readiness, adhere to best **test administration** practices, and be **accessible** to all students. Many states are already demonstrating leadership in moving in this direction by developing higher-quality college- and career-ready assessments through participation in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) or Smarter Balanced assessment consortia; other states are also developing new CCR assessments. Our intent is to ensure that CCR-aligned assessments support an education that prepares all students for entry into college without remediation and for successful careers.

As part of states' comprehensive assessment systems, states are moving toward systems that improve upon traditional assessments so that students' in-depth knowledge can be measured. These assessment systems will: assess higher-order cognitive skills; assess critical abilities with high-fidelity; be based on CCR standards that are internationally benchmarked; be instructionally sensitive and educationally valuable; and be valid, reliable, and fair.[1] States' ability to implement systems of assessment that meet these criteria is evolving, along with the technology that is used as part of instructional practice to teach and assess these types of college and career skills and knowledge.

High-Quality Summative Assessment Principles for ELA/Literacy and Mathematics Assessments Aligned to College- and Career-Readiness Standards[2]

To ensure that all students have access to an education that prepares them for college and careers, summative assessments in grades 3 – 8 and high school should:

1. **ALIGN to CCR standards, by**

    —*in ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS / LITERACY ASSESSMENTS:*

    A. **ASSESSING STUDENT READING AND WRITING ACHIEVEMENT IN BOTH ELA AND LITERACY**: The assessments are English language arts and literacy tests that are based on an aligned balance of literary and informational texts.

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[1] These criteria are taken from a June 2013 report "*Criteria for High-Quality Assessment*," written by Linda Darling-Hammond, Joan Herman, James Pellegrino, Jamal Abedi, J. Lawrence Aber, Eva Baker, Randy Bennett, Edmund Gordon, Edward Haertel, Kenji Hakuta, Andrew Ho, Robert Lee Linn, P. David Pearson, James Popham, Lauren Resnick, Alan H. Schoenfeld, and Richard Shavelson. Click here to access the report.

[2] Federal review of assessments should remain limited solely to summative assessments. While the principles set forth herein should apply to all assessments, including formative, the principles are intended to provide guidance to the US Department of Education (USED) on its peer review process for summative assessments only.

B. **FOCUSING ON COMPLEXITY OF TEXTS**: The assessments require appropriate levels of text complexity; they raise the bar for text complexity each year so students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school. Multiple forms of authentic, previously published texts are assessed, including written, audio, visual, and graphic, as technology and assessment constraints permit.

C. **REQUIRING STUDENTS TO READ CLOSELY AND USE EVIDENCE FROM TEXTS**: The assessments consist of reading and writing test questions, tasks, and/or prompts, as appropriate, that demand that students read carefully and deeply and use specific evidence from increasingly complex texts to obtain and defend correct responses.

D. **REQUIRING A RANGE OF COGNITIVE DEMAND:** The assessments require students to demonstrate a range of higher-order, analytical thinking and performance skills in reading, writing, and research based on the depth and complexity of CCR standards, allowing robust information to be gathered for students with varied levels of achievement. Assessments should have a significant portion of total score points come from items that demonstrate a deeper level of knowledge (e.g., represent the high complexity levels designated by taxonomies of cognitive demand).

E. **EMPHASIZING WRITING THAT DEMONSTRATES PROFICIENCY IN THE USE OF LANGUAGE, INCLUDING VOCABULARY AND CONVENTIONS**: The assessments require students to demonstrate college- and career-ready abilities in writing, vocabulary knowledge and strategies, and the use of language and its conventions.

F. **ASSESSING RESEARCH AND INQUIRY**: The assessments require students to demonstrate research and inquiry skills, demonstrated by the ability to find, process, synthesize, organize, and use information from sources.

G. **ASSESSING SPEAKING AND LISTENING**: Over time, and as assessment advances allow, the assessments measure the speaking and listening communication skills students need for college and career readiness.

— *In MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENTS:*

H. **FOCUSING STRONGLY ON THE CONTENT MOST NEEDED FOR SUCCESS IN LATER MATHEMATICS:** The assessments help educators keep students on track to readiness by focusing strongly on the content most needed to pave the way for later mathematics. In a CCR-aligned assessment system, the elementary grades focus strongly on arithmetic, assessing other topics such as statistics, probability, and congruence only after elementary grades; middle grades focus strongly on ratio, proportional relationships, pre-algebra, and algebra; and high school focuses on widely applicable prerequisites for careers and postsecondary education.

I. **ASSESSING A BALANCE OF CONCEPTS, PROCEDURES, AND APPLICATIONS**: The assessments measure conceptual understanding, fluency and procedural skill, and application of mathematics, as set out in CCR standards.

J. **CONNECTING PRACTICES TO CONTENT:** The assessments include brief questions and also longer questions that connect the most important mathematical content of the grade or course to mathematical practices, for example, modeling and making mathematical arguments.

K. **REQUIRING A RANGE OF COGNITIVE DEMAND**:   The assessments require students to demonstrate a range of performance based on the depth and complexity of CCR standards, allowing robust information to be gathered for students with varied levels of achievement. Assessments include questions, tasks, and/or prompts, as appropriate, about the basic content of the grade or course as well as questions that reflect the complex challenge of CCR standards. Assessments should have a significant portion of total score points come from items that demonstrate a deeper level of knowledge (i.e., represent the high complexity levels designated by taxonomies of cognitive demand).

2. **Yield valuable REPORTS ON STUDENT PROGRESS, by:**
   A. **FOCUSING ON PROGRESS TO READINESS:** Score reports illustrate a student's progress on the continuum toward college and career readiness, grade by grade, and course by course. Reports stress the most important content, skills, and processes and show how the assessment focuses on them, to show whether or not students are on track to readiness.
   B. **PROVIDING TIMELY DATA THAT INFORMS INSTRUCTION:** Reports are instructionally valuable, are easy to understand by all audiences, and are delivered in time to provide useful, actionable data to students, parents, and teachers.

3. **Adhere to best practices in TEST ADMINISTRATION, by:**
   A. **MAINTAINING NECESSARY STANDARDIZATION AND ENSURING TEST SECURITY**: In order to ensure the validity, fairness, and integrity of state test results, the assessment systems maintain the security of the items and tests as well as the answer documents and related ancillary materials that result from test administrations.

4. **Provide ACCESSIBILITY to all students, by:**
   A. **FOLLOWING THE PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN:** The assessments are developed in accordance with the principles of universal design and sound testing practice, so that the testing interface, whether paper- or technology-based, does not impede student performance.
   B. **OFFERING APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS:** Allowable accommodations that maintain the constructs being assessed are offered where feasible and appropriate. Decisions about accessibility are based on individual student needs.
   C. **ENSURING TRANSPARENCY OF TEST DESIGN AND EXPECTATIONS**: Assessment design documents (e.g., item and test specifications) and sample test questions are made publicly available so that all stakeholders understand the purposes, expectations, and uses of the CCR assessments.