

A Pilot Year in Review

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT
THROUGH-YEAR ASSESSMENTS?

About this publication

A Pilot Year in Review: What have we learned about through-year assessments?

This publication interrogates key takeaways from through-year assessment pilots administered during the 2022-2023 school year. We explore key design decisions, enabling conditions and implications for future research and practice. This publication is part of a series published through Education First's Through-year Curriculum-Connected Assessment Grant Program.

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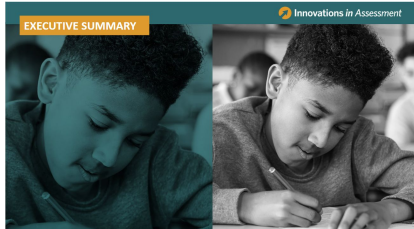


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Full Report

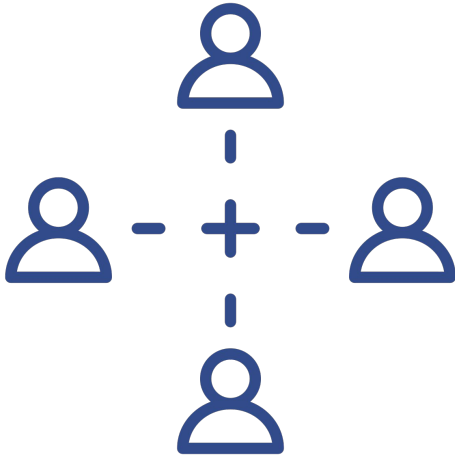


Exploring the Models



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Introduction & Background





*While state summative assessments serve an important role in our education system, **they have the potential to improve through various innovations***

Education First believes students, educators, families and state leaders need more equitable, focused and relevant assessments that strengthen the connection between assessment and instruction and better align what is tested with what is taught



Many states are exploring through-year assessments to address some long-standing, legitimate concerns about traditional end-of-year summative assessments

Stakeholders (including students, families and educators) often see traditional end-of-year summative assessments as:

Lacking utility to teaching and learning

Providing untimely results that do not inform instruction

Requiring a large footprint on the overall system

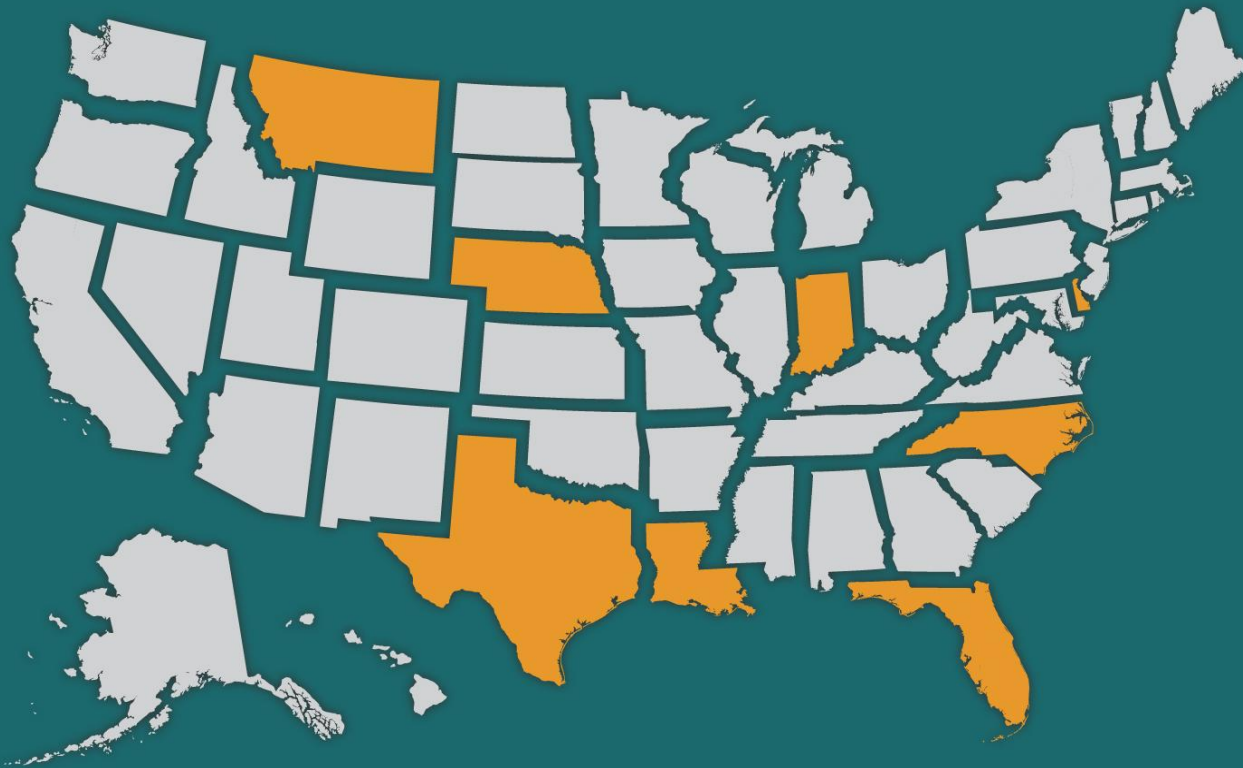
(in terms of the resources needed, time for preparation and administration)

Misaligned to what and when students are taught and their curriculum

Read more about the reasons for the growing interest in through-year assessment models in Education First's publication, "[What are Through-year Assessments?](#)"



This report synthesizes learnings from 8 states who tested different versions of through-year assessment models in the 2022-2023 school year



We also incorporated learnings from CenterPoint’s Through-Year Illustrative Mathematics (IM)-Aligned Interims study with district partners in Maryland and Wisconsin. In total, 13 states were currently exploring, developing, or testing through-year models in the 2022-23 school year.



In this report, we use the following definitions that build on our prior thinking and the work of others in this field:

Through-Year Assessment Models

Through-year assessment models administer multiple tests throughout the school year as part of an assessment system designed to produce a single summative score meeting federal and state accountability requirements. Through-year assessment models are also referred to as “through-course” by some states.

Curriculum-Agnostic Approach

Through-year assessment models that **test the entire content domain (or grade-level standards) throughout the year at each testing administration**, and do not try to align content tested to curriculum.

Curriculum-Aligned Approach*

Through-year assessment models that directly **draw on the content found in specific curriculum**. This model is also referred to as “curriculum-specific” or “curriculum-embedded.”

Curriculum-Relevant Approach

Through-year assessment models that can be **flexibly aligned with multiple curricula, a scope and sequence or pacing of content**. This approach is also referred to as “scope and sequence aligned”, “instructionally relevant” or “instructionally aligned.”

*In previous publications, we referred to this as curriculum-specific embedded

With these definitions in mind, this publication explores the following research questions



Primary Research Questions:

What are the lessons learned from a group of states who piloted through-year models in the 2022-2023 school year?

What are key implications and recommendations for scaling the models?

What are the outstanding questions, needs and considerations for the future of innovations in assessment?

Across the states we reviewed for this publication,
over
2.5 million
students tested using a through-year assessment during the 2022-2023 school year.

We answered these research questions through stakeholder engagement, literature reviews and interviews



Methodology:

1

Synthesis of stakeholder engagement findings, surveys, prototyping and piloting reports from three assessment developers and two states

2










Literature and artifact review

3

Interviews and focus groups with 20 state leaders, assessment developers and field leaders

We examined the following models and discussed lessons learning in-depth with the leaders implementing them



	Delaware (DE)	Through-Course Assessment
	Florida (FL)	Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST)
	Indiana (IN)	Through-Year Assessment (ILEARN (State Summative) Redesign)
	Louisiana (LA)	Guidebooks and Wit & Wisdom — CrawFish Model
	Montana (MT)	Montana Alternative Student Testing Pilot Program (MAST)
	Nebraska (NE)	Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS)
	North Carolina (NC)	North Carolina Personalized Assessment Tool (NCPAT)
	Texas (TX)	Texas Through-Year Assessment Pilot (TTAP)
	Districts in MD and WI	CenterPoint's Through-Year Illustrative Mathematics-Aligned Interims

Each of the states vary in how they approach the design of their through-year assessment, the degree to which they connect to curriculum and the goals they aim to achieve



Feature	LA*	LA**	MT	DE	FL	IN	NE	NC	TX
Each administration assesses the depth and breadth of grade-level standards	+	+			+		+	+ <i>ELA</i>	+
Each administration assesses a subset of standards			+	+		+		+ <i>Math</i>	
Curriculum-aligned	+								
Curriculum-relevant		+	+	+		+			

*Guidebooks and Wit & Wisdom **CrawFish Model

Note: CenterPoint’s Through-Year Illustrative Mathematics-Aligned Interims studied in districts is curriculum-aligned and assess the depth and breadth of standards.

LESSONS LEARNED

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT THE INFRASTRUCTURE, CONDITIONS, RESOURCES AND CAPACITY REQUIRED TO PILOT THROUGH-YEAR ASSESSMENTS?



Piloting through-year assessment models requires certain enabling conditions to be in place, strategic stakeholder engagement and professional learning



Enabling Conditions

What infrastructure and enabling conditions must be in place to pilot and implement a through-year assessment system?

What resources and level of capacity is required to pilot and implement a through-year assessment system?



Stakeholder Engagement

How have states and assessment developers engaged stakeholders and people proximate to the problem? What forms of stakeholder engagement were more effective?

What are stakeholders' views on through-year assessments so far?



Professional Learning

How have states and assessment developers address professional learning for educators?

What have been the biggest challenges in addressing professional learning?

We will cover these three infrastructure components in detail on the following slides

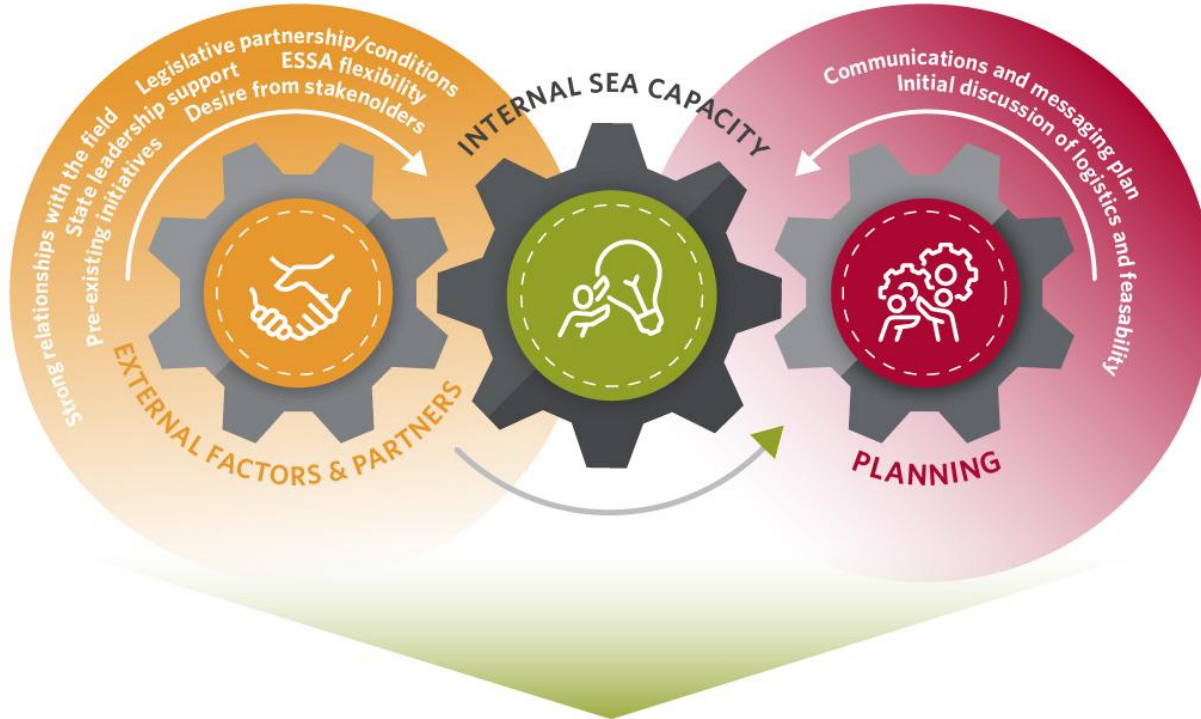
Enabling Conditions





The enabling conditions for through-year assessments fall into three main areas: external factors & partners; internal State Education Agency (SEA) capacity; and planning

Articulating a vision for a future state



Many of the states and assessment developers we spoke to identified these factors as key to their successful pilot and implementation.

We believe these enabling conditions are essential for all states attempting to pilot through-year assessments.

States and developers identified six external factors and partnerships as key enabling conditions that allowed their through-year assessment model to get off the ground



External factors and partnerships identified as key enabling conditions

- 1 ESSA flexibility
- 2 Desire from stakeholders
- 3 Strong relationships with the field
- 4 Legislative partnerships/conditions
- 5 State leadership support
- 6 Pre-existing initiatives

We will describe each one in more depth on the following slides...

ESSA provided states a path for considering through-year assessments as a possibility



1

ESSA flexibility

ESSA created a new academic assessment option for states—the allowance for multiple statewide interim assessments—along with a new flexibility for developing innovative approaches to assessment, the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA). Additionally, if a state continues administering its legacy assessment to all students while piloting an innovative assessment, a state may develop and pilot a new assessment, such as a through-year assessment. For several of the states we talked to, this new option and development pathways were key in allowing them to explore the potential of through-year assessments.

“It came down to ESSA and the flexibility it gave states in designing... we don’t have to have the same test form as the last decade... this set the stage for looking at what can we do?”

- Director of Statewide Assessments, Nebraska Department of Education

“When ESSA was reauthorized, it promoted through-year assessment systems so that helped.”

- Education Associate, Social Studies Assessment, Delaware Department of Education

Read more about the regulatory pathways for through-year assessments in Education First’s publication [“What are Through-Year Assessments?”](#)

Most states considered through-year assessments as a response to stakeholders' frustration with the current summative assessment system and desire for a new test



2

Desire from stakeholders

In some states, stakeholders, including educators and families, expressed the desire for a change in assessments, namely a **need for more timely test results**. A number of states assembled task forces and commissions to originally gather stakeholder perspectives' and the recommendations from many of these groups was a through-year assessment model.

In Texas, the legislature put together a commission on how to improve assessment and accountability and ***“one of the recommendations was to look at replacing the summative with an integrated, formative through-year model.”***

- Department of Assessment and Reporting
Associate Commission, Texas Education Agency

“We heard loud and clear that everyone wanted data in the hands of teachers to help adjust instruction.”

- Section Chief, Test
Development, North
Carolina Department of
Public Instruction

“We heard from parents and teachers over and over again that we don't get results back in a timely fashion.”

- Assistant Deputy Commissioner,
Division of Accountability, Research,
and Measurements, Florida
Department of Education

Collaboration and strong relationships with partners in the field seems to be a necessary enabling condition prior to piloting through-year assessments



3

Strong relationships with the field

State leaders and assessment developers we spoke to discussed collaboration in different ways, including collaboration across state government branches, partnerships with districts, community members and teacher associations, and a partnership with a strong assessment developer.



North Carolina

The state agency's partnership with NC State University has been a key enabling condition. The state develops assessments in close partnership with NC State University, and works collaboratively to design and develop test items and forms.



Delaware

Delaware has a strong social studies coalition with representatives from all districts. **State level leaders' relationships with this coalition allowed them to partner together to roll out a social studies through-year assessment.**

"We didn't move forward until the SS coalition was on board... their leadership and membership were really important."

- Education Associate, Social Studies Assessment, Delaware Department of Education

A strong assessment developer is one of the key partnerships for successful implementation



In Nebraska, having a strong assessment developer was key in building capacity.

The state looked for a developer that had the capacity to handle a state level innovative assessment.

“It came down to which vendor, what the vendor has in their background as far as test design, what it is they can scale up to at the state level. The fact that they [NWEA] already had a national imprint was very important.”

- Director of Statewide Assessments,
Nebraska Department of Education

For some states, guidance or mandates from the state legislature is what made through-year assessments possible in the first place



4

Legislative partnerships/conditions

For five states that we spoke with, legislative conditions played a key role in the transition to through-year assessments.



Indiana

In Indiana, House Enrolled Act 1251 in 2011 legislated the **DOE to streamline and prioritize standards**, and to realign assessments to these prioritized standards.



Texas

The **Texas Legislature passed House Bill 3906 in 2019**, which **mandated changes to the annual standardized tests and directed the SEA to create and pilot an integrated through-year assessment** that would monitor student progress, inform classroom instruction and potentially replace summative assessments. The bill came with a lump sum of annual funds which allowed TEA to pilot their through-year assessment.



Florida

In Florida, having the governor's backing was key. **Governor DeSantis signed Senate Bill 1048 into law in March 2022**, officially **replacing the Florida Standards Assessment with progress monitoring to measure students' growth**.



For other states, support from state leadership is what made through-year assessments possible

5

State leadership support

State leadership support has been a key enabling condition for both assessment developers and SEAs.



Montana and Louisiana



- + **New Meridian described how collaboration with Montana and Louisiana was essential to the success of their pilot, and the importance of the capacity and commitment of both the state leader and staff.** The Montana Office of Public Instruction's dedication to the success of their innovative through-year assessment led them to request a Field Test Flexibility Waiver from USED. Multiple members of Congress and the Montana Governor wrote letters of support for the waiver, and USED approved the waiver in August 2023.
- + NWEA also shared how collaboration with state leaders in Louisiana has been key to their work.

“The leader at the state has to be ready to take on the work of selling their vision. They have to be ready to convince not only their field, but often their own team of the benefits of a new through-year design.”

- Senior Vice President, State Partnerships, New Meridian

Pre-existing initiatives can be an especially helpful enabling condition



6

Pre-existing initiatives

In Louisiana, the state built on their previous work investing in HQIM infrastructure to design their Guidebooks through-year assessment and pilot their Innovative Assessment Program (IAP). This made their transition to building the [CrawFish through-year model](#) easier.

- + Develops the **ELA Guidebooks 2.0 curriculum**.
- + **Reviews and rates curriculum** for quality.
- + **Incentivizes schools** to adopt high-quality materials.
- + **Vets professional learning** for alignment to high-quality curriculum.

- + Applies for **Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA)** to **build a through-year assessment aligned to Guidebooks 2.0**, and later Wit & Wisdom.
- + IADA helped with initial through-year assessment work, the **Innovative Assessment Program**
- + The **IADA application forced a lot of this early development**, and that opportunity crystalised the theory of action.

In addition, the existing infrastructure of the **Innovative Assessment Program** helped significantly with **buy-in and roll-out** as Louisiana already had “curriculum-aligned” assessments that made the transition to the CrawFish model easier. The new through-year model had the same platform, technical supports, manuals and communication.

Internal State Education Agency (SEA) capacity is key for implementing through-year assessments, both at the start of piloting and throughout the process



Strong theory of action and vision
Staffing capacity and knowledge
Internal coordination

Internal SEA capacity factors identified as key enabling conditions

1

Strong theory of action and vision

2

State level personnel and capacity

3

Staff knowledge and expertise

4

Internal coordination

We will describe each one in more depth on the following slides...

A strong theory of action and a vision for the *why* behind the shift to through-year assessments at the SEA level is critical



1

Strong theory of action and vision



*“States have to have a **vision for assessment that needs to prevail through leadership changes.**”* - State Assessment Leader

- + Almost every state and assessment developer we spoke with emphasized the **importance of having a theory of action for the through-year assessment, with clear goals**
- + The theory of action for through-year assessments should fit into the state’s overall vision for assessment

*“You have to have a theory of action. You have to be very clear about what your goal is - **processes have to be in place and have to be well thought out.**”*

- Director of Statewide Assessment, Nebraska

NWEA also recommended that states and assessment developers **“develop a strong theory of action from the start and reflect on it often.”** As they’ve progressed in their work, they’ve had to make numerous decisions and pivot quickly. The theory of action acts as a roadmap to guide their decisions.



"When we talk about implementation [of through-year assessments], we have to consider how implementation may span statewide administration changes and the implications of that. This [implementing through-year assessments] requires buy-in across leaderships."

- State Assessment Leader



State level capacity needs include additional personnel and training to implement through-year assessments



2

State level personnel and capacity

Piloting and implementing through-year assessments involves switching from a system everyone is familiar with to a new way of thinking and operating, as well as dealing with the logistical challenges that come from administering a test multiple times a year. States described how they had to adjust both personnel and ramp up technology capacity.

Developers described how implementing a through-year assessment system is like starting up a new assessment program which requires consistent capacity.

“You need consistent staff who are owning what is needed... There’s a strong vision from the top, which helps, but you need staff.”

- Vice President, Product Strategy, New Meridian

Consultants supporting states highlighted the need to grow state department capacities, especially during transitions between assessment models.

“Coming from a statewide summative assessment, the psychometric and content teams are not big, only a couple people. That model is not going to be enough long term for through-year assessments. It’s a hard reality.”

–Senior Associate, Center for Assessment

We spotlight how two states approached this on the following slides...

Delaware addressed capacity through creating a new position at the SEA level



For their social studies through-year assessment, Delaware created a new position to oversee the curriculum, instruction and professional learning side. This allowed another state leader position to move over to focusing on assessment full time.

“You need somebody on both ends of this. If the intent is to improve instruction, you need someone overseeing instructional resources.”

- Education Associate, Social Studies Assessment, Delaware Department of Education

Florida addressed capacity issues through adding staff and ramping up their technology capacity



Regarding district capacity, Florida shared that **districts were also able to adapt quickly to the required additional technology capacity and ramp up their capacity.**

However, Florida's Assistant Deputy Commissioner also noted that collecting and dealing with student data three times a year, as opposed to one, did stretch some districts' capacity.

*"We did add two FTEs because of the additional grades... **The workload certainly exploded.** For example, our reporting team usually only has to worry about reporting tests once a year and now it's 3 times a year - that's not a small undertaking - the ability to manage test administration, testing system."*

- Assistant Deputy Commissioners, Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurements, Florida Department of Education

*"Another piece was the technology capacity. **We needed to have a pretty robust ramp up to have the devices and do computer based testing in additional grades.**"*

- Assistant Deputy Commissioner, Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurements, Florida Department of Education

While feasibility and logistics can be a challenge for states' capacity, a few states felt that the logistical strain may be less on districts



It is too early to estimate the full impact of through-year assessments on district capacity, but states and assessment developers pointed out that most districts already have structures and systems in place for administering multiple interim assessments a year.

*“We had a lot of people say multiple administrations through the year - everyone will hate it! We haven't heard these reactions. **Districts and schools know what to do.** It hasn't been as hair-on-fire to do multiple assessments as people thought it might be.”*

- Senior Vice President, State Partnerships, New Meridian

In Louisiana, NWEA shared they haven't heard concerns from the state about district capacity during their collaboration piloting through-year assessments—but wondered whether districts will consider replacing their current interim assessments with the new state through-year model in the future.

And in certain states, through-year assessments fill a gap for districts that do not have strong interim assessment infrastructures



For some districts, particularly smaller or rural districts, **through-year assessments provide interim assessments they may otherwise not have.**

North Carolina

North Carolina also shared that the NC Check-Ins have received lots of support, especially from small districts. **While large districts have resources to buy benchmark assessments, smaller districts appreciated having these available from the state.**

Texas

In Texas, many of the participating districts were rural districts. The fact that the pilot through-year assessment is aligned to state standards is another incentive for these districts.

For these districts, *“it can take a lot of effort or money for them to develop their own local benchmarks and for that reason they were open to doing a pilot put together by the state.”*

- Strategy and Operations Manager, TEA

CenterPoint partnered directly with districts and found that districts need consistent capacity and want guidance around data use and interpretation



Many districts have the infrastructure in place to transition to a through-year system, but consistent capacity and support with data use are key.

Consistent capacity at the district level is important.

“Some districts may experience changes in leadership or have new staff members for the current year, making it challenging to establish stable collaborations.”

- CenterPoint

Districts want more insight into the data and guidance on interpreting results to inform instruction

CenterPoint found that **districts will engage when they meet them where they are and help them to understand the data they receive.**

Besides additional personnel, having staff with deep knowledge and expertise in assessments is a crucial factor



3

Staff with deep knowledge and expertise

Staff with deep knowledge and expertise in assessments is important in different ways

They may have prior experience with changing assessment systems

*“States that don’t have a robust and knowledgeable staff, they’re going to struggle. We have a large assessment unit and most of us have been around for a number of years... We work with our national experts, our other colleagues in other states. **That breadth and depth of knowledge and connections throughout the country made it helpful.**”*

- Assistant Deputy Commissioners, Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurements, Florida Department of Education

Through-year assessments require strong technical knowledge

*“On the SEA side, we needed **to have someone who knew psychometrics** and who could talk with the vendor about what we need from the state’s accountability piece - we need to ensure it’s a valid test.”*

- Director of Statewide Assessments, Nebraska

*“The amount of items that are written that have to be reviewed, **the amount of embedding that needs to be done** on the current end of grade test to develop a bank to develop all these different assessments while maintaining the current assessments... **it has to be strategic.**”*

- Section Chief, Test Development, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

Strong internal coordination and coherence between the curriculum & instruction team and the assessment team within an SEA can also be a determinant of success



4

Internal coordination

One of the main goals of through-year assessments is to drive and improve instruction. To achieve this fully, it helps if the curriculum/instructional office and assessment office within the SEA communicate and coordinate, especially for states using curriculum- connected and/or scope and sequence aligned models.

*“The curriculum office and assessment office need time and space together to do the work... **There’s a need for participation and buy-in from multiple arms of the state agency.**”*

- Director, State Innovative Solutions, NWEA

For states considering through-year models that connect more closely to curriculum, thinking through the communication between the curriculum and assessment offices is key. In Louisiana, for their ELA Guidebooks curriculum-aligned model, because ELA Guidebooks is created by the state, the curriculum and assessment offices are in close contact. Both offices understand the curriculum roadmap and the through-year assessment outline.

State Spotlight: Delaware is aiming for strong ties between its instructional and assessments offices



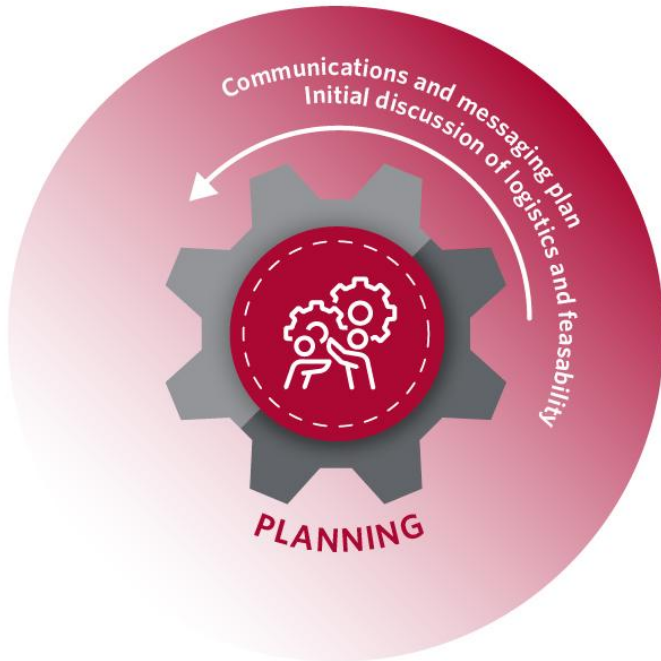
- + With the shift to a social studies through-year assessment, there was a huge push funded by the department to create **instructional resources aligned to the through-year assessments**.
- + The lessons, called Model Lessons, outline the standards on each assessment and include a **planning guide paced to the assessment administrations**.
- + The **through-year assessment development happens at the same time as the instructional resource development** which gives more credibility to the whole system.
- + As mentioned earlier, Delaware created a **new position for curriculum instruction and professional learning** to accompany the shift to through-year assessments, and the two offices coordinate.



*"You can't really think of it as just assessment - **it's a teaching and learning system with assessment at the end to help you see how it's gone** - that's what resonates with folks."*

- Education Associate, Social Studies Assessment, Delaware Department of Education

States have found that a strong communications and logistics plan is a critical enabling condition for articulating a vision for a future state



Planning factors identified as key enabling conditions

1

Initial discussion of logistics and feasibility

2

Communications and messaging plan

We will describe each one in more depth on the following slides...

Initial discussions about logistics, feasibility and the time & commitment needed for through-year assessments can help to level set expectations



1

Initial discussion of logistics and feasibility

It is crucial that SEA staff, district partners and assessment developers understand what implementing a through-year assessment actually means, and the time and effort that is involved. It is also key that states think through the logistics of coordinating with districts, test design, scoring and reporting.

“Level setting about the time scale. These things take longer to stand up, but are potentially more impactful to states and students.”

–Senior Associate, Center for Assessment

Communication must clearly message the purpose of a state's through-year assessment and expectations for how it should be used



2

Communications and messaging plan

States have experienced challenges setting expectations with educators about the fundamental purpose of their through-year assessment and what the assessment does and doesn't do.

States must be clear on if the assessment is meant to be diagnostic, formative, a benchmark, summative—or a combination of these purposes.

"Teachers would want to see [the through-year assessment] as a fully formative tool, but it more so serves the role of a replacement to locally adopted benchmarks that takes a snapshot of student performance throughout the year."

— Strategy and Operations Manager, Texas Education Agency

"One of biggest challenges is what it does and what it doesn't do—what are the purposes and how it's being designed. Some (educators) thought it would roll everything up and it's not. Our colleagues do a really good job of emphasizing the formative aspect."

— Senior Director of Accountability and Testing, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

Strong communication plans are essential for setting expectations and establishing purpose



States and assessment developers shared best practices for communication plans

- + Communicate constantly, consistently and cyclically
- + Reach all stakeholders at every phase of design and implementation
- + Gather input at every phase
- + Coordinate communication centrally from the SEAs
- + Partner closely with assessment developers and platform providers to develop and deliver communications and technical support
- + Build on existing systems to reach stakeholders where they are expect

Communication within districts presents challenges

While Delaware's social studies coalition was an essential partner, the SEA found members didn't always fully articulate what was happening to other district leadership, exposing assumptions about intra-communication and requiring additional layers of communication.

Celebrate schools and educators piloting assessments

New Meridian made banners for piloting schools and certificates for teachers to honor their role and build buy-in to the vision.

"As pilot participants, helping to shape the next assessment, we know this is not easy."

– Senior Vice President, New Meridian

Stakeholder Engagement



All assessment developers mentioned the importance of stakeholder engagement throughout their through-year pilot process



*“You need to engage with stakeholders and PPP (people proximate to the problem) from the start. **It absolutely needs to happen.**”*

- Director, State Innovative Solutions

*“We place significant value on the **feedback of our stakeholders**, particularly those deeply involved in the teaching and learning process.”*

- CenterPoint

*“Stakeholder engagement and diverse voices from PPP will remain **key drivers of the development process.**”*

- New Meridian

States and assessment developers each defined “stakeholder” differently, although most included students, caregivers and educators



Students

Caregivers

Educators

States and assessment developers also engaged:

- + Principals
- + Counselors
- + Superintendents
- + Administrators
- + Test coordinators
- + Experts in education measurement
- + Accessibility advisory groups
- + Assessment advisory groups

States and assessment developers found that engaging stakeholders in different ways and at different times served a variety of purposes



Types of stakeholder engagement:

- + Focus groups
- + Cognitive labs
- + Empathy interviews
- + Surveys
- + Committees
- + Rapid testing
- + Interviews
- + In-person workshops
- + Quarterly feedback sessions

At the Outset

"TEA didn't have idea of what this should've looked like from very beginning - we very much relied on our stakeholders to inform our work and help us understand what folks are looking for when it comes to TYA" - Strategy and Operations Manager, TEA

At Specific Decision Points

Louisiana and NWEA used feedback from instructors to inform the design of their score reports

At the End of the Pilot

Montana's feedback sessions at the end of their pilot year showed immense improvement in teacher opinions about TYA

Each of the states and assessment developers engaged with stakeholders in their own way, and each plan to continue that engagement

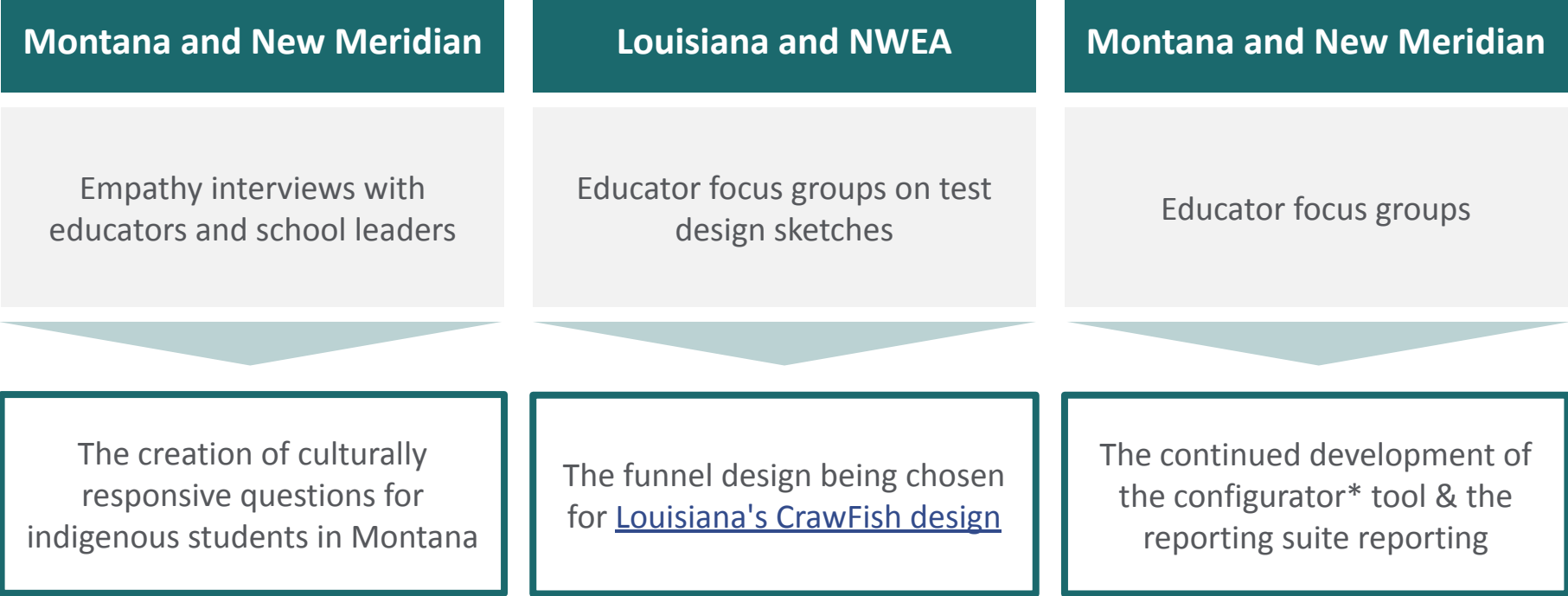


CenterPoint	Louisiana and NWEA	Montana and New Meridian
Educator surveys	Educator focus groups on test design sketches	A week-long, in-person item development workshop with educators
Empathy interviews with students	A student survey on reporting completed by over 13,000 students	Student surveys as part of the second and fourth administrations
<i>To come:</i> Continued engagement with PPP (people proximate to the problem)	<i>To come:</i> Caregiver engagement on reports	<i>To come:</i> Cognitive labs with students

Stakeholder feedback directly impacted the design of their through-year pilots



These are three examples:



**A tool New Meridian is developing that will allow schools/districts to schedule [testlets](#) to fit their local scope and sequence. The tool will make a recommendation for the order of testlet administration based on a school's curriculum.* 47

Despite the value of stakeholder feedback, assessment developers found structural barriers to be in the way of engaging with students and parents



Student Engagement

Gathering student feedback is challenging due to privacy and legal concerns and the legality of those interactions varies by state.

However, surveys were an effective tool for gathering significant input from large numbers of students.

Parent & Student Engagement

Recruiting parents and students for more direct interactions—such as empathy interviews—was a persistent challenge—and developers are still figuring out how to do this more effectively

*“Recruitment efforts by the states, social media marketing, direct compensation, and contact with parent/student groups yielded **minimal leads for students and parents that are willing to talk about their experiences with assessments.**”*

- New Meridian

Overall, stakeholder engagement shows an excitement for through-year assessments and a dissatisfaction with the current assessment system



Excitement for Through-Year Assessments

*“Curriculum-aligned assessments are **more representative of what students are actually learning**, more helpful tools for teachers, they could use the results – [assessments] would be less discouraging.”*

- District educator who worked with CenterPoint

*“The focus [groups] were **generally excited about and interested in the testlet system.**”*

- Focus group on Louisiana’s math pilot with New Meridian

*“The recent Student Survey from Spring 2022 uncovered that a large percentage of the students **preferred the Innovative Assessment to the regular LEAP 2025 assessment (66% to 34%).***

*For those students who preferred the IAP, many called out that **the preference was related to the fact that the test was administered after the unit of study (37%).**”*

- Louisiana’s Innovative Assessment Program, data shared by NWEA

Overall, stakeholder engagement shows an excitement for through-year assessments and a dissatisfaction with the current assessment system



Dissatisfaction with the Current Assessment System

For example, New Meridian gathered feedback from instructors about their current end-of-year assessment systems:

- “1. **Too much time** is dedicated to formal assessment in the classroom.*
- 2. Assessments given throughout the year and at the end of the year are **not well aligned to classroom instruction.***
- 3. Assessments **cause stress** for students.*
- 4. **Educators want to see measures of growth** just as much as they want to see proficiency.”*

- New Meridian

Professional Learning



“One instructional coach told us he’s finally able to have real conversations with teachers about what is happening in their classroom.”

- Education Associate, Social Studies Assessment, Delaware



States and developers provided professional learning on through-year assessments in two main areas



1

Developing districts', educators' and staff's understanding of the assessment (the design, structure, administration guidance, the testing platform)

2

Supporting educators to use the data from through-year assessments to inform teaching and learning

Both areas of professional learning are important to the success of through-year assessments, and states are in different phases of development and success with each area.

States have approached professional learning on understanding through-year assessments in different ways



Webinars

A number of states have conducted webinars on the what and how of their through-year assessment



Online modules

Some states have created independent online modules and video trainings for teachers on the test design and reports



Contracting with assessment developers

Some states contract with assessment developers to handle professional development and train educators and distinct staff

Supporting educators to actually use the data from through-year assessments to inform instruction is an evolving area



Most states are still figuring out how to address this type of professional learning. Some states are trying to support educators' use of data by producing detailed test reports.



Delaware has tried to create a reporting system that gets at the information and grain-size teachers need. **The test reports break down results by summary, by standard and individual student reports** so that teachers can dive into the data. The instructional resources from the state aim to actually help teachers do something about the results.



Nebraska has revamped their test report to **communicate more information on proficiency and create actionable reports with detailed data.**



Montana has plans to develop and launch a trainer-led, multi-session, in-person PD on data-driven instruction and develop a teacher community of practice for learning from each other.

States face a number of challenges, both logistical and strategic, in implementing professional learning around through-year assessments



Lack of capacity

- + **Many states face capacity issues to create and implement professional development** and often have to contract out with partners or other organizations.
- + In some states, the professional development piece is expected to be handled by the instructional/curriculum side of the state agency.

Level of fidelity in districts

- + **District implementation and capacity can pose a challenge as well.**
- + Districts have different levels of fidelity in training for teachers, particularly when it comes to the data and interpretation side of professional learning.

Finding time for professional learning

- + Teacher and substitute shortages make finding time for in-person professional learning more challenging
- + Many schools struggle to find time for educator professional learning communities to discuss data

Ensuring all teachers access professional learning

- + **Ensuring that professional learning and training reaches every teacher is a challenge.** In North Carolina, despite multiple avenues of professional learning, an end of year survey revealed that a handful of teachers had not received training.

In sum, we have learned that having the right enabling conditions, engaging stakeholders continuously and establishing a professional learning infrastructure are key



Enabling Conditions

States, along with their assessment developers, must think through certain external factors and partnerships, ensure they have strong internal SEA capacity, and carefully consider their communication and logistics plans.



Stakeholder Engagement

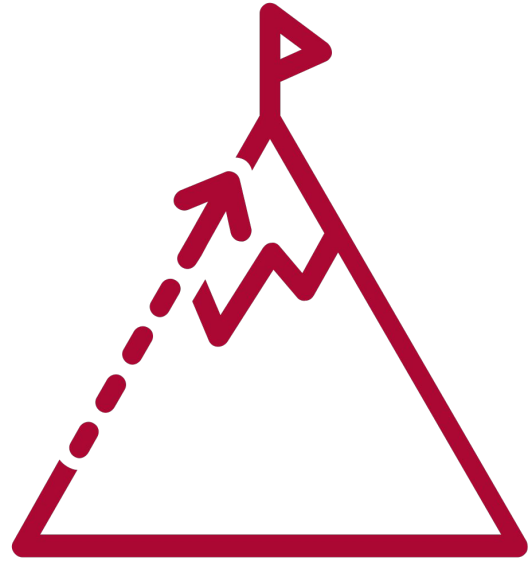
States and developers must engage stakeholders, including educators, students and families, at multiple points in time and in multiple ways, throughout the pilot and implementation.



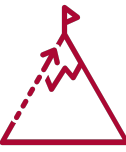
Professional Learning

While states have provided professional learning on understanding what through-year assessments are, meeting districts, educators, families and students' desire for support in interpreting results to inform instruction is an emerging focus.

Common Challenges



Across the models piloted in our grant and other states, there were a few common challenges and areas for further exploration in through-year test design



Testing students on content they haven't been taught yet



Knowing which curricula districts are using



Negotiating issues of local control



In some states' through-year pilots, students were tested on content and skills they had not been taught yet, which required additional communication to stakeholders



In their initial pilot, due to logistical considerations, **New Meridian was not able to let districts and schools choose the order of testlets**. In math particularly, many students were likely tested on material they hadn't learned yet.

For states who are doing **full-scope through-year models, the first administration presents material teachers have not covered yet**. States such as Florida have tried to address this by messaging that this is a byproduct of the nature of the design and that results will likely be lower in the first administration, but messaging has been a challenge.

In North Carolina, the SEA tried to group the standards in a way that made sense instructionally and surveyed educators on the order they typically teach and group standards. However, **due to local control of curriculum, the order the state through-year groups standards may be different from a locality**.

Delaware is one state that has addressed this challenge head on



In Delaware, **state leaders worked with the social studies coalition for the 8th grade history assessment to decide which time period each assessment covered**. That agreement allowed the through-year assessments to actually cover content students had learned.

For states considering curriculum-aligned or curriculum-relevant models, determining the curricula districts use has posed a challenge



There are two parts to this challenge:

1

Many states do not have a systematic way of collecting data on which curricula districts use.

2

Districts and individual educators implement curriculum with different levels of fidelity—and states have little visibility on this variation.

Example: As Louisiana attempted to launch their [CrawFish model](#), they came upon this challenge. The state initially considered five curricula to incorporate into their CrawFish model, but **struggled to collect data and understand the landscape of curriculum use in the state**. It also wasn't clear if the curricula were being implemented “at the level of fidelity required to scale a curriculum-aligned or curriculum-relevant assessment.”

States intending to pursue a through-year assessment related to curriculum should consider implementing an annual systematized data collection of curriculum use in the state.

For states considering curriculum-aligned or curriculum-relevant models, negotiating local control of curriculum is an ongoing issue



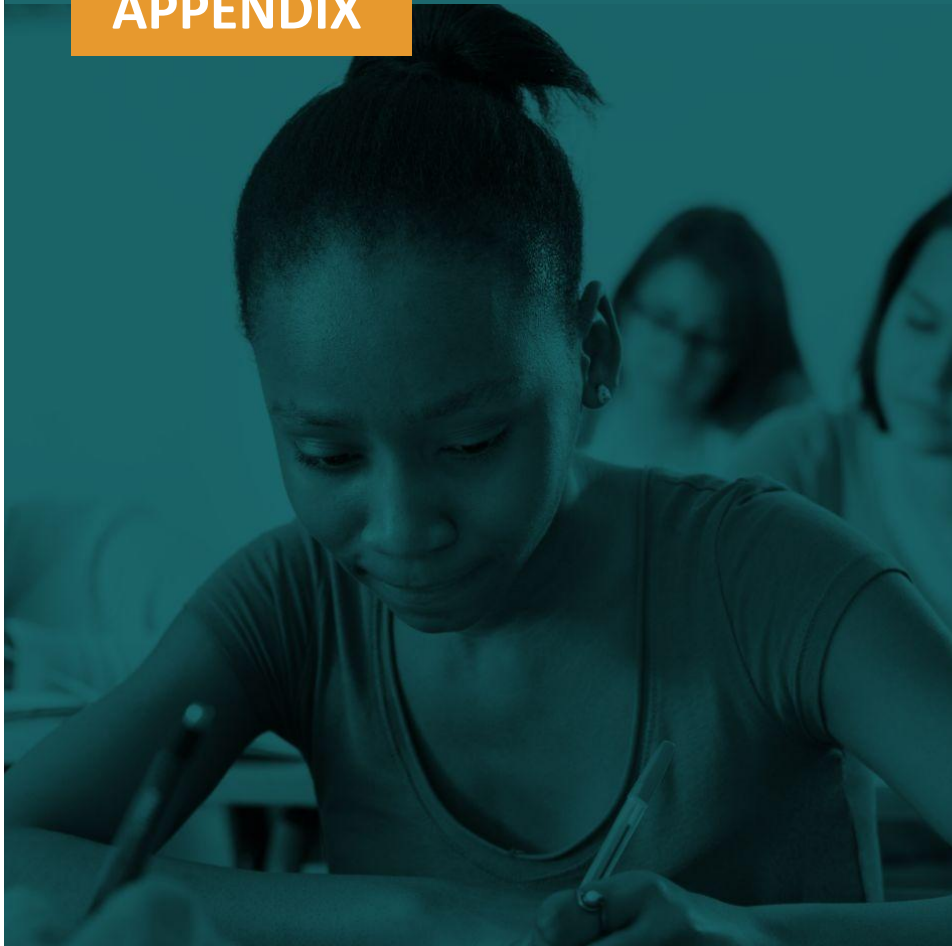
Our education system in this country is designed on the premise that districts have local control over their curricular choices.

For states trying to design a through-year assessment model that is curriculum-aligned or curriculum-relevant, this poses a challenge. **They must figure out a way for the through-year assessment model design to work with any curriculum used by districts in that state.**



Louisiana is the state in the country best positioned to implement a curriculum-connected through-year assessment, as at least 85% of the state uses two curriculum. However, even in Louisiana, they face challenges in creating a model that is applicable for all districts.

APPENDIX



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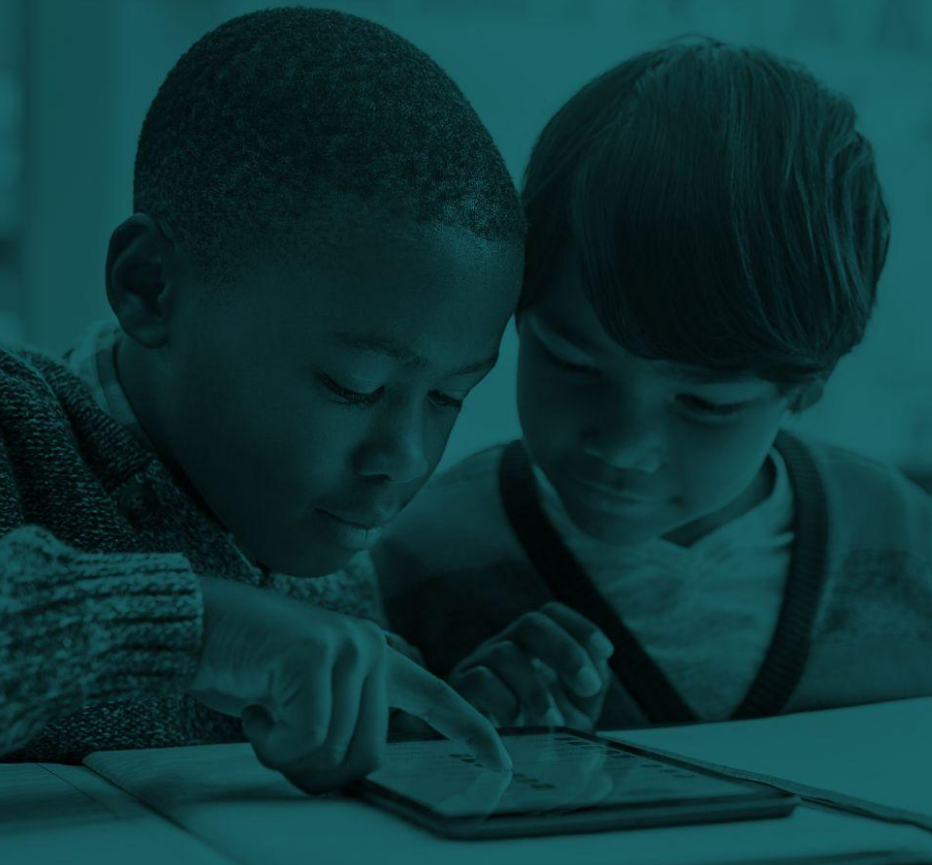
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THANK YOU!



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