



Assessments

What the Law Says...

Highlights of the Title I provisions on assessments are:

- Assessments must be used as the primary indicator of Adequate Yearly Performance (AYP) (See: Accountability)
- Assessments must be, at a minimum, in mathematics, language arts (reading and writing), and beginning in SY 07-08, science.
- Assessments must be:
 - The same for all students.
 - Aligned with state content and achievement standards.
 - Used for purposes in which they are valid and reliable.
 - Used only if the State provides evidence of the assessments' technical quality.
 - Until SY 05-06, given once in grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12, in at least mathematics and language arts.
 - By SY 05-06, given every year in at least mathematics and language arts.
- Include reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities (as defined by IDEA – 602(3)).
- Include Limited English Proficient (LEP) students with accommodations “to the extent practicable” in the language and form most likely to yield accurate data.
- English proficiency must be tested for any student who has attended a US school for three or more consecutive years.
- Assessments must produce individual student interpretive, descriptive, and diagnostic reports to guide addressing student needs.
- Must enable disaggregation (without causing identification of individual students) within each state, local education agency, and school by:
 - Major racial and ethnic groups
 - LEP status
 - Students with disabilities as compared to non-disabled students, and
 - Economically disadvantaged vs. non-disadvantaged students.
- States must identify the languages other than English spoken in the schools and indicate the languages for which assessments are needed and not available.
- States must assess English language proficiency of all students with limited English proficiency.
- States must participate, beginning SY 02-03, in the biennial National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessments of 4th and 8th graders in mathematics and reading.

Regulations

The regulations concerning assessments from the US Department of Education greatly mirror the highlights described above with the following specifics:

- The State's assessment system must be designed to be valid and accessible for use with the widest possible range of students, including students with disabilities and LEP.
- The system must be supported by evidence of test publishers or other relevant sources.
- Though the statutory language requires testing only "objective" knowledge, this does not prohibit essay responses and opinion questions.
- The state has flexibility in how it sets up the assessment system. It may use different types of assessment, providing each test:
 - o Fully addresses the depth and breadth of the state's academic standards,
 - o Is valid, reliable, and of high technical quality, and
 - o Expresses the results in terms of the standards.
- If norm-referenced assessments are used, the assessments would have to be augmented with additional items as necessary to:
 - o Measure depth and breadth of standards, and
 - o Express the results in terms of the standards.
- If a combination of assessments (different State assessments or State and local assessments) are used, the State must demonstrate that the:
 - o Design is rational and coherent,
 - o Assessments work together to assess fully the academic standards, and
 - o Assessments measure adequate yearly progress (AYP), as well as student progress towards the standards.
- To include locally designed assessments, the State must assume responsibility for:
 - o Setting technical criteria,
 - o Ensuring the assessments are equivalent to one another in content coverage, difficulty and quality,
 - o Reviewing and approving each assessment,
 - o Ensuring that the data can be aggregated to make fair determination of AYP for districts and schools.
- Clarify that, beginning no later than SY 05-06, yearly assessments are required in mathematics and reading/language arts in grades 3 through 8; and once in grades 10 through 12.
- Beginning SY 02-03, the State must provide assessment results to districts, schools, and teachers no later than the beginning of the next school year after the assessment is administered.
- The state assessment system must provide for appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities (IDEA 602(3)) and students with limited English proficiency. Moreover, the state must assess LEP students in the language and form most likely to produce accurate data until the student is proficient in English.
- Accommodations for students with disabilities are those determined by the IEP team.
- Accommodations must be provided for students covered under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as determined by the student's placement team.

- The state must provide one or more alternative assessments for students with disabilities if the IEP team determines that the student cannot participate in all or part of the State's assessment, even with accommodation(s).
- Migrant and other mobile students, including homeless students, must be assessed even if they are not included for accountability purposes.
- Private schools are NOT required to participate in the State's assessment system.

Assessments and Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania is well on its way to complying with the ESEA '01 assessment requirements. Chapter 4 regulations (1999) established the state's Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). Under Chapter 4, the PSSA is given in mathematics, reading and writing to 5th, 8th, and 11th grade students. The state has already developed a pilot version of a science PSSA assessment. Since the PSSA was developed under Chapter 4 to assess schools, it remains to be seen whether it will be deemed valid and reliable to assess individual student progress.

A grade 3 version of the PSSA in mathematics and reading has been given since SY 02-03. In a proposal accepted by the State Board of Education in May, 2003 and by the US Department of Education in June, 2003, the Department recommended establishing assessments for mathematics and reading consistent with the PSSA for grades 4, 6, and 7. Additionally, PDE anticipates compliance with science assessments by SY 07-08 in grades 4, 7, and 10.