

High School Assessment Recommendation January 12, 2021

The Accountability Oversight Committee (AOC) supports the State Board of Education in its process of continually engaging in efforts to improve student achievement and ensure students are college and career ready. We recognize the relationship between achievement and assessment and the impact that changes in assessment have on Idaho's educational system. After a thorough review of high school assessment options as referenced in Appendix C, the AOC makes the following recommendations to improve our system.

Recommendation: Explore a Multi-Assessment Option for High School

Would require changes in federal accountability requirements and additional research

We recommend the State Board of Education explore the possibility of a shift to a multi-assessment option for high school students that allows individual students to choose and take the assessment that best aligns with their high school course of study and future goals. This exploration should be done through communication with the U.S. Department of Education, either through existing processes available under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) or through new means.

Reasoning / Evidence:

- While we are confident the ISAT by Smarter Balanced appropriately measures the Idaho Academic Content Standards, we recognize it may not be ideal for all students. High school students are diverse in their post-secondary interests and the pathways they pursue. Thus, we recommend the high school assessment for state and federal accountability measure each student's preparedness to pursue their preferred post-secondary pathway.

Additional Information:

- It is important to note that a multi-assessment system for high school may not be approved by the U.S. Department of Education, unless there are changes to federal law. Existing flexibility in the ESSA allows for locally selected, nationally recognized assessments, but requires each local education agency (LEA) to administer the same assessment to all students within the district. We are not aware of any state being approved to allow students within a given LEA to choose their assessment. Additionally, if the State Board were to pursue this option, they would need to establish a process for approving the assessments that LEAs may administer. ESSA also includes a process that allows states to apply for Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA); but again, there are specific parameters and requirements, and no states are currently using IADA for individually-chosen assessments.

Recommendation: Maintain the ISAT by Smarter Balanced as the High School Assessment for State and Federal Accountability

No additional action required

Considering the current standards review process, results of prior research of large scale assessments, and feedback from the Idaho Technical Advisory Committee, we recommend continuing to use the ISAT by Smarter Balanced until any substantial changes to the standards are clarified and implementation of adjusted standards has begun.

Reasoning / Evidence:

- The primary purpose of the summative assessment is to measure the effectiveness of our education system and to hold the system accountable for continuous improvement. We achieve this by measuring student achievement relative to our standards. Based on our comparative review of the ISAT by Smarter Balanced, ACT, and SAT; extensive feedback provided by the Idaho Technical Advisory Committee; and peer review results, it is clear the ISAT by Smarter Balanced is the most closely aligned to the current Idaho Academic Content Standards.
- Our comparative review of the ISAT by Smarter Balanced, ACT, and SAT revealed that ISAT by Smarter Balanced also has a more advanced system of addressing the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners, both in regards to accommodations available and administration of accommodations.
- Based on our comparative review, we believe the ISAT by Smarter Balanced is the best examination to administer during the interim period while the Multi-Assessment Option for High School is being explored and developed.

Recommendation: Administer the ISAT by Smarter Balanced in Grade 11, beginning in 2022-2023

Would require an amendment to IDAPA 08.02.03, through the negotiated rule-making process. Earliest consideration by the legislature 2022.

We recommend that beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, the ISAT by Smarter Balanced be administered to all students in grade 11, and that grade 11 results be reported for state and federal accountability. We recommend that administration of the ISAT by Smarter Balanced to grade 10 students be made optional.

Reasoning / Evidence:

- It is critical to ensure students have appropriate opportunities to learn content (as aligned to the high school standards) prior to taking the accountability assessment. Idaho has adjusted the ISAT by Smarter Balanced for grade 10 in an effort to reduce test questions that the state anticipates students may not be prepared to answer. However, since districts and schools are given responsibility for determining the order in which content is taught, shifting the test to grade 11 offers more time and opportunities for students to access content before it is assessed. On the other hand, testing in the senior year would be too late for the assessment to be used to inform later instruction or to use the data for direct admissions and/or college placement purposes (see immediately below for a specific recommendation concerning this.).

Recommendation: Explore Incorporation of the ISAT by Smarter Balanced 11th Grade Assessment into the Direct Admissions Program and/or Eliminate the College Entrance Exam Graduation Requirement

Would require change to Board policy after Administrative Rule change moving ISAT administration to the 11th grade.

Contingent upon agreement with Idaho's public institutions of higher education, we recommend the Board incorporate the ISAT by Smarter Balanced 11th Grade Assessment within the direct admissions framework and consider completion of the ISAT by Smarter Balanced as meeting the college entrance exam graduation requirement. If the institutions are not in favor of this approach, we recommend the Board eliminate the college entrance examination graduation requirement.

Reasoning / Evidence:

- There is precedent for using the ISAT by Smarter Balanced 11th Grade Assessment for college admissions and placement. A notable example is South Dakota's use of the Smarter Balanced

Assessment (administered in grade 11) within their proactive admissions program. South Dakota's program was based on, and is similar to, Idaho's direct admissions program. Additionally, public universities in California are in the process of considering use of the Smarter Balanced Assessment for admissions purposes, and several other states within the consortium utilize the results for college placement. Thus, Idaho would not be "going it alone" if it decides to employ ISAT 11 for these purposes.

- Although requiring all Idaho high school students to take a college entrance examination as part of their earning a high school diploma was a laudable effort to help more Idaho youth matriculate, it is now time to explore a more inclusive approach to helping youth prepare for their postsecondary pursuits. In reviewing the data, we do not believe that the statewide college entrance exam requirement has resulted in a substantial increase in Idaho's Go On rate. Additionally, we believe the direct admissions program is a more effective approach to reaching students who may have previously not considered higher education. And finally, we believe students should only be required to take a single statewide assessment in grade 11.

Recommendation: Support Efforts to Provide Financial Support for College and Career Examinations

Would require future appropriation to fund exams regardless of use as graduation requirement. Career Technical Assessments currently cover by Advanced Opportunities Funding.

We recommend the State Board of Education support the development of state budgets that maintain financial support to students to complete exams that benefit their chosen college or career path (including SAT, ACT, ASVAB, or career technical assessments). This, perhaps, could be accomplished through existing Fast Forward funding.

Reasoning / Evidence:

- Until a time when a multi-assessment option is possible for state and federal accountability, we believe it is critical to support students in pursuing their individually-chosen pathways. Rather than require a college entrance exam for all, we propose the state provide funding to support students in completing the exam that best suits their needs.
- We recognize that the legislature finalizes both state budgets and statute. However, we recommend that the State Board of Education encourage the executive and legislative bodies to support efforts to ensure students have the financial support to take the exam(s) needed to pursue their chosen postsecondary education or career pathway.

Recommendation: Consider these Recommendations as a Package

And finally, we recommend this series of recommendations be considered as a package. Our committee views these recommendations as interdependent. Together, they represent a coherent and streamlined approach to assessment at the high school level that aligns with current standards, honors the efforts of Idaho educators to teach standards-based content and skills, and recognizes and applauds Idaho's diverse student populations.

Supporting Documentation

Appendix A: History of Standards, Assessment, and Accountability

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