

**Center for the Future of Arizona's
Response to the State Board of Education's Call for Papers
on the Feasibility of Menu of Local and/or Statewide Assessments
and Discussion of Multi-Level, Multiple Measures Models**
January 11, 2016

Overview

The Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA) is responding to the State Board of Education's Call for Papers to share our analysis of the feasibility of including a menu of assessments in a K-12 accountability system and to offer our services in support of a pilot to demonstrate the feasibility of a menu of assessments approach. Per the call for papers we are also including a discussion of multiple levels and measures of data within the accountability system, and, in the Appendix, we provide a preliminary working draft of how multiple measures might be deployed in the accountability system.

Based on CFA's analysis, we believe it is possible to design and develop a state accountability system around a menu of assessments and multiple levels and measures of data. CFA has developed a preliminary working proposal for a state accountability system that meets both these requirements, which is included in the Appendix of this document. CFA is ready to discuss the ideas presented below, to offer a pilot program to demonstrate the feasibility of assessment choice, and to be a thought partner in the development of the new state K-12 accountability model.

Pilot the Feasibility of a Menu of Local or Statewide Assessments

The Center for the Future of Arizona welcomes the discussion by the State Board of Education regarding the feasibility of a menu of assessments that would provide assessment choice for Arizona schools while meeting the needs of the state's accountability system. CFA has experience working with schools that are already implementing high-quality assessments, in addition to required state assessments, which suggests a menu of assessments model is feasible in Arizona. We are eager to assist the Board in its deliberations and believe that we are in a good position to pilot an effort with these schools that would yield valuable insights and lessons into the Board's questions around a menu of assessment policy. Such a pilot would provide an opportunity to learn what would be involved in evolving state accountability policies to support school and learning education agency (LEA) assessment choice, maximize local control, and support innovation, in addition to positioning Arizona as a national leader in this arena. If the State Board of Education chooses to move forward, CFA is also prepared and well positioned to assist in the development of an accountability system that includes a menu of assessments.

More specifically, CFA has been working in partnership with schools that offer high-quality, rigorous assessments aligned to state standards to their students alongside the state's own assessments. In particular, 29 of CFA's Move On When Ready schools

have utilized the highly regarded Cambridge International Examinations, which are high-quality aligned instructional systems and include standards-based assessments, impacting more than 25,000 students statewide. The State Board of Education is familiar with the Cambridge exams as CFA has had the opportunity to appear before the Board to discuss them on a number of occasions. The Board is likewise familiar with ACT QualityCore assessments, which are similarly utilized by Move On When Ready schools and could also be part of a pilot to demonstrate the feasibility of assessment choice

If this policy is enabled, schools and LEAs would choose from among a growing menu of examinations, each representing a different approach to curriculum or style of instruction, giving schools and LEAs more flexibility and freedom to determine their educational program. The State Board of Education would need to certify that assessments were aligned to state standards and other requirements, a relatively demanding task. In the case of the Cambridge assessments utilized by the schools in CFA's Move On When Ready initiative, this work has already been completed by CFA's national partner, the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), which provides technical and other support to CFA. The fact that this alignment work has already been done for the Cambridge assessments would allow a pilot to move forward expeditiously.

Similarly, in order to assure accountability within a menu of assessments, the State Board of Education would also need to know how exam scores in one system compare to scores in another system. In other words, assessment systems would need to be equated in order to ensure that an exam score in one system means the same thing as it does in another system. In the case of the Cambridge and ACT QualityCore assessments, NCEE has already equated the exams to AIMS and is able and at the ready to equate them to our new state assessment, AzMERIT.

CFA welcomes the opportunity to share our experiences and insights with regard to providing a menu of assessments to schools as well as our thoughts about how we would propose designing a pilot to allow assessment choice within the accountability system. Such a pilot would test the efficacy of offering a high-quality menu of assessments and yield important information and insights about an assessment choice approach within a K-12 accountability system.

Discussion of Multi-Level, Multiple Measures Models

The Center for American Progress and Council of Chief State School Officers finds, nationwide, states are beginning to assess schools through multiple measures and more robust systems of assessment.¹ Multiple measures supported by research help educators make school-based decisions and lead to greater student outcomes. For example, the College and Career Readiness and Success Center at American Institutes for Research has identified a number of leading indicators that states and schools can

¹ Center for American Progress & Council of Chief State School Officers (2014). *Next-generation accountability systems: An overview of current state policies and practices*. Retrieved from <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Accountability-report.pdf>.

use to improve academic achievement and guide accountability policy through a meta-analysis study of the factors that predict postsecondary success, academic attainment, and economic security.² These indicators, when utilized within a state accountability framework, demonstrate to schools and policymakers where to focus time, energy, and resources to lead to greater student academic outcomes. A number of these factors are incorporated into CFA's Preliminary Working Proposal of K-12 State Accountability Model, located in the Appendix of this document.

Of growing interest in Arizona and nationally are accountability system indicators that demonstrate K-12 schools are responsible for preparing college- and career-ready students.³ A number of national educational policy organizations have proposed linking schools' accountability results more directly to college and career outcomes, including SAT and ACT performance, high school college credit accumulation, FAFSA completion rate, college remediation rate, and even college completion rates.^{4,5,6} There is also discussion nationally around how to include meaningful career indicators in state accountability systems and opportunity for Arizona to become a prominent leader in this area.⁷

There are examples nationwide of how to incorporate multiple levels and measures of data within a single accountability framework. For example, some states have moved toward school accountability models that look more like student report cards. In New Mexico⁸, schools earn separate letter grades for student achievement, student growth, graduation rate, attendance, and college- and career-readiness indicators, in addition to a single overall letter grade. Other states score schools on more inclusive broader categories that each take into account multiple measures. In Kentucky,⁹ schools are scored on multiple measures within three larger categories: next-generation learners, next-generation instructional programs and support, and next-generation professionals. These broad categories contain multiple subcategories, for example, the next-generation learners category is comprised of five subcategories (achievement, growth,

² Hein, V., Smerdon, B., & Sambolt, M. (2013). *Predictors of postsecondary success*. Retrieved from http://www.ccrscenter.org/sites/default/files/CCRS%20Center_Predictors%20of%20Postsecondary%20Success_final_0.pdf.

³ Aldeman, C. (2015). *Mind the gap: The case for re-imagining the way states judge high school quality*. Retrieved from http://bellwethereducation.org/sites/default/files/Bellwether_HighSchoolQuality.pdf.

⁴ Center for American Progress & Council of Chief State School Officers. *Next-generation accountability systems: An overview of current state policies and practices*.

⁵ Aldeman, C. *Mind the gap: The case for re-imagining the way states judge high school quality*.

⁶ Ward, D. & Vargas, J. (2011). *What gets measured gets done: Adding college-course completion to K-12 accountability systems*. Retrieved from

http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/WhatGetsMeasuredGetsDone_PolicyBrief_100311.pdf.

⁷ Achieve & National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (2014). *Making career readiness count*. Retrieved from http://www.achieve.org/files/AchieveNASDCTEc_Career_Readiness_0.PDF.

⁸ U.S. Department of Education, (2012). *New Mexico ESEA Flexibility Request*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/eseaflex/approved-requests/nmrequest3.pdf>.

⁹ Kentucky Department of Education, (2012). *Unbridled learning accountability model (With focus on the next-generation learners component)*. Retrieved from <http://education.ky.gov/comm/ul/documents/white%20paper%20062612%20final.pdf>.

performance gaps, readiness for college/career, and graduation rate), which are each calculated based on multiple measures of data. These multi-level, multiple measures approaches provide all stakeholders both a broad, holistic overview of school's current grade and more detailed snapshots of school's strengths and areas for growth in specific areas.

Next Steps

Based on CFA's analysis, we believe it is possible to design and develop a state K-12 accountability system around a menu of assessments and with multiple levels and measures of data. CFA is ready to discuss these ideas, to offer a pilot program to demonstrate the feasibility of a menu of assessments, and to be a thought partner in the development of the new state K-12 accountability model.

Based on research and with input from innovative Arizona school, district, and charter network leaders, CFA has developed a preliminary working proposal of an accountability model found in the Appendix of this document. CFA welcomes the opportunity to share our thoughts further with the State Board of Education and to be a thought partner in discussions on a new K-12 accountability system.

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Appendix

CFA Preliminary Working Proposal: K-12 State Accountability Model

CFA developed the following preliminary working proposal to demonstrate how a menu of assessments and the use of multi-level, multiple measures and data points could be included in an Arizona K-12 state accountability system. CFA welcomes the opportunity to be a thought partner in the development of Arizona's new accountability system.

Based in research in the fundamental attributes of state accountability systems,¹⁰ CFA's working proposal is comprised of multiple measures of student success within the following six key indicators:

- **Achievement**
- **Academic Growth**
- **Achievement Gap Closure**
- **College and Career Readiness**
- **On-Time Graduation** (HS only)
- **Attendance**

In CFA's working proposal, LEAs and schools would earn a separate letter grade on each key indicator using multiple measures and would also earn a single cumulative overall letter grade. This multi-level reporting system would provide stakeholders with a broad picture of school success they are accustomed to seeing reported, and also allow schools and the public to drill deeper into these six areas and the components of the overall grade. Specific formulas to determine how each letter grade would be calculated would need to be developed separately.

CFA believes that Arizona's K-12 accountability system can include multiple levels and measures of school success. Arizona has the opportunity to build on current national promising practices to become a leader in this area and, in doing so, address the following within our accountability system:

- ***Excellence and Equity*** – In Arizona, too often student outcomes are tied to demographic markers. A system that includes many more measures will bring attention to the array of factors that influence student attainment. By publicly reporting these data by student subgroup, schools will have better access to reliable sources to ensure they are meeting the needs of all students.
- ***Transparency*** – A model that provides for maximum transparency will clearly articulate how schools are doing on each separate measure and indicator before wrapping that into an overall letter grade. CFA's proposed working model would look more like a student report card, so that schools earn separate letter grades

¹⁰ Mikulecky, M. & Christie, K. (2014). Rating states, grading schools: What parents and experts say states should consider to make school accountability systems meaningful. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. Retrieved from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/12/53/11253.pdf>.

for each key indicator, in addition to a single overall letter grade. This model provides all stakeholders—especially families—both a broad, holistic picture and a more detailed snapshots of each school’s strengths and areas for growth.

- **Flexibility** – To meet local needs, this model allows flexibility in how schools are able to show success. For example, within the College and Career Readiness Indicator, schools may demonstrate evidence of excellence across a wide range of measures, providing ample flexibility for schools to design their academic program to meet their local needs.

A working list of proposed indicators and related measures are detailed below:

CFA’s Preliminary Working Proposal of K-12 State Accountability Model

Key Indicators	Measures
Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student achievement on AzMERIT or other assessments approved for use as part of a menu of assessments • Student achievement on AIMS Science • Student achievement on NCSC Alternative Assessment • Student achievement on AZELLA
Academic Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall student growth in math and ELA on AzMERIT or other assessments approved for use as part of a menu of assessments (to be considered: growth as a measure on its own or compared to individual school goal or like schools) • Growth of top 75% • Growth of bottom 25%
Achievement Gap Closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing achievement gaps, growth gaps, or graduation rate between groups of students (e.g. race, gender, income, ELL, SPED) at school (either whole school or in certain grades)
College & Career Readiness	<p>HS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College-level Course Completion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dual credit, concurrent credit, or college equivalency participation (e.g. Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Cambridge A-levels, Cambridge AS-levels) ○ Dual credit, concurrent credit, or college equivalency scores (e.g. Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Cambridge A-levels, Cambridge AS-levels) ○ Upper division diplomas (e.g. APID, IB Diploma, AICE) ○ Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC) earners ○ Associate’s Degrees earners • Postsecondary Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ College going rate ○ College course remediation rate in mathematics and English ○ Admissibility to Arizona universities ○ Military enrollment • Predictors of Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ELL reclassification ○ PSAT participation ○ PSAT scores ○ SAT/ACT participation ○ SAT/ACT scores ○ Enrollment in postsecondary programs (AVID) ○ FAFSA completion rate ○ ACT WorkKeys scores ○ Arizona CTE Certifications ○ GCD participation ○ GCD college-ready scores ○ GCD earners ○ Course participation and passing tied to college success based on research

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participation in transition programs (e.g. middle to high school summer bridge, school year transition, early intervention, and high school to postsecondary)
	K8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third grade reading • On-time promotion • Algebra 1 and Geometry participation • Algebra 1 and Geometry passing • Other high school coursework participation • Other high school coursework passing • Course participation and passing tied to college success based on research • Benchmarks on college preparatory exams
On-Time Graduation (HS ONLY)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation in 4 years (accounting for student needs based on IEPs) • Graduation in 5 years • Graduation in 6 years • Reengaging opportunity youth
Attendance		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall attendance rate • Students missing more than 10% of instruction days

CFA has also identified topics not yet addressed in the preliminary working proposal below, but that likely warrant discussion and consideration as accountability is discussed statewide:

- Should certain patterns of 9th grade course taking and promoting be included as College and Career Readiness predictors of success?
- Is it valuable to include student/family survey data as a measure of success? Can this be included given current state capacity and the current principles of agreement?