

How Do States Integrate Performance Assessments Into Their Systems of Assessment?

By Elizabeth Leisy Stosich, Jon D. Snyder, Katherine L. Wilczak

About this Brief

This brief is drawn from the forthcoming article, *How Do States Integrate Performance Assessments Into Their Systems of Assessment?*

This research was made possible with support from the Hewlett Foundation and Sandler Foundation



Stanford Center for
Opportunity Policy
in Education

edpolicy.stanford.edu
@scope_stanford

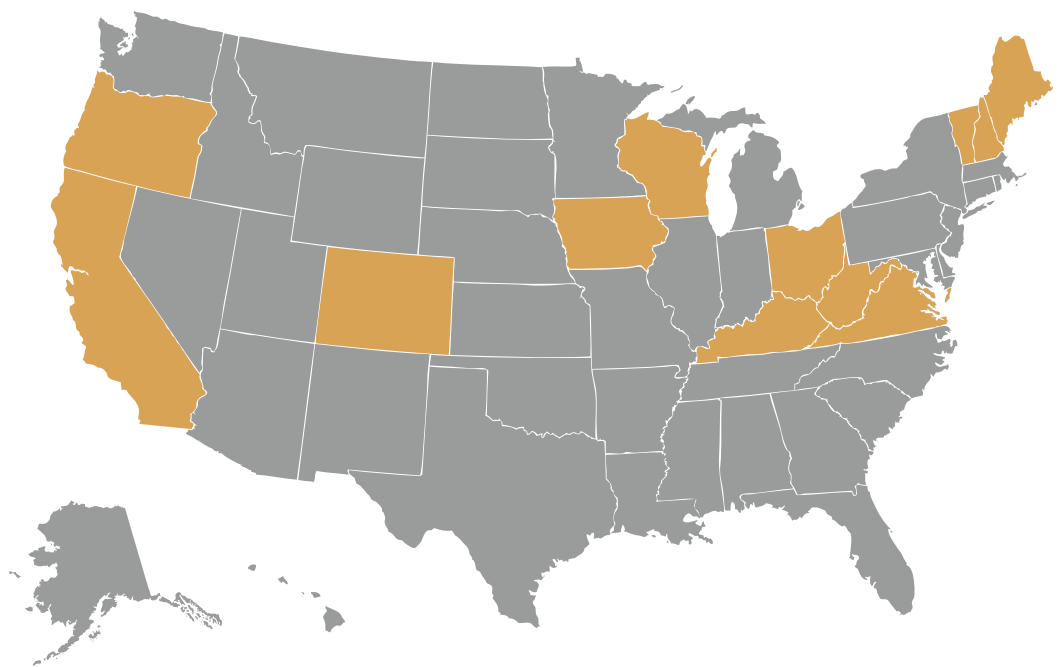


Understanding Language
– Stanford Center for
Assessment, Learning
and Equity

scale.stanford.edu
@stanford_scale

There is growing interest among state and local educational leaders in using performance assessment to develop and assess students' critical abilities—such as inquiry, communication, and collaboration—that are essential for student success but poorly measured by many traditional assessments. In this study, we identified four strategies for integrating performance assessment in state systems of assessment.

We analyzed the policies and capacity building efforts of 12 states to identify the strategies used to integrate performance assessment into state systems of assessment. This review builds on the ongoing work of the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE) and the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) with the Innovation Lab Network (ILN), a working group of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). At the time of the review, 12 states were members of the ILN: California, Colorado, Iowa, Kentucky, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Maine. We analyzed data collected from SEA personnel and websites through interviews, observations, and document review using thematic analysis to identify patterns in how states integrated performance assessments in their systems of assessment. With varying levels of support from their state, district, and/or school, educators in each of these ILN states were using performance assessment to measure and further develop students' knowledge, skills, and dispositions.



In some states, the adoption of college- and career-ready standards created demand for assessments that better evaluated the higher-level thinking required by these new standards. In other states, the adoption of competency-based learning models has spurred interest in using performance assessment to evaluate students' ability to apply their knowledge in authentic ways and demonstrate mastery of both academic and so-called "21st century" skills, such as communication and collaboration. Other states have created opportunities for using locally developed and curriculum-embedded assessments, as an alternative to high-stakes standardized tests that are further removed from classroom instruction and curriculum.

Our review of state policies and practices reveals four strategies for incorporating performance assessment into systems of assessment. Notably, some states used multiple strategies for integrating performance assessments.

- Supporting teachers, schools, and districts in their use of performance tasks for **classroom purposes**.
- Using performance tasks as one component of a **graduation requirement**, either by creating a graduation portfolio including performance tasks, or establishing proficiency requirements that can be demonstrated through the use of performance assessment.

- Using performance assessments for **school accountability purposes** or replacing statewide tests with performance tasks when possible, including allowing the use of performance assessment in non-tested grades/subjects or to fill the testing vacuum created by the introduction of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).
- Seeking a waiver from the federal government to alter federal testing requirements and allow performance tasks to be used for **federal accountability**.

While most of the studied activities took place prior to the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015), under ESSA, states will be able to pursue these same strategies, with a few minor modifications. Significantly, rather than pursuing a waiver to develop and implement performance assessments for accountability purposes, states can apply to the federal government to participate in a state-designed assessment innovation pilot that would allow some of the same flexibility provided by waivers. ESSA also includes increased flexibility for all states to design innovative assessment systems, including systems that incorporate performance assessment as part of interim assessments or as part of a portfolio of student work.