



# TRANSITIONING TO A THROUGH-YEAR ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

TOOLKIT FOR STATE LEADERS

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## INTRODUCTION



## How should states determine if a through-year summative assessment system is the right fit for their state and navigate the transition?

The process of transforming a state assessment system requires coherent and strategic approach to planning and implementation. For many state leaders, this includes identifying the right design choices for their own context, engaging and building buy-in among key stakeholders, effectively communicating and having strong plans in place.

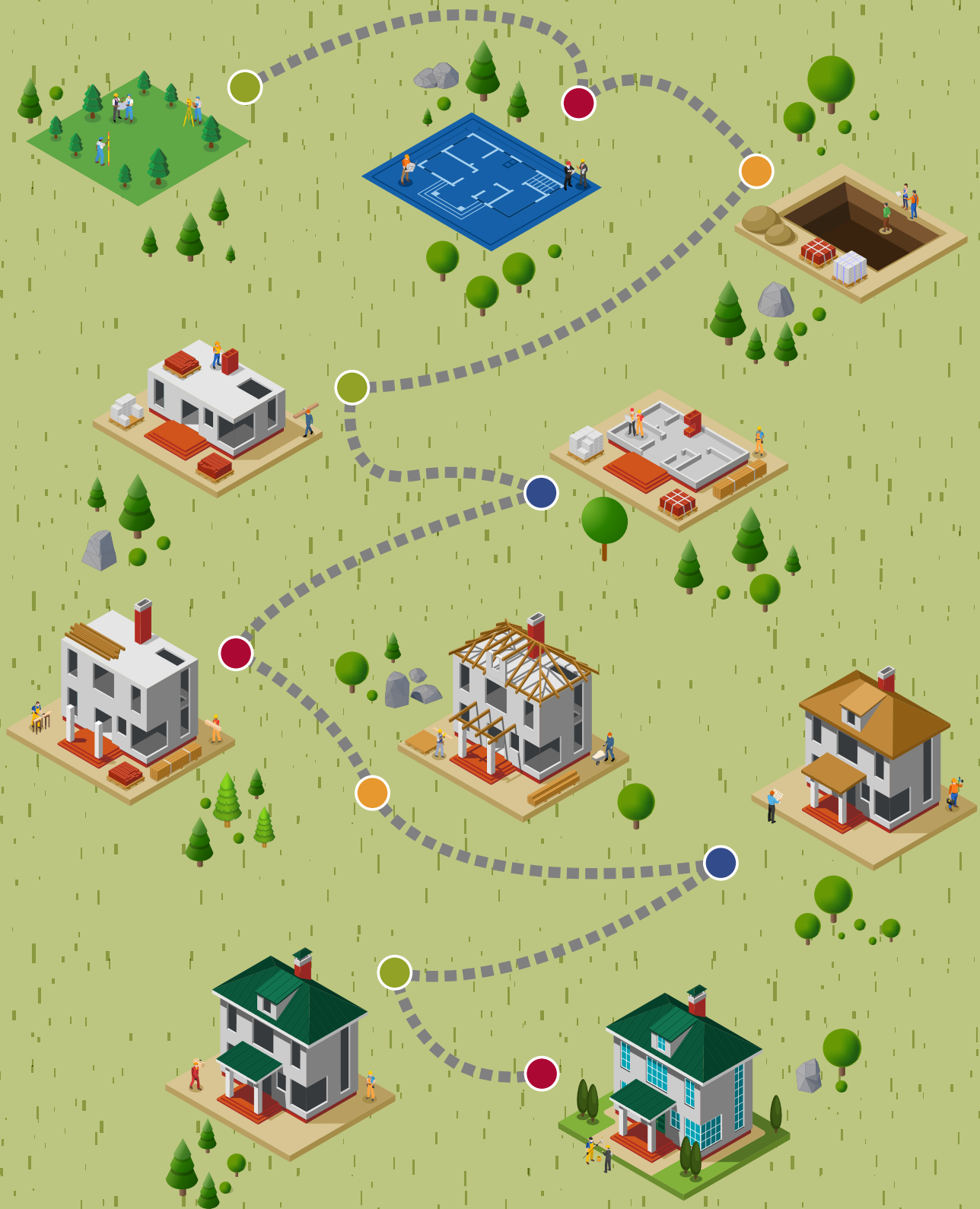
Education First partnered with state leaders, assessment developers and partner organizations to develop a toolkit for state leaders who are exploring, developing or implementing through-year models. This toolkit is intended to support states leaders identify the enabling conditions that must be in place to pursue a through-year assessment system and provide a set of key steps to explore as they embark on the planning process.

As of Spring 2023, no state has fully scaled a through-year assessment model for summative use. There are many technical considerations and challenges state leaders, their partners and vendors must navigate and explore as they pursue a through-year design and transition. And, we are optimistic that through-year models have the potential to better connect what is tested to what is taught, could provide teachers with timely information to inform instruction, and, if implemented with fidelity, could support leaders at the local, state and federal levels in understanding student progress and achievement consistent with statutory requirements.

We know this process is not linear and we are encouraged by the leadership of states who are willing to research, test and pilot through-year assessments to provide the field with proof points and information about the feasibility and viability of the model. We hope this toolkit can provide practical and specific actions states can take as they navigate the transition to a through-year system.

These tools were created in partnership with state leaders, assessment developers and partner organizations who are working to support the development and implementation of through-year models.

# Mapping your through-year transition





# SO YOU WANT TO TRANSFORM YOUR STATE'S ASSESSMENT SYSTEM?

*Transition to a through-year  
system discussion guide*



**The purpose of this discussion guide is to support state leaders in anticipating the key questions, discussions and considerations to keep in mind when approaching a redesign of a state assessment system to a through-year model.**

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## **Guidance:**

The questions that follow are not intended to be exhaustive and may be adapted given a state's particular context, needs and where they are in the planning process. While the questions are framed to focus on a transition to a through-year model, these questions may be adapted to consider different innovative state assessment approaches.

## Key questions to consider for SEA leaders:

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### Framing the problem

**What are the key problems you are trying to solve for in your assessment system?**

- + Are these problems symptoms of a deeper issue or are they root causes? How do you know?
  - + Do these problems look the same across communities? If not, how does the problem manifest for different subgroups or communities?
  - + What do different stakeholders need in order for this problem to be addressed (ex. Teachers need... District leaders need...)? How do you know?
  - + What solutions, designs and approaches exist that may match the needs and problems you’ve identified?
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### Articulating a vision for a future state

**Assuming you have chosen a through-year model:**

- + How does a through-year model address your root cause problems?
- + When your new through-year model is fully operational, what will be true for each of the key stakeholders in your state?
- + Students will be able to...
- + Teachers will be able to...
- + School/district leaders will be able to...
- + SEA leaders and policy makers will be able to...

- ⊕ 10 years after your model is fully operational, what will the reality of teaching, learning and assessment be in your state?

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### **Identifying enabling conditions**

- ⊕ What are the current practices within your existing assessment systems that would support the transition to a through-year system?
- ⊕ What existing resources can you adjust or tap into?
- ⊕ What relationships and partnerships do you have to build on or leverage in this transition?
- ⊕ What power dynamics or conditions might support your system in making the transition?
- ⊕ What mental models or mindsets exist among your leaders or key stakeholders that may support this transition?

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### **Building buy-in and engaging key partners**

- + Who will ultimately make final decisions as your transition progresses?
- + Who are the groups, stakeholders or leaders who will collaborate and partner on the decision making?
- + Who are the specific stakeholders and groups who will be involved in the process to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered?
- + Who will provide consultation, feedback, analysis and alternatives along the way?
- + Who needs to stay informed?

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### **Planning for implementation**

- + What are the most effective strategies to support implementation of the new assessment model given your state’s context?
- + How will you leverage field testing, evaluation and ongoing progress monitoring to ensure fidelity of implementation?
- + How will you incorporate adjustments and new discoveries learned through the field testing process?
- + How might different contextual factors influence implementation success or failure?
- + What are the indicators that you will use to signal readiness for scaling the model and that you are building capacity across your system?





## ENABLING CONDITIONS SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

*Do I have the Enabling  
Conditions in place for  
Through-Year Assessments?*



**The purpose of this self-assessment tool is to support state leaders in identifying the enabling conditions necessary for implementing through-year assessment models.**

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### **Guidance:**

The questions below are not intended to be exhaustive and may be adapted given a state's particular context, needs and where they are in the planning process. The purpose of these questions is to help you consider the various enabling conditions that states have found important for piloting/exploring through-year assessments, and figuring out where your state is in the process. While the questions are framed to focus on a transition to a through-year model, these questions may be adapted to consider different innovative state assessment approaches.

### **Background:**

We created this tool in collaboration with state leaders from D.C., Indiana, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska and North Carolina. These state leaders identified the following as key enabling conditions for exploring and piloting through-year assessment models.

## Articulating a vision for a future state



## Successfully piloting through-year assessment models

### Key questions to consider for each enabling condition for SEA leaders.

#### Vision for a future state

- Have you discussed your vision for your state summative assessment with relevant stakeholders?
- Have you discussed how through-year assessments fit into this vision?

#### Internal SEA Capacity

- Do you have the resources and capacity to design, plan for and pilot through-year assessments?
- Do you have the resources and capacity to provide professional learning and training to teachers/admin/district staff?

## Stakeholder Engagement

- Have you talked to stakeholders and end users in your state?
- Do you understand end-users' issues with the current assessment system and what they want to see in a new assessment system?
- Have you developed trust and strong relationships with end-users and stakeholders?

## Assessment Vendor

- Do you have an assessment vendor willing to partner with you in this work?
- Does this vendor have the capacity to take this work on?
- Does their vision align with your vision?

## Legislature Conditions

- Do you have the relationships in place with your legislative body to have conversations about through-year/innovative assessments? Are you having these conversations?
- Is there an interest among the legislative body in through-year/innovative assessment models?

## Communication Plan

- Do you have a strong messaging/communications plan that addresses all stakeholders' needs?
- Have you thought through the logistics and feasibility enough to demonstrate and message to your stakeholders that this is a possible path?

## Initial Discussion of Logistics & Feasibility

- Have you scoped out an initial testing, scoring and reporting plan for your through-year assessment?
- Have you considered/defined the different types of scores that can be available for each interim and summative and the test design requirements?

\*This tool was created from input provided by the state leaders that are participants in the Through-Year Assessment Community of Practice.



## STAKEHOLDER MAPPING TOOL

*Who are the key stakeholders in my state that must be engaged?*



**The purpose of this mapping tool is to support identifying what stakeholders to engage when determining whether to transition to a through-year assessment system, planning for a transition, and designing and piloting a new assessment system.**

### **Guidance:**

Rather than simply identifying a list of stakeholders to engage, we suggest creating a stakeholder map which visually captures the network of stakeholders who are impacted by your state's assessment system. A stakeholder map can help you not only identify who to engage, but can illuminate valuable information that can influence how you engage and ways the network may need to be improved to support the development and implementation of your vision. A stakeholder map can help demonstrate:

- +** The connections between stakeholders and the strength of these connections
- +** The influence and power centers within a network
- +** How resources, information and influence move within the network
- +** The roles stakeholders play in the network
- +** Gaps in connections and opportunities for relationship building

Below we outline the key steps in creating a stakeholder map and provide a simple example. Stakeholder maps are best created in groups in a dynamic setting. We recommend creating a stakeholder map during an event like a team meeting, an advisory council meeting or during a strategic planning retreat and revisiting it over time. Aim to ensure the group creating the stakeholder map has a diverse set of perspectives and relationships. Depending on the level of detail or complexity you want to capture, you may create multiple stakeholder maps focused on more targeted networks.

To create the map, utilize a large blank space—such as white board or chart paper. Sticky notes can be useful for capturing the names of stakeholder organizations, groups and individuals. Alternatively, you can utilize software designed for mapping connections.

## Steps for Creating a Stakeholder Map:

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### **Step 1: Identify the topic and boundaries of your system. *What scale will you be working at?***

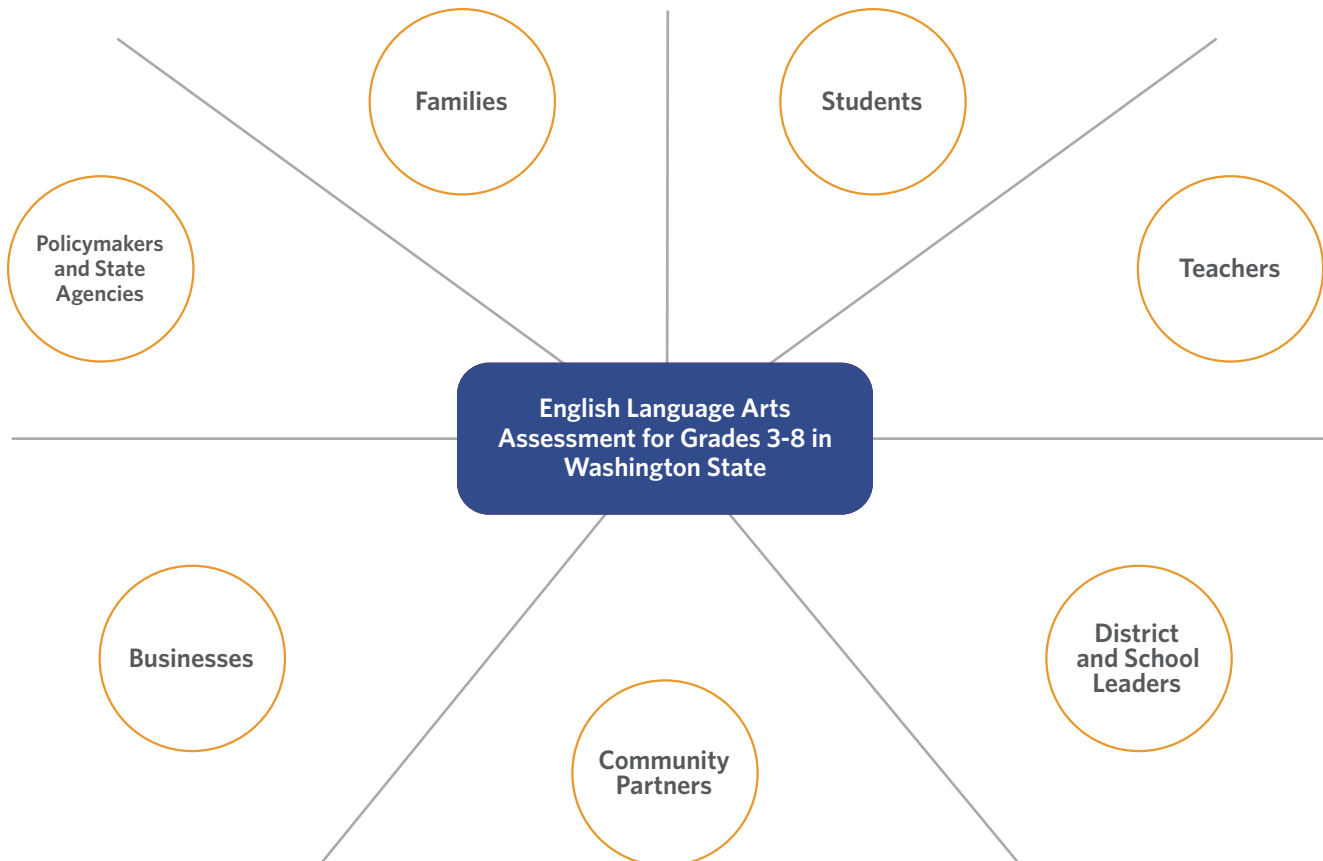
- + The topic describes the system and/or issue you are working on, while the boundaries describe the scale or geography of your system. In this case, at its most basic the topic is your state's assessment system and the boundaries are your state; but you should get more targeted depending on your vision—what subject are you focused on? What grade levels? If you are in the development phase, your boundary might be smaller—the set of schools and districts you are piloting your assessment system in.

English Language Arts  
Assessment for Grades 3-8 in  
Washington State

*Example: Identify topic and boundaries of your system*

## Step 2: Frame your system. *What groups of stakeholders are involved?*

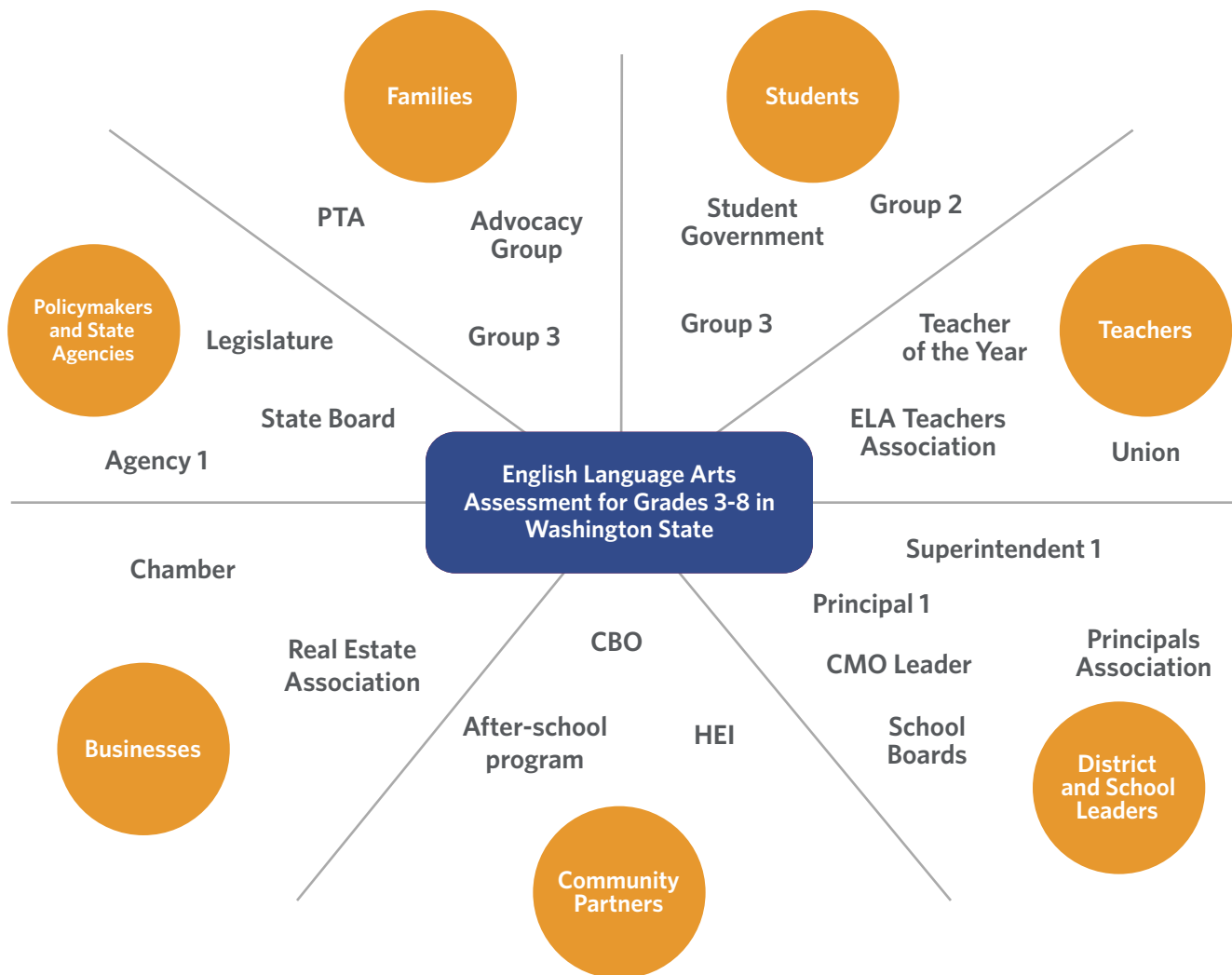
- + The frame of your system is the stakeholder groups within the boundary of your system who are impacted by the topic. These groups will serve as the structure or primary nodes of your network. The identification of stakeholder groups provides an opportunity to expand who is involved in shaping the vision for your assessment system—try to think creatively about groups that should have input on this vision beyond the groups you engage with regularly. Use the questions below to help prompt thinking:
  - + What stakeholders are most proximate to the problem?
  - + What stakeholder groups have historically been underrepresented in discussions about K12 education and assessment?
  - + What stakeholder groups utilize the data produced by state assessments? What groups make or could make decisions using the data?
  - + What stakeholders do you interact with on a regular basis?
  - + What stakeholder groups provide funding for assessment?
  - + What stakeholder groups research assessment or use assessment data in their research?
  - + What stakeholder groups create policy on assessment?



*Example: Frame your system*

**Step 3: Name key stakeholders and their roles. *Who are the specific organizations, groups and individuals within each stakeholder group who have influence, should have influence or are connected to this work?***

- + This step offers an additional opportunity to expand who is involved in shaping the vision of your assessment system. Think about who has been historically underrepresented in discussions on K12 education and assessment.
- + This step will be deeply influenced by the knowledge of those creating the stakeholder map and the resources you are utilizing. None of us are experts on all the stakeholder groups. Consider your biases and limitations and who might provide input on the specific organizations, groups and individuals to engage with in stakeholder groups you have limited knowledge of.

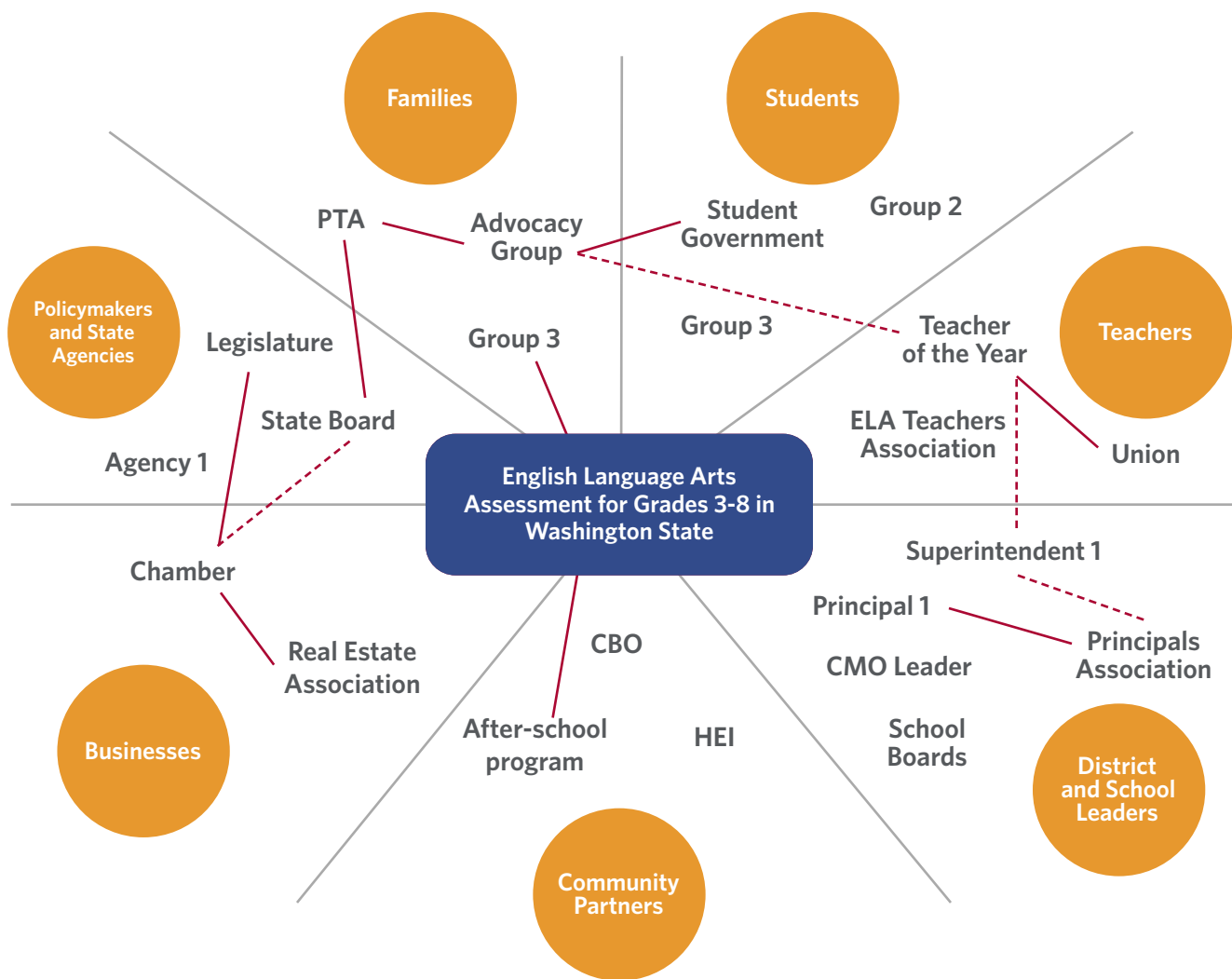


*Example: Name key stakeholders and their roles*



### Step 4: Make connections visible. *How are these individuals, groups and organizations connected?*

- + Draw lines between individuals, groups and organizations. Utilize solid lines to indicate strong relationships and dotted lines to indicate growing or weaker relationships.
- + The goal of drawing these connections is to help illuminate how information and resources move within the network, who may shape the perspectives of other stakeholders, and what gaps exist. To accomplish this focus on capturing the most impactful connections, rather than aiming to be comprehensive.



Example: Make connections visible

## Resources:

In creating this tool, our thinking was shaped by Srikanth “Srik” Gopal and Tiffany Clarke of FSG’s **Guide to Actor Mapping**, which is an excellent resource for more detail.

# STATE EDUCATION AGENCY CABINET DISCUSSION GUIDE

*SEA Cross Division Discussion  
Through-Year Assessment  
2 hour discussion*



**The purpose of this guide is to surface strengths and opportunities in your assessment system, and to determine if a through-year assessment might be right for your state.**

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## **Guidance:**

Use this agenda to host a two-hour discussion with a cross functional group of SEA leaders to learn about and determine if a through-year assessment might be the right solution for your state. Participants should include decision makers focused on assessment, data systems, curriculum and instruction, special education, multilingual learners, and legal.

## **Pre-work:**

Consider asking participants to read **this resource** and/or watch **this webinar** to better understand what through-year assessments are and how they are being used in various places across the country.

**Connector: Describe a vivid memory you have about a time you took an assessment.**

After everyone shares, discuss any commonalities in the stories? Use this to frame today's discussion to ground it in the assessment experience.

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**Time: 10 minutes**

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**Brainstorming activity: What is working in our current assessment system?**

- + What concerns/areas of improvement have been expressed by families, educators, students, and leaders regarding the current assessment system?
- + What is our vision for the future of our assessment system?

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**Time: 20 minutes**      **Resources:** Use Jamboard (digital) or chart paper (in person) to post ideas.

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## What is a through-year assessment? What are other states doing across the country?

After reviewing materials, put the group into pairs to discuss the following questions:

- + What excites you about the promise of a through-year assessment?
- + What do you want to learn more about regarding through-year assessment?

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**Time: 25 minutes**

**Resources: EdFirst Microsite Webinar; What are through-year assessments?**

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## What we know about the legislative/legal implications for through-year assessment?

- + How does this impact our state?
- + What questions do we still have?

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**Time: 20 minutes**

**Resources: Policy analysis Slides; Policymaker's Guide**

Notes

## Our state's context

Discuss the following questions as a group:

- + What models resonate most with us?
- + What legislative, structural, political or other challenges would have to be overcome to implement a through-year assessment?
- + Could through-year assessment fill the gap between our current state and our desired state?
- + What additional information or support do we need to continue exploring this solution?

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**Time: 30 minutes**

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## What are our next steps?

- + Do we need to collect more information from people not at this table? People most proximate to the problem we are trying to solve? How would we do that?
- + How can we learn more?
- + When will we meet next?

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**Time: 30 minutes**

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# STATE POLICYMAKERS' DISCUSSION GUIDE

*What does my legislature need to know?*



**The purpose of this discussion guide is to build policymakers' understanding of what through-year assessments are and explore support for transitioning to a new system.**

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## **Guidance:**

Utilize the guide below as an outline for discussing with state policymakers' your reasons for wanting to change the state's tests and why through-year assessments may better serve needs. The guide is designed to support conversations with governors, legislators, state board members and other decision makers and their staff. Adapt the guide based on the politics and context in your state as well as your relationships with policymakers' and knowledge of their motivations, values and priorities.





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## Frame the problem

Layout the problems with the current state testing system you want to solve and why. Aim to build on their perspective on the current state tests to demonstrate alignment or explore differences.

**The timing of the test results limits their usefulness; the data comes back too late and is too infrequent to help improve teaching and learning.** Data from current state tests come back weeks after the end of the school year, reducing their usefulness and frustrating stakeholders because the data comes long after when:

- + Parents need information to support their child,
- + Schools and system leaders have decided the upcoming school year's priorities and budget, and
- + Teachers need the information to inform their instruction.

**The tests are too disconnected from what students are learning, meaning we are measuring the wrong thing.** Current state tests are disconnected from curriculum and daily instruction, creating a dynamic where the test results reflect different levels of students' background knowledge, rather than truly measuring what they learned. This is evidenced by the strong correlation with school demographic data.

**There is too much focus and time spent on state tests.** When the tests are given once a year and schools, teachers and students will be judged on the results of that single test, it leads to:

- + Too much time spent on test prep
- + Stress and test anxiety experienced by students and educators
- + Narrowing the curriculum, so there is less focus on music, arts, history and other subjects

**The tests don't provide a true measure of student growth over the school year.** Current student growth measures assess growth from one spring to the next, rather than from the start of the school year to the end-making it harder to understand where students' start the year and the impact of summer learning loss.

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## Articulate a vision for a through-year assessment

Lay out how and why you're considering transitioning to a through-year assessment system. Explain how through-year assessments differ from the current state tests and how they could solve the identified problems and serve stakeholders better. Focus on shared concerns.

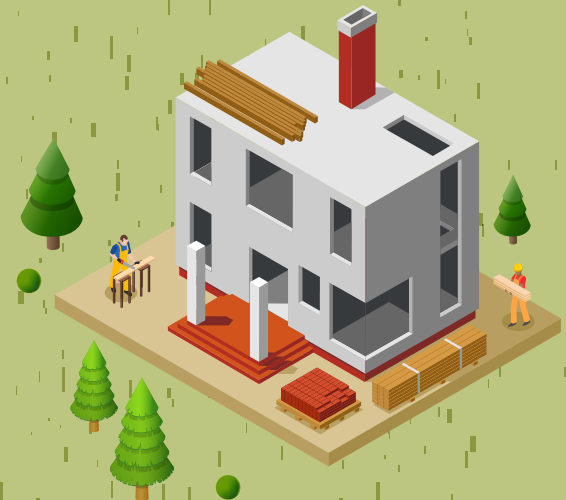
- + Despite the shortcomings of the current state tests, they are important for monitoring student progress and equity. We are exploring transitioning to an innovative approach to state tests called a through-year assessment system because we believe it has the potential to be more equitable, focused and relevant to students, families, educators and school leaders.
- + Rather than relying on single end-of-year tests in math and reading, a through-year assessment model administers multiple, shorter tests throughout the school year; but still provides scores at the end of the year that reflect students' proficiency and progress.
- + Providing students the opportunity to demonstrate learning multiple times a year, creates the ability to:
  - + Produce data on student learning right away, rather than weeks or months after tests are taken
  - + Provide frequent and timely reports to families, students, teachers and leaders multiple during the school year when it can still be used to inform instruction, make data driven decisions and target school and system improvements
  - + Create greater clarity and transparency for stakeholders about student achievement and school quality
  - + Strengthen the connection to curriculum and daily instruction
  - + Better connect what students are tested on with what they've learned, rather than assessing their access to resources, background knowledge or opportunity
  - + Support the design of tests that are culturally sustaining and relevant for students and teachers experience
  - + Reduce the pressure single end-of-year tests place on students, teachers and the system
  - + Calculate within-year growth by using the first administration as a baseline, thus providing a clearer measure of progress and deeper understanding of the impact of summer learning loss
  - + Eliminate duplicative or low-quality local tests
- + This approach is allowed under federal law and a diverse range of states are currently piloting or moving toward such a model, including: Alaska, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Texas and Virginia.
- + In Louisiana, **preliminary evidence** shows this approach is increasing student engagement on state tests and is narrowing achievement gaps.





## GUIDE TO ENGAGING DISTRICT LEADERS

*Two-Hour Facilitation Guide for SEA and District Leaders to Explore Through-Year Assessments*



**The purpose of this guide is to surface strengths and opportunities in your assessment system, and to determine if a through-year assessment might be right for our state and its districts.**

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### **Guidance:**

Use this agenda to host a two-hour discussion with district leaders to help them learn about and gather their input on moving to a through-year assessment or modify it slightly to gain buy-in for a through-year assessment that has already been decided upon.

Participants should include district superintendents and cabinet members in charge of assessment, instruction, student services and data systems and measurement.

### **Pre-work:**

Consider asking participants to read **this resource** and/or watch **this webinar** to better understand what through-year assessments are and how they are being used in various places across the country.

## Welcome by the state superintendent/state commissioner

- + Importance of a balanced assessment system
- + The key role that summative assessment plays
- + Some of the challenges/limitations of summative assessments (include end-user perspectives if possible)
- + Equity implications
- + A vision for the future with your help
- + Today's objectives

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**Time: 15 minutes**

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## In small groups: If you could design the perfect summative assessment system what would it look like?

- + How would your teachers describe it?
- + How would your parents describe it?
- + How would your students describe it?
- + Gallery walk of other group's work

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**Time: 30 minutes**     **Resources:** Use Jamboard (digital) or chart paper (in person) to post ideas.

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## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROTOCOLS

*How do I engage teachers,  
students and families?*



**This tool includes focus group protocols for engaging students, parents and teachers. Focus groups are designed to gain an understanding of stakeholders' perspectives, experiences and aspirations for a future assessment system.**

### **Guidance:**

These focus group protocols are designed to last between 45-60 minutes, but can be adapted to be shorter or longer. The facilitator will ask participants open-ended questions to prompt in-depth discussion of their feelings, experiences and wishes surrounding assessment.

- + The facilitator will begin each session by welcoming participants, explaining the purpose and context, and asking participants to briefly introduce themselves. The facilitator will explain that the focus group session will be recorded, and the information collected will be kept confidential and names will not be used.

### **Purpose:**

Depending on what stage your state is at in the through-year process, these focus groups could serve a few different purposes:

- + Understand issues in current assessment system
- + Provide input on test design and needs
- + Help you to build user personas, or archetypal users whose goals and characteristics represent the needs of a larger group of users, to guide the design of your through-year assessment system.

## Student Focus Group Protocol

### Sample Script:

*Today we want to chat about what you like about your school, classroom and community. We also want to hear about what could make your school experience better, particularly with regards to tests.*

*There are no right or wrong answers. I will ask you to share some stories with me about your school, classes and community. Your thoughts are important and will help us continue making school a great place for you. We hope you'll be as honest as possible in your reflections, as your name will not be shared with anyone. Any questions before we start our conversation?*

*Before we jump in, it would be great to get to know a little bit about each other. Let's go around and share:*

- + Your name
- + Current grade and where you go to school
- + A TV show you're currently watching (optional Icebreaker question)

### Section 1: Reflecting on Current Assessment Experiences

*We want to start this conversation by learning about your experiences with testing at school.*

- + Could you tell me about the last time you took a test in school? What did you like about the test? What did you find difficult?
- + How did you feel about the test when you were taking it? What kinds of things help you do your best on the day of a test? What are things that got in the way of you doing your best? (Probe on: confidence, focus, distractions, time, what was behind the feeling)
- + How do you like to prepare for tests? What do your teachers do to help you prepare for tests?
- + Tell me about your favorite question you ever had on a test (prompt to describe features of the item)

### Section 2: Test Results

*Now we are going to spend some time talking about test results and what you do when you get your test results back.*

- + When you receive your results/scores from a test, what do you do? Does this change depending on what kind of test it is?
- + Do you talk to your teacher about the results of tests? What kinds of things do you discuss with them about tests?
- + Do you talk to your family about the results of tests you take in school? What kinds of things do you discuss with them about tests?



## Parent Focus Group Protocol

### Sample Script:

*Today we want to chat about your experiences with your child's school, particularly when it comes to testing. We also want to hear about what could make your school experience better.*

*There are no right or wrong answers. I will ask you to share some stories with me about your child's school, classes and community. Your thoughts are important and will help us continue making school a great place for your child. We hope you'll be as honest as possible in your reflections, as your name will not be shared with anyone. Any questions before we start our conversation?*

*Before we jump in, it would be great to get to know a little bit about each other. Let's go around and share:*

- + Your name
- + Your children's ages and the schools they attend
- + A TV show you're currently watching (optional Icebreaker question)

### Section 1: Reflecting on Current Assessment Experiences

*We want to start this conversation by learning about your child's experiences with testing at school.*

- + Could you tell me about your experience with your children taking tests in school?
  - + Probe on: through-your such as interims (e.g. weekly quizzes), end of year summative (e.g. state required testing)
- + How do you help your child prepare for these tests? What kinds of things do you do to support your child in preparing for tests at school?
- + What kinds of things does your child tell you about their experiences with taking tests at school? What kinds of questions do they ask you about taking tests?
- + What does your child say about their feelings about taking tests? How do you feel about the tests and exams your child takes at school?
- + Are there any things that get in the way of your child doing their best on tests at school?

### Section 2: Communication Around Assessments

*We want to ask some questions about how your child's teacher and school communicates with you around your child's test results.*

- + How does your child's teacher and/or school communicate with you about the tests they administer to your child? How do they share the results of the tests with you?





## Teacher Focus Group Protocol

### Sample Script:

*Today we want to chat about your experience with testing, and particularly your state's summative assessment, and how that can be improved for the future.*

*There are no right or wrong answers. I will ask you to share some stories with me about your school, classes and community. Your thoughts are important and will help us as we think about improving our state's assessment system. We hope you'll be as honest as possible in your reflections, as your name will not be shared with anyone. Any questions before we start our conversation?*

*Before we jump in, it would be great to get to know a little bit about each other. Let's go around and share:*

- + Your name
- + Grade and subject taught, school
- + Length of time teaching
- + A TV show you're currently watching (optional Icebreaker question)

### Section 1: Reflecting on Current Assessment Experiences

*We want to start this conversation by learning about your current experiences with testing.*

- + How do you define assessment?
- + Tell me about your experience with testing in your district or school - what is it like when it is time to administer state or district wide assessments? What do you think about the content that is currently on assessments?
- + What is it like when you and your students receive the results of an assessment? How do you use the results of assessments?
- + Thinking about your experience with assessments, could you tell me about a time that you felt an assessment helped you improve a students' education for the better?
  - + Can you tell me about a time when you felt an assessment wasn't so helpful?

### Section 2: Current State Summative Assessment

- + What is working in our state's current assessment system? What changes would you like to see?
- + What is working in your district's interim assessment system? What changes would you like to see?
- + How do you use state exams and other tests to guide your instruction and practice?

- + How do you currently measure students' progress toward end-of-year goals?
- + How connected to a curriculum do you believe the state summative test should be?
- + What kind of test score reports do you find most valuable? Why? How could tests and score reports help you use data more effectively?

### **Section 3: Test Results/Reports:**

- + Thinking about assessment reports, what kinds of information have you found to be valuable for you to use?
- + What kinds of information on a report do you tend to overlook or ignore?
- + What would an assessment need to be able to do for it to be really valuable to you in your teaching? (probe on: features that would help adjust instruction for whole class, for individual students)
- + What are your goals when using interim and summative assessments?
- + What do you think is missing from the assessments that you have given?
- + What would an assessment need to be able to do to help your students' parents better support their children?

### **Section 4: New Assessments**

*We are working on piloting a new innovative through-year assessment system and I'd like to show you our initial thinking and a pilot design.*

Show sample language about purpose/concept statements of new assessment system

- + What are your first reactions to this statement? What could be valuable or beneficial about this new system?
- + What questions do you have or what is confusing?

Show sample of test design in current stage (These questions must be adapted based on your test design)

- + What are your thoughts on this design? What is missing?
- + How would you approach administering these tests?
- + How interested would you be in administering shorter assessments closer-in to when the content is delivered vs. assessing all the content at end of year? What factors drive your preference?









## Appendix: Additional resources

### Sample Email Language:

*Hello, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ and I work for \_\_\_\_\_. We are working with the state of \_\_\_\_\_ to pilot a new system of assessments with the goal of better addressing the needs of educators, students and parents. I am contacting you to schedule 45 minutes for a focus group (OR to ask for assistance in reaching out to parents and students). Focus group participants will be asked about their general feelings and experiences with assessments. I have the following dates and times available and can work with your availability to find a time that fits within your schedule. Please let me know which option works best for you.*

### Focus Group Framing Script:

*Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. I am [Name] with \_\_\_\_\_ and we have partnered with \_\_\_\_\_ to pilot a new system of assessments with the goal of better addressing the needs of educators, students and parents.*

*Before we begin, as we mentioned in the email we sent ahead of this interview, we will be recording this interview to aid note taking during the interview. This recording will not be shared with anyone outside of the project team. It will be deleted at the conclusion of the project. Is that ok?*

*In addition, our findings will include both quotations and synthesis from the dozens of interviews and focus groups we are conducting. We want to ensure you feel comfortable openly sharing during this conversation. We will not attribute quotes to any individuals to protect your anonymity unless we reach out for your permission first. If we do, you'll have the opportunity to review and correct any quotations we attribute to you. Any questions before we begin?*

### Focus Group Agreements/Norms:

*Before we start, we'd like to share a few group agreements and norms for this focus group:*

- + Let's try to stay at one speaker at a time, so that we can hear & take notes*
- + As much as possible, let's try to keep responses focused, so that we can make sure everyone's voice is heard and shared*
- + We encourage participation from everyone present, since each person's perspective is important. We won't be calling on people to answer, but we do want to make sure everyone's voice gets heard so we invite you to un-mute as a way of "raising your hand"*
- + Build from each other's comments, to leverage the collective power of those in the room/on the call*
- + We encourage differing perspectives and want to hear if you disagree with each other, as long as we're respectful of other viewpoints*
- + We ask that you share as much as you are comfortable with sharing in response to our questions, and know that your reflections will be confidential and used in the aggregate, and not traced back to you.*

## SAMPLE LOGIC MODEL AND TEMPLATE

*What inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes should we be working towards?*



**Logic Models outline the resources, inputs, and activities required to reach your desired outputs and outcomes.**

### **Guidance:**

This document contains an example of a completed logic model from a state that has piloted multiple through-year assessment models. It also includes blank logic model templates that your state can use to design your own logic model, as well as a sample list of potential inputs, activities/strategies, outputs and outcomes.



## Sample completed logic model

Louisiana's Logic Model for Testing What's Taught: Equity in Test Design Project

### Inputs

Foundation support for stakeholder engagement in designing math and ELA curriculum-relevant through-year assessment and score reports	Foundation support for prototyping math and ELA curriculum-relevant through-year assessments in 2022-23 SY	State experience with designing and piloting ELA curriculum-embedded through-year assessments (Guidebooks, Wit & Wisdom)	Catalog of reviewed and tiered high-quality curriculum along with incentives to encourage district adoption	Legislative and State Board support for a coherent, curriculum-aligned system and academics and accountability	First state to be granted an Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority Waiver
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### Strategies

Develop <b>models</b> of math and ELA curriculum-relevant through-year assessments, which both connect to each of the high-quality curriculum in the state while also flexibly working across the total set of high-quality curriculum (Absolute Priority 2).	Develop and implement an <b>approach to scaling</b> these through-year models up from initial prototyped grade(s) in a small number of schools to additional grades and schools that leads to recommendations on whether to scale statewide in grades 3-8 (Priority 2).	Develop <b>reports</b> of through-year assessment results with <b>corresponding supports</b> to drive stakeholders understanding of and response to results (Competitive Priority).
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### Outputs

Expanded pilots of math and ELA curriculum-relevant through-year assessments from one elementary and one middle school grade to additional grades and districts in 2023-24 and 2024-25.	Research-informed recommendations on the viability of scaling math and ELA curriculum-relevant through-year assessments statewide for summative use.	Score reports designed with stakeholder engagement for math and ELA curriculum-relevant through-year assessments	Production of stakeholder-informed supports and tools that connect assessment results to curriculum and enable instructional modifications.
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### Short-term Outcomes

Gap in scores between students who are economically disadvantaged and those who are not is reduced on the curriculum-relevant tests in comparison to traditional assessments.	Percentage of students who disengage with curriculum-relevant test models during pilots is reduced in comparison to the traditional summative assessment	Stakeholders report satisfaction with the level of engagement in designing assessments, score reports, and supports.	Teachers, administrators, and parents rate reports as useful and easy to understand in surveys and focus groups after pilots and field tests.	Teachers report increased skill and confidence in using assessment results to inform instruction in surveys and focus groups.
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### Long-term outcomes

Demonstration that through-year assessments can be scaled statewide in core subjects with the potential to replace existing summative assessments while preserving comparability and ESEA requirements.	Results from parallel pilots of different through-year assessment approaches (curriculum-embedded vs. curriculum-relevant) informing future decision-making in Louisiana and the national landscape.	An assessment system that better balances <b>assessment of learning</b> with <b>assessment for learning</b> ; improving student achievement and increasing opportunities to learn by aligning assessment with instruction and thereby providing real-time meaningful and actionable data.
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U.S. Department of Education Office of Elementary & Secondary Education. *Competitive Grants for State Assessments Awards* (August, 2022). [https://oese.ed.gov/files/2022/08/LouisianaCGSA2022application1\\_Redacted.pdf](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2022/08/LouisianaCGSA2022application1_Redacted.pdf)

## Blank logic model template

We have provided two different versions of logic model templates, depending on your team's preference. The first is designed in the style of the example on the page prior and provides thinking questions for each phase of the logic model. The second is designed in a table format.

- + PowerPoint [here](#)
- + Table version [here](#)

## List of sample inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes

### INPUTS

- + Foundation support for testlet development and pilot testing
- + Political and legislative/state board support for innovative testing
- + State experience with designing and piloting innovative assessments
- + Necessary grants/ funding to support pilot testing

### ACTIVITIES/STRATEGIES

- + Develop models of through-year assessments including test design, item creation, passage selection etc.
- + Develop and implement an approach to scaling through-year models in a small number of schools/districts
- + Recruit districts and schools as prototype sites and prepare for administration of prototype
- + Provide teacher support and professional learning on test design, methodology etc.
- + Educate parents and the public on the vision for through-year assessments and what it means for their child
- + Administer the prototype assessments
- + Analyze results from prototype including administering surveys and conducting focus groups with educators, students and parents to collect input on design of test models and scope reports
- + Increase SEA staff capacity to support innovative assessment

### OUTPUTS

- + Pilot administration in X schools and districts, statewide administration of through-year assessments by X
- + X teachers participate in professional development by X date
- + X% of teachers, parents and administrators, students engaged through X surveys, focus groups etc.
- + Score reports designed with stakeholder engagement

### OUTCOMES

- + Stakeholders report satisfaction with level of engagement in designing assessments, score reports, and support
- + Teachers, administrators and parents rate reports as easy to use and instructionally useful
- + Teachers report increased skill and confidence in using assessment results to inform instruction in survey and focus groups
- + Demonstration that through-year assessments can be scaled statewide with potential to replace existing summative assessments
- + An assessment system that better balances assessment of learning with assessment for learning; improving student achievement

## **Potential Timeline and other considerations**

- + 1-2 years: Develop test design, conduct focus groups, revise test design
- + 2 years: Pilot test design in districts and revise
- + 2 years: Scale up implementation to full state

# SAMPLE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND ENHANCED TASK LIST

*What are the specific steps to help me monitor progress towards my goals?*



**This document provides resources to support developing an implementation plan for a through-year assessments system.**

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## **Guidance:**

This document provides three resources to support developing an implementation plan for considering, planning for, and developing a through-year assessments system with the intention that if the design of the through-year assessment system better meets stakeholders' needs it would replace the current assessment system. Your state's implementation plan will look different depending on your state's context, structures, systems and enabling conditions—as such, the resources below should be considered a guide to be personalized; but the key phases and milestones outlined will need to be addressed in some fashion.

## Overview of Implementation Phases

The chart below provides an overview of five key phases for considering, planning for, and developing a through-year assessments system. This toolkit focused on the first two phases: 1) Determining whether a through-year assessment system is the right system for a state’s context and needs, and 2) Planning to transition to a through-year assessment system. The next three phases outline the process for designing, prototyping, and scaling a through-year assessment system. For each phase we have described milestones to be completed during the phase as well as key questions the phase should address and resources to support implementation during the phase. We have also provided a Key Decision that each phase should support answering by the end of it. Depending on the answer to that decision point, you may choose whether to move to the next phase or not. To find additional resources to support each phase of implementation, please review the resources on our website: **Preparing for Transitioning to a Through-year Assessment System: Toolkit for State Leaders.**

### PHASE 1: Determining whether to transition to a through-year assessment system

**Key Decision:** Determining whether to transition to a through-year assessment system

MILESTONES	KEY QUESTIONS	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Identify stakeholders</li> <li>+ Engage stakeholders in assessing whether the current assessment system is meeting their needs and how an innovative assessment may better serve needs</li> <li>+ Assess political support with the governor, legislature, state board and other policymakers</li> <li>+ Develop a vision for a new assessment system through a theory of action and logic model</li> <li>+ Investigate potential funding sources for developing an innovative assessment system</li> <li>+ Craft an RFP outlining the components desired in an innovative assessment system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ What might be the right system for my context?</li> <li>+ Who are the key stakeholders in my state who must be engaged?</li> <li>+ How do I engage teachers, students and families?</li> <li>+ What do SEA cabinet leaders understand and believe about TYA?</li> <li>+ What does my state legislature need to know?</li> <li>+ What are the inputs, activities, outcomes and outputs we should be working towards?</li> <li>+ What funding options are available? What resource flows can you adjust or tap into?</li> <li>+ What power dynamics exist and how might you be able to shift them?</li> <li>+ What mental models may you need to address, challenge and/or develop?</li> <li>+ Where might you face the most resistance to this type of assessment?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <b>So you want to transform your assessment system? Discussion guide</b></li> <li>+ <b>System self assessment tool</b></li> <li>+ <b>Sample logic model and template</b></li> </ul>

## PHASE 2: Planning to transition to a through-year assessment system

**Key Decision:** Are the resources, capacity, infrastructure and plans in place to effectively support an assessment transition?

MILESTONES	KEY QUESTIONS	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Secure an assessment vendor</li> <li>+ Secure Funding</li> <li>+ If available, consider applying for a federal Competitive Grant for State Assessment.</li> <li>+ Communicate intentions with USED</li> <li>+ If available, determine whether to apply for Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority</li> <li>+ Develop an implementation plan</li> <li>+ Develop a communications plan</li> <li>+ Develop a professional development plan</li> <li>+ Hire project staff as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ What are the specific steps to help me monitor progress towards my goals?</li> <li>+ What regulatory requirements must be met while piloting a new system and in order to replace the current system in the future?</li> <li>+ How do I build buy-in among and engage my districts?</li> <li>+ What professional learning structures need to be in place to effectively implement my new system?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <b>The Center for Assessment's Slow the Flow of Your RFPs</b></li> </ul>

## PHASE 3: Developing and prototyping new test and report designs

**Key Decision:** Does the evidence from the test prototypes indicate the design is better serving stakeholders strongly enough to merit expanding to additional grades and schools?

MILESTONES	KEY QUESTIONS	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Recruit schools to pilot innovative test prototypes</li> <li>+ Design test, platform and report prototypes</li> <li>+ Create structures for collecting stakeholder input on prototypes</li> <li>+ Develop a research plan</li> <li>+ Train educators</li> <li>+ Implement communications plan</li> <li>+ Administer prototypes</li> <li>+ Collect evidence and conduct psychometric analyses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ What research and evidence is needed to evaluate the prototypes?</li> <li>+ How should result reports be designed to best support stakeholders in understanding and utilizing the data?</li> <li>+ How will stakeholder input and feedback be collected?</li> <li>+ How should the test and report designs be revised based on stakeholder input?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <b>Engagement Protocol for People Most Proximate to the Problem</b></li> <li>+ <b>Overview of Prototyping</b></li> </ul>

### PHASE 4: Scaling pilots of new test and report designs

**Key Decision:** Does the evidence from pilots indicate the design is better serving stakeholders than the current assessment system?

MILESTONES	KEY QUESTIONS	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Revise test, platform and report designs</li> <li>+ Repeat milestones in Phase 3 for additional grades and pilot schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ What evidence needs to be collected to prepare for submitting to peer review?</li> <li>+ What is your plan to collect this evidence?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <b>Viable regulatory pathways using a through-year model</b></li> </ul>

### PHASE 5: Preparing for peer review and replacing assessment system with new test

MILESTONES	KEY QUESTIONS	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Engage USED for guidance on peer review</li> <li>+ Assemble evidence and prepare peer review submission</li> <li>+ Expand trainings and communications to build capacity for statewide use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ What infrastructure and systems changes are needed to support and sustain statewide implementation?</li> <li>+ What current policies govern summative assessment systems in the state(s) you are working in? What would need to change to allow for through-year assessments on a large scale?</li> <li>+ What are the current practices around assessment systems? What practices need to be put in place to advance through-year assessments?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <b>Visit the resources on the Curriculum-Connected Through-Year Assessments Microsite</b></li> </ul>

## Sample Implementation Plan

The sample Gantt chart or implementation plan on the following pages is adapted from one included in the Montana Office of Public Instruction’s 2022 application for a Competitive Grant for State Assessments, titled “Demonstrating the Full Potential of a Through-year Assessment System in Montana,” from which they were awarded \$2.9 million in federal grant funds. Blue boxes indicate the timeframe when a task should be completed with an “x” indicating major milestones or deliverables.

How long each phase takes to complete will vary depending on a state’s goals, context and systems. In Montana’s plan, they envision prototyping a through-year assessment system in two grades over the course of one school year and then scaling up the system to additional grades in each of the next two school years before moving to statewide implementation in grades 3-8.

Phases		Phase 1 & 2 Determining and Planning a Transition			Phase 3 Prototyping			Phase 4 Scaling			Phase 5 Statewide				
		Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4		Year 5					
Tasks	Owner	Sp	Su	Fa	Sp	Su	Fa	Sp	Su	Fa	Sp	Su	Fa	Sp	Su
		<b>Activity 1: Determining whether to transition to a through-year assessment system</b>													
Identify stakeholders	SEA														
Engage stakeholders in assessing current assessment system and defining a new one	SEA		✓												
Assess support with policymakers	SEA		✓												
Develop theory of action/ logic model	SEA		✓												
Investigate potential funding sources	SEA														
Craft and launch RFP	SEA			✓											
<b>Activity 2: Planning for transitioning</b>															
Secure funding	SEA			✓											
Secure assessment vendor	SEA			✓											
Refine vision with vendor	SEA/ Vendor														
Communicate intentions with USED	SEA														
Develop an implementation plan	SEA			✓											
Develop a communications plan	SEA			✓											
Develop a PD plan	SEA			✓											
<b>Activity 3: Stakeholder Engagement on Test Design</b>															
Empathy interviews	Vendor				✓	✓									
Focus groups on prototypes	Vendor				✓	✓									
Stakeholder surveys	Vendor							✓			✓			✓	



Pilot participant focus groups	Vendor						✓	✓										
Pilot participant surveys	Vendor						✓	✓										
Stakeholder task force	SEA					✓												
<b>Activity 4: Prototype Test Development &amp; Deployment</b>																		
Recruit schools to pilot prototypes	SEA					✓												
Develop reporting claims	Vendor					✓												
Design test specs and blueprints	Vendor						✓											
Develop low-fidelity prototypes	Vendor						✓											
Test development workshops with educators	Vendor						✓											
Demonstrate alignment of test to state standards, scope and sequences, and/or learning progressions	Vendor						✓	✓	✓									
Review and revise tests and prepare for prototype administration	Vendor						✓	✓	✓									
Platform setup and deployment	Vendor							✓										
Prototype test administration	SEA							✓	✓									
<b>Activity 5: Scaling to additional grades</b>																		
Develop reporting claims	Vendor							✓										
Test specs and blueprints	Vendor							✓										
Test development workshops with educators	Vendor							✓				✓						
Demonstrate alignment of test to state standards, scope and sequences, and/or learning progressions	Vendor							✓	✓			✓	✓					
Review and revise tests and prepare for delivery	Vendor							✓	✓			✓	✓					
Test administrations	Vendor							✓	✓			✓	✓					



Activity 9: Stakeholder Communication																
Superintendent bulletins	SEA							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Social media posts	SEA							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Resource page on the SEA website	SEA															
Updates to stakeholder groups	SEA				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Board of Ed updates	SEA				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Activity 10: Project Management																
Determine Project staffing needs	SEA															
Hire project staff as needed	SEA			✓												
Project management meetings	SEA/ Vendor															

## Implementation Plan Template

<b>Phases</b>																
Tasks	Owner	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4			Year 5		
		Fa	Sp	Su	Fa	Sp	Su	Fa	Sp	Su	Fa	Sp	Su	Fa	Sp	Su
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