

**MAKING A
MEASURABLE
DIFFERENCE:** CASE STUDIES FROM
THE HIGH-QUALITY ASSESSMENT PROJECT

GRANTEE
ACCOMPLISHMENTS
& LESSONS LEARNED
(2013-2017)

States are now using higher quality tests to better measure important student skills such as writing, problem-solving and critical thinking. This report shares lessons learned from a four-year effort to help state leaders, educators and advocates make the case for new tests that measure student skills that matter.

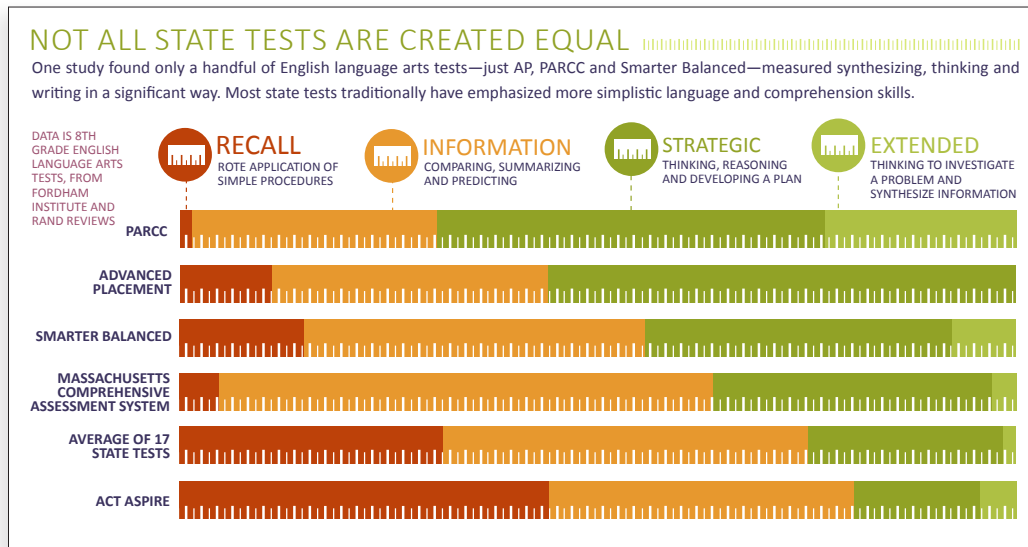
PREPARED BY



INTRODUCTION: In 2012, a RAND Corporation research study showed that state summative assessments—a key tool for signalling what skills and knowledge students should be learning and for ensuring they get the support they need—were not up to the task of measuring the writing, problem-solving and critical thinking skills students need for success in college and careers. The average share of questions measuring these skills across tests that RAND reviewed was 22% in reading and writing and just 2% in mathematics¹.

Since then, the landscape has changed as most states have adopted standards to better focus teaching and learning on college- and career-ready expectations—and to make sure their tests could measure these expectations. States committed to developing new tests with more performance items and open-ended questions, more writing prompts and reading selections from actual books and journals, and better accommodations for English learners and students with disabilities.

RAND and other organizations that have independently reviewed state tests have found wide variation in quality. PARCC and Smarter Balanced are among the best.



**GRANTS & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
TO SUPPORT TRANSITION
TO BETTER TESTS**

As a pooled grantmaking fund, HQAP provided grants and technical assistance to education advocates, teacher networks, researchers, education agencies and civil rights groups to support states as they transitioned to new, higher-quality assessments. Over its four-year tenure (2013-2017), funders included the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family and William and Flora Hewlett Foundations as well as the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust. Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors managed the fund, with support from Education First.

Initially, HQAP targeted its support in nine states, but over time—adjusting to the evolving debates around the country on testing—expanded funding to additional states (for a total of 17) for a range of communications, advocacy and information-sharing. Grantees educated state boards, legislators, governors and the media, and engaged parents as new tests were adopted and administered and score reports issued.

1. See https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR400/RR483/RAND_RR483.pdf.

Recognizing the huge leap in test design these changes demanded, most states joined one of two consortia—Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) or Smarter Balanced—to pool resources and knowledge and jointly develop a common test. Both more rigorous, longer and reliant on technology innovations, these new tests required states to rethink their data systems, student access to technology, cut scores and reporting. In addition, the shift to new tests obligated states to communicate with stakeholders why the new tests

were better and what to expect with test implementation. It turned out few states were prepared to meet this mix of technical and political challenges, and it became clear the implementation of these new tests—regardless of their quality—was going to be difficult.

Starting in 2013, the High Quality Assessment Project (HQAP) helped advocates and policymakers around the country learn more about and make the case for higher quality state assessments that truly measure college and career expectations². This publication summarizes HQAP’s four years of work and the accomplishments of the grantees and partners it supported.

PATH TO TESTING THAT MATTERS

Get Smart About Measuring What Matters

Review Education First’s compilation of best resources and tools¹.

Know the criteria for the design of high-quality state tests—see *what state education chiefs say*².

Articulate your own state criteria: What skills and knowledge matter most today? Ask teachers, parents and employers to help.

Recognize that many state tests—maybe our state’s too?—don’t measure up despite claims.

Get Evidence About Test Quality

Ask for independent proof that tests meet high-quality criteria. Don’t just trust assertions.

Repurpose existing tools that can help with your own test review—no need to reinvent.

Engage an outside partner: Experts such as *Achieve*³ and *National Network of State Teachers of the Year*⁴ can help determine whether your test is high quality.

Invite Higher Ed to Weigh In

One goal for tests is to understand if kids are on track for success: What does higher ed say about your tests?

Convene higher ed faculty to review your tests and validate their value.

Washington, Illinois and Tennessee asked higher ed leaders to confirm new state tests reflected the knowledge and skills needed for success in their 2- and 4-year colleges. For help with similar reviews, the *Higher Education for Higher Standards*⁵ coalition has tools and advice.

Engage Classroom Teachers

Good teachers know a good assessment.

Convene excellent teachers to review test questions and offer suggestions for improvement: Does your state test reflect high-quality teaching?

Ask teachers to identify what else they need in order to know how well students are learning.

HQAP worked to help advocates and policymakers understand the qualities of better state tests and ways to advocate for improvement.

GOOD TESTS MEASURE WHAT MATTERS MOST

- Probes students’ writing, problem solving and critical thinking skills
- Aligns fully to grade-level expectations for what students should know and be able to do and expectations for what students need for success after high school
- Measures a range of performance, including moderate and high-performing students, not just the average
- Employs a variety of test question types (such as multiple choice, multi-step problems, short answer where students explain/justify their conclusion, extensive writing) well-matched to the skills and knowledge being measured
- Uses excerpts from actual research journals, famous essays and literature for students to read and analyze
- Allows nearly all students to demonstrate what they know and can do regardless of whether they have special learning needs or language barriers (using innovations such as pop-up word glossaries, options for simplified formats and questions in multiple languages)
- Reflects great teaching and strong instructional practices that should be used in classrooms

IMPORTANT FACT

Studies show not all state tests meet these criteria. So don’t just trust—verify.

2. HQAP relied on *criteria developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)* to identify state summative assessments that are of high quality.

THE HIGH-QUALITY ASSESSMENT: GOALS & FUNDED ACTIVITIES

Although every state struggled in some fashion with the challenges of implementing a new, longer, more complicated assessment aligned to higher standards, HQAP’s funders made an early decision to focus on states with large numbers of students and active debates about the future of assessment.*

HQAP supported the move to higher quality tests in four major ways:

- 1** Deepen the knowledge base about new tests and support the ability of education advocacy organizations and coalitions to develop or strengthen their strategies to ensure the successful implementation of higher-quality assessments
- 2** Strengthen the knowledge and ability of state education agencies themselves to inform and engage stakeholders in the transition to new tests
- 3** Develop communications tools, analyze policies and conduct opinion and messaging research to support these efforts
- 4** Commission independent reviews—from classroom teachers to assessment experts—to examine the quality of different state tests so policymakers and advocates can better understand choices between tests

In most of the states in which it invested—especially early on—HQAP’s focus was on helping states as they moved to implement PARCC or Smarter Balanced assessments, given early research demonstrating the quality of these tests. But HQAP also supported grantees in places that chose not to use a consortia test but were still committed to a test better aligned to college and career expectations. Depending on the needs of state policymakers, HQAP activities included supporting the writing of clear Requests for Proposals for vendors, providing policy advice on choosing different tests over four years (2013-2017) and making the case for tests that measure writing and problem solving.

MAKING THE CASE FOR BETTER TESTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

With funding and technical assistance support, HQAP advocacy grantees reached current and new audiences with hundreds of touch points, including op-eds, letters to the editor, coalition letters, social media posts and tweets, community meetings, parent trainings, policymaker briefings and legislative testimony.

They disseminated HQAP-developed tools and materials of their own design; conducted outreach to parents and communities of color; developed curriculum for teacher leaders to use to educate their colleagues; hosted parent workshops and listening sessions, house parties, community conversations and teacher-parent meetings and provided communications support to state agencies. Their varied approaches to advocacy fit the unique context and needs of each state.

* See Appendix A for a list of states—plus grantees and partners—where HQAP made investments to support the transition to new assessments.

WITHIN A SHIFTING CONTEXT, HQAP'S FOCUS EVOLVED OVER TIME:

2013-14: HQAP made substantial one- and two-year grants to advocates in nine states to help them increase policymaker and public understanding of the need for high quality assessments.

2014-15: While maintaining support in the original nine states, HQAP made grants to advocates in eight new states. In addition, it supported third-party reviews of the quality of different state tests, engaged teachers to elevate their voices and conduct assessment audits and teacher-led reviews, conducted public opinion research on perceptions about testing and created tools, messaging, written materials and videos to support advocates to build public understanding and support.

2015-16: HQAP narrowed its investments to seven states most at risk of exiting PARCC or Smarter Balanced (plus two states that had recently left the consortia). It also conducted research on the opt-out movement and created messages and tools for advocates to counteract the movement. In addition, HQAP prioritized a new grantmaking focus on civil rights and equity advocacy organizations to strengthen their understanding of high quality assessments and to support their efforts to bring voices from diverse communities to debates about tests.

2016-17: Extending its work with civil rights and equity advocates, HQAP made grants to help these groups develop new tools for communicating with parents, educators and other stakeholders—especially within communities of color—about using test results to advocate for their children. HQAP also created a customized-for-each-state document that summarized the case for higher quality assessments and curated the best resources from HQAP on the Education First website to give advocates, policymakers and the field continuing access to tools and supports.

HQAP Funded Four Types of Activities³

TYPE OF ACTIVITIES	SAMPLE GRANTEES	TYPE OF ACTIVITIES	SAMPLE GRANTEES
IN-STATE ADVOCACY, COMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION SHARING	Advance Illinois, Children Now (California), Expect More Arizona, High Achievement New York, Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education and state PTA chapters	TEST QUALITY REVIEW	National Network of State Teachers of the Year, Teach Plus, Student Achievement Partners, Fordham Institute and HumRRO
IMPROVING PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT HIGH-QUALITY ASSESSMENTS	Latino Policy Forum, National Center for Learning Disabilities, Unidos US (National Council of La Raza) and National Urban League	NATIONAL TOOLS & RESOURCES TO ENHANCE LEARNING & SUPPORT FOR HIGH-QUALITY ASSESSMENTS	Edge Research, GMMB, HCM Strategists, Partnership for Learning (Washington), PIE Network and Stand for Children (national)

To complement state and organization support and strategic counsel, HQAP also hosted several partner convenings to further help grantees build their knowledge base about high quality assessments, share strategies for advocating within states for new, high quality tests and supporting equity and civil rights organizations in particular to engage in high-quality assessment advocacy.

HQAP Convenings For Grantees and Partners

DATE	CONTENT	DATE	CONTENT
NOVEMBER 2014	After its first year of supporting the field, HQAP convened grantees and other advocates to identify and share lessons they learned from different state efforts and to prepare for evolving political challenges in 2016.	OCTOBER 2016	HQAP brought together a subset of equity and civil rights organizations and state partners to deepen understanding of specific assessment-related issues that more typically affect students (or should be opportunities for students) in historically underserved communities, such as English language proficiency assessments and innovation pilots. The convening also provided time for planning across HQAP grantees for short-term collaboration opportunities.
MAY 2015	Inviting equity, civil rights and national advocates and assessment experts, this HQAP meeting explored the content, structure and technology shifts in new assessments and encouraged advocacy groups to share strategies for informing parents, students and local communities about test scores and data.	ONGOING	HQAP conducted over 10 webinars on topics including opt-out research, selecting high school assessments and messaging to Latino parents. (It also supported PIE Network to provide similar webinars, host meetings and share tools on assessment advocacy with its broader network of state education advocacy groups).

³ For a complete list of grantees, see Appendix A.

To help advance the field’s understanding of state assessments that are of high quality, HQAP commissioned independent reviews of available assessments, including PARCC, Smarter Balanced, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and ACT Aspire. To get teacher perspectives on assessments, HQAP also asked grantees to compare the PARCC and Smarter Balanced Assessment to tests used previously by states.

HQAP-Funded Independent Reviews of Tests

TEST QUALITY VALIDATION	SAMPLE GRANTEES	TEST QUALITY VALIDATION	SAMPLE GRANTEES
Creation of a <i>methodology</i> based on CCSSO criteria for high-quality summative assessments and other considerations for guiding any evaluation of the quality of state tests. The Fordham Institute and HumRRO used this methodology in their review of PARCC, Smarter Balanced, MCAS and ACT Aspire, and the methodology is freely available for other researchers or state leaders to use to review other tests.	CENTER FOR ASSESSMENT	<i>Assessment validation study</i> of new state assessments for ELA/literacy and mathematics summative assessments in high schools: ACT Aspire, MCAS, PARCC and Smarter Balanced.	Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO)
		Two teacher-conducted studies that compared the quality of PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessments to assessments used previously by states: Its first study compared the new tests to previous tests from Delaware, Illinois, New Hampshire and New Jersey, and the second study compared them to previous tests in Nevada and Oregon.	National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY)
<i>Assessment validation study</i> of new state assessments for ELA/literacy and mathematics summative assessments in grades 5 and 8: ACT Aspire, PARCC and Smarter Balanced as well as MCAS, widely viewed as one of the best prior state tests.	FORDHAM INSTITUTE	Reviews of state assessments in Colorado, Louisiana, North Carolina and Ohio, where teachers analyzed test items and their alignment to the standards.	STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS

With feedback from its grantees, HQAP recognized that effective messages did not exist to help parents and other stakeholders understand the value of high quality assessments and what factors to consider before making a decision to opt out. It made investments and engaged in activities to support the development of messages that states and advocacy grantees could deliver as part of their outreach strategies.

HQAP Communications Research

PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH
HQAP, in partnership with Edge Research, conducted focus groups to learn more about the motivations behind those parents and students refusing state summative tests—and those who made the choice not to opt out.
HQAP, in partnership with HCM Strategists and GMMB and 12 civil rights advocates, used focus group findings and national survey results to create tools in English and Spanish to communicate about tests and the importance of students “opting in.”
Following up on a national poll conducted by another organization, HQAP commissioned state specific opinion research in Colorado, New Jersey and Washington using the same questions to help advocates understand how public opinion about testing was shifting (or not) and what messages were most compelling to parents in those states specifically.

HQAP developed materials to help states and grantees understand the assessment landscape, new assessments, myths about the new tests and other issues related to advancing high quality assessments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS, SHARED INFORMATION AND BRIEFINGS FOR USE BY GRANTEEES		CLICK ON THE LINKS BELOW TO VIEW THE RESOURCES
<u><i>The Common Core Standards & Assessment Landscape</i></u>	<u><i>A Complicated Conversation: A Framework for Guiding Assessment Conversation and Decision-Making</i></u>	<u><i>What Does a High-Quality Assessment Look Like?</i></u>
<u><i>What We Know (and Don't Know) About Testing Time—and What States Can Do</i></u>		<u><i>Assessment Mythbusters for PARCC & Smarter Balanced</i></u>
	<u><i>Choices and Trade-offs: Key Questions for State Policymakers when Selecting High School Assessments</i></u>	Biweekly e-newsletter to grantees highlighting new tools and important news

GRANTEE
SPOTLIGHTS

As HQAP reached its sunset, it supported three grantees to document lessons they learned and advice they would give to others to reach new audiences and build stronger cases for the importance of using better state tests: Unidos US (formerly the National Council of La Raza), The National Network for State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY) and Ready Washington.

Unidos US: Advice for Helping Latino Parents Become Strong Advocates


In August 2015-16, Unidos US surveyed Latino parents to ascertain their views about new standards and assessments. Survey results revealed that they did not know much about them. Parents also said they found testing to be a valuable means for them to assess their children’s progress and expressed eagerness to help them master grade-level standards and succeed on tests. Unidos US used the results of the survey to develop messages and information that state-based Unidos US affiliates across the country used during the 2015-16 school year to communicate with more than 6,000 Latino parents at education workshops focused on the need for high academic standards and tests. Feedback collected by the affiliates reflected the results of the survey: Latino parents view more rigorous academic assessments positively. Unidos US used what it learned from the surveys and meetings to produce a *resource guide* on communicating to Latino families about the Common Core and assessments aligned to it.

See the HQAP Unidos US brief about Unidos US’s work here.

With its HQAP grant, Unidos US produced a range of bilingual, parent-friendly materials, including one on accountability provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act.


**THE
PARENT'S
GUIDE**

**THE EVERY STUDENT
SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)**



What is ESSA?


The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is an update to the federal education law, previously known as No Child Left Behind. This new legislation, signed by President Obama, is intended to ensure that all students, no matter what their race, gender, income, language, or origin have the same opportunities and access to a high- quality education.



What can I do as a parent? Get involved!

ESSA requires schools, districts, and states to “meaningfully consult,” or engage with parents in the implementation of ESSA. The law also requires ongoing parent involvement.


- This year, States are drafting and submitting state ESSA plans.
- You can contact **UnidosUS** to find out how you can be involved in this process.



How will ESSA change my child's school?


ESSA will:

- Allow states to design their own systems to measure the quality of your child's school
- Ensure that students are given rigorous content in reading and math.
- Require schools to measure and report on the academic progress of Latino students, English learners and other categories of students every year.
- Allow states to take action when students are not succeeding academically
- Ensure schools prepare your child for college and career
- Require states to define new goals and procedures for English Learners.



Why is my involvement important?

- Because states are in charge of designing their own systems, it is up to parents and advocates to ensure that your child's rights are protected.
- Your involvement will keep schools, districts, and leaders accountable for serving your child well.
- With parents as partners, schools can better prepare students for college and career.



UNIDOSUS
STRONGER COMMUNITIES. STRONGER AMERICA.

8

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHTS

NNSTOY: Advice on Engaging Teachers to Review Test Quality for Alignment with Excellent Classroom Instruction

NNSTOY convened groups of outstanding teachers to study the quality of state tests. In 2015, teachers compared the consortia's grade 5 assessments to previous state tests from Delaware, Illinois, New Hampshire and New Jersey. Teachers repeated the process for Nevada and Oregon. The two grade 5 teacher panels found that the new consortia assessments are appropriately more demanding and better reflect strong instructional practices than prior tests in these states. NNSTOY's findings are captured in the *Right Trajectory* and *Still on the Right Trajectory* in 2016.

See the HQAP NNSTOY brief here.

Across both of NNSTOY's reviews of state test quality, teacher rated PARCC and Smarter Balanced highest (data in the accompanying illustration comes from The Right Trajectory report).

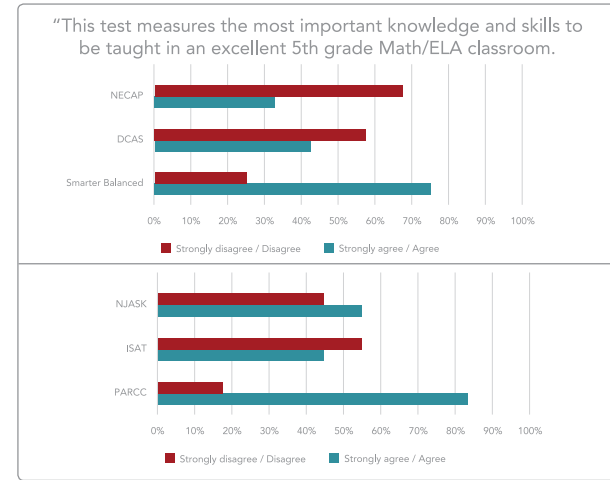


Figure 25. Percent agreement with statement: "This test measures the most important knowledge and skills to be taught in an excellent fifth grade Math/ELA classroom."

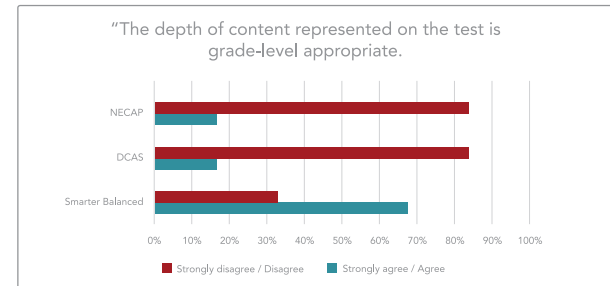


Figure 26 (A). Percent agreement with statement: "The depth of content represented on the test is grade-level appropriate."

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHTS

Partnership for Learning/Ready Washington: Advice on Engaging Students to “Opt In” for Testing, Especially in High School

Ready Washington’s *Opt In for Student Success* campaign began with an analysis of 2015 test participation data that revealed test refusals most frequently occur in wealthy suburban districts. Follow-up telephone surveys and focus groups examined more closely the level of information students and parents had about Washington’s new test (Smarter Balanced) and the messages that would encourage high school students to “opt in” and take it seriously. Based on this research, it created a unique, multi-media campaign to coincide with the spring 2016’s testing window and then again with the 2017 window. The campaign included fact sheets, graphics and videos to deliver key message to students and secondary audiences through social media, and included a contest that asked high school students to record and upload a video that had to include the phrase, “I opt in for better education because...”. The campaign awarded 10 \$500 scholarships (revised to five and \$1,000 scholarships in 2017) to winners. Winning students’ teachers received \$100 Visa gift cards. The campaign touched more than 1.5 million people in 2016, and an additional 1 million in 2017.

[See the Ready Washington HOAP brief here.](#)



OPT IN FOR STUDENT SUCCESS FAQs

What are Common Core State Standards?	To help students on the pathway for success after high school, Washington state adopted the Common Core State Standards, which define what students should know and be able to do at each grade level in math and English language arts.
What are Smarter Balanced assessments?	We measure how students and schools are performing in meeting the standards with Smarter Balanced assessments. Smarter Balanced is a computer-based assessment system that measures deeper knowledge and skills that are important to each student’s future, including problem-solving, writing and critical thinking.
How are Smarter Balanced assessments scored and what do the scores mean?	Smarter Balanced assessment scores fall into one of four levels. Students receive a score for math and a score for English language arts. A level 3 or 4 score is one way of demonstrating a student is on track for college and career readiness. A level 1 or 2 score means a student might need extra help, motivation and planning to be college and career ready after high school.
What does being college and career ready mean?	Being college and career ready means students have the skills to qualify for and to succeed in credit-bearing college courses or on-the-job training that’s necessary for their chosen career.
Why do students need to be college and career ready?	By 2018, more than 70 percent of jobs in Washington will require a postsecondary degree or certificate. Less than 40 percent of Washington students have college degrees. To take advantage of these opportunities and have a life filled with options, students need a quality education to successfully pursue college and career pathways. Smarter Balanced is a tool that lets teachers and families know how students are doing and when they might need extra help along their path to a high school diploma and postsecondary degree or certificate.



Caedmon Calbero
Winner in the 2017
‘Opt In for Student Success’
video contest.

Using messages designed especially for high school students, Ready Washington’s *Opt In Campaign* included a variety of collateral shared across a variety of media platforms.

TOP 3 REASONS TO TAKE THE SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENT

- 1 KNOW NOW IF YOU ARE READY FOR COLLEGE OR WORK.**
If you score a 3 or higher on the Smarter Balanced assessment, you’re on track to be ready for college or career and can qualify for credit-bearing courses in college and avoid the cost and time of remedial or high school level courses in college.
- 2 KNOW IF YOU NEED EXTRA HELP OR CAN TAKE ADVANCED CLASSES.**
The Smarter Balanced assessment provides a key measure of how you’re doing. It also lets teachers and families know how to support you to reach your goals.
- 3 TAKING THE TESTS HELPS TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS.**
The Smarter Balanced assessment provides educators, schools and families better information on how you and your school stack up against others in the state, nation and world and how you are improving and where you need extra help.

WASHINGTON WILL HAVE **MORE THAN 700,000 JOB OPENINGS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. MOST JOBS WILL BE FILLED WITH WORKERS WHO HAVE A POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL OR SOME COLLEGE EXPERIENCE.**

But how do we know if you’re ready? If you have the skills and knowledge to fill these jobs?
One way teachers and parents measure college and career readiness is through assessments.

In our state, we use Smarter Balanced assessments, which measure skills like problem solving and critical thinking that are important to a student’s future in a globally competitive world.



Sarah Archer

Winner in the 2017
‘Opt In for Student Success’
video contest.



PROGRESS AND LESSONS LEARNED⁴

During the 2016-17 school year, 24 states and the District of Columbia were still active members of PARCC or Smarter Balanced or were using their test questions. While both consortia have lost members from the optimistic starting point of 2011, across the country almost 40% of students in grades 3-8 or high school still take one of these higher quality tests. And, specifically among the 17 different states HQAP targeted for support in some way during its four years, 12 are still using a consortia test or, in the case of New York, another independently verified, high-quality test.

In the process of supporting high quality assessment in key geographies, HQAP learned several lessons:

- Higher quality assessments need advocates. Despite the arguments for tests that genuinely measure skills students should be learning and how they help educators address achievement gaps, the pressures of testing time, costs and politics still influence state decisions about testing vendors too. Moreover, many HQAP-supported organizations did not have content knowledge about new standards and assessments or experience advocating for them—they needed to build that capacity.
- Confirming whether a test is well-designed and truly measures skills and knowledge critical to student success becomes especially important when a state chooses to create its own test with a private vendor. To date, more than 20 states have chosen to do so outside the consortia entirely. The challenge moving forward is to help these states reach a high bar for quality and resist the temptation to drift back toward cheaper, multiple-choice dominant tests that take far less time to administer.
- Teachers have been, appropriately, some of the biggest skeptics of tests that take away from instructional time. But they also understand the role of assessments and the importance of tests that truly reflect excellent instruction and deeper learning. When teachers have a chance to study state tests more carefully—looking carefully at actual tests to see what the questions ask students to do—they see more clearly see the link to what they are asking students to do in their classrooms.

There is no doubt that states will continue to wrestle with the value of balancing costs and concerns about testing time with the desire to use assessments that measure critical thinking, problem-solving and writing skills demanded by college and careers. Work remains to be done to ensure that states—especially those striking out on their own by designing a new test or selecting a test that is not yet externally reviewed for quality—remain committed to administering tests that really do measure college- and career-ready standards thus allowing them to identify gaps in performance between dominant and sub-dominant populations of students so that all groups are prepared for the future.

4. For observations about funder collaborations in the Common Core-era, see also How Funder Collaborations Flourish: Lessons from the Common Core Standards <http://education-first.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Funder-Collaboratives-Complete-Guide-Final-4-25-2016.pdf>.

APPENDIX A: HQAP GRANTEES & PARTNERS & TARGETED STATES

Grantee	State(s)	Grant Focus Category
Achieve, Inc.	National	National Tools and Resources to Enhance Learning and Support
Advance Illinois	IL	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Alma Villegas Consulting	WA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
America Achieves	NY	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Arizona Chamber of Commerce Foundation	AZ	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Arizona PTA	AZ	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
BEST NC	NC	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Buffalo ReformEd	NY	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
California PTA	CA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Community & Parents for Public Schools of Seattle	WA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Council of Chief State School Officers	National	National Tools and Resources to Enhance Learning and Support
Center for Assessment	National	Test Quality Review
Children Now	CA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Colorado PTA	CO	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Colorado Succeeds	CO	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Data Quality Campaign	National	National Tools and Resources to Enhance Learning and Support

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<i>Grantee</i>	<i>State(s)</i>	<i>Grant Focus Category</i>
Edge Research	National	Research and Communications to Address Opt-out
Education Counsel	National	National Tools and Resources to Enhance Learning and Support
Education Reform Now	NY	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Education Strategy Group	IA, IL, MA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Education Trust - Midwest	MI	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Expect More Arizona	AZ	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Fordham Institute	National	Test Quality Review
Foundation for Educational Administration	NJ	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
GMMB	National	Research and Communications to Address Opt-out
Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce	AZ	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
HCM Strategists	National	Research and Communications to Address Opt-out
High Achievement New York	NY	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
HumRRO	National	Test Quality Review
Illinois PTA	IL	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Illinois State Board of Education	IL	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Latino Policy Forum	IL	Improving Partnerships to Support High-quality Assessments

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Learning Heroes	National	National Tools and Resources to Enhance Learning and Support
LULAC	MA, NY	Improving Partnerships to Support High-quality Assessments
Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education	MA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Massachusetts PTA	MA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Meeting Street Research	CO, NJ, WA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Metiri	IL	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Michigan PTA	MI	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
National Center for Learning Disabilities	National	Improving Partnerships to Support High-quality Assessments
National Congress of Parents and Teachers (National PTA)	CT, OH, OR	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Unidos US (formerly National Council of La Raza)	CO, NJ, NY	Improving Partnerships to Support High-quality Assessments
Nevada PTA	NV	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
New Jersey PTA	NJ	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
New York Urban League, Urban League of Rochester, Buffalo Urban League	NY	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing

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<i>Grantee</i>	<i>State(s)</i>	<i>Grant Focus Category</i>
National Network of State Teachers of the Year	National	National Tools and Resources to Enhance Learning and Support
North Carolina Chamber Foundation	NC	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Ohio Business Roundtable	OH	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Ohio Standard Coalition	OH	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Oregon Department of Education	OR	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
PARCC	National	National Tools and Resources to Enhance Learning and Support
Partnership for Learning	WA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
PIE Network	National	National Tools and Resources to Enhance Learning and Support
Rennie Center	MA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Smarter Balanced	National	National Tools and Resources to Enhance Learning and Support
Equity in Education Coalition (Southwest Youth and Family Services)	WA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Stand for Children	National	National Tools and Resources to Enhance Learning and Support
Stand for Children Arizona	AZ	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing

APPENDIX A: HQAP GRANTEES & PARTNERS & TARGETED STATES

<i>Grantee</i>	<i>State(s)</i>	<i>Grant Focus Category</i>
Stand for Children Illinois	IL	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Stand for Children Louisiana	LA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Stand for Children Oregon	OR	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Stand for Children Leadership Center	IL, MA, WA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Strategies 360	OR, WA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Student Achievement Partners	National	National Tools and Resources to Enhance Learning and Support
Teach Plus	IL	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
The Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO)	NJ	Improving Partnerships to Support High-quality Assessments
Trace Strategies	AR	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
Urban League New Orleans	LA	Improving Partnerships to Support High-quality Assessments
Washington Roundtable	WA	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing
WestEd	OR	In-state Advocacy, Communications and Information-sharing

ABOUT THE HQAP : HIGH-QUALITY ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Between 2013-2017, the High-Quality Assessment Project—a pooled grantmaking fund created by the Bill & Melinda Gates, Hewlett, Lumina and Schusterman foundations as well as the Helmsley Trust—provided resources to policymakers and advocates around the country to support them in making the transition to higher quality state tests. Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors and Education First managed the fund.

Using grants and technical assistance from HQAP, these state and national leaders engaged in reviews of state test quality, developed materials for better engaging parents and teachers, and commissioned research into public opinion about the importance of testing. Across the country and more deeply in 17 states over HQAP’s four years, grantees educated state boards, legislators, governors and the media, and engaged parents as new tests were adopted and administered and score reports issued.

With the sunset of HQAP, Education First has been working to take stock of lessons learned from this initiative and to make sure the field continues to give access to the varied and helpful tools and information grantees created about test quality.

As part of this work, HQAP commissioned case studies from three grantees—the National Network of State Teachers of the Year, Partnership for Learning/Ready Washington and UnidosUS—to share their work influencing the debates about states tests and their advice for advocates and policymakers. Each of these organizations engaged their constituencies—parents, teachers and students—in different and innovative ways, and it’s worth thinking about how these efforts could be replicated in more states and communities.

Complementing these case studies, Education First has prepared a report summarizing the work of HQAP and lessons learned for continued advocacy on the quality and usability of state tests.

Finally, the Education First website now includes a permanent “best of” library of resources from many HQAP grantees, including rubrics for reviewing the quality of tests, communications tools and infographics to discourage “opting out” and model materials for engaging both parents and policymakers. The case studies and the Education First final can be found at this online resource as well.



Education First is a strategy and policy organization that helps policymakers design and accelerate policies and plans that help all young people succeed in college, careers and life.



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