

State Achievement Assessment Waiver for Members of the Ohio Innovation Lab Network, Districts and Schools

Guidance and Instructions for Submitting Requests

Final – 11/4/2015

Ohio is excited about the opportunity to support and encourage districts and schools that are members of the Innovation Lab Network. Ohio law allows the superintendent of public instruction to approve up to 10 additional waivers of the state's statutorily prescribed assessment system. If approved, a waiver allows the district or school to develop and use an alternative assessment system for the district's students in place of the state assessments required under law.

The intention of these waivers is to provide flexibility to Innovation Lab Network districts and schools to use alternative, and yet still rigorous, assessments that may be more compatible with the educational programs of the applicants. The language of the law recognizes that, by allowing an alternative assessment approach, schools and districts also will need to be exempted from some of the specific requirements of Ohio statutes related to teacher and administrator evaluations and data reporting requirements for the Ohio School Report Cards. Those exempt will instead use the proposed alternative assessments to support teacher and administrator evaluations and the Ohio School Report Cards.

The law authorizing the assessment waivers does not provide authority to waive any other provisions of law or rule. However, applicants may seek other waivers available from the department as appropriate. Instructions for the request for waiver follow in the subsequent pages.

Design Considerations for Alternative Assessments

Ohio's state assessment system complies with federal laws and regulations. A federal waiver is required before any of the proposed alternative assessments can be used in place of state achievement assessments. The Ohio Department of Education will advocate to the U.S. Department of Education for a federal waiver to accommodate alternative assessments. Such a federal waiver can likely only be obtained for one alternative approach. To increase the likelihood of federal approval, applicants are encouraged to collaborate to identify and implement an alternative assessment system that has a high probability of gaining federal support.

Districts and schools are encouraged to be innovative and creative in their approaches to proposed alternative assessments. Nothing in the statute would preclude districts from proposing approaches that incorporate project-based learning, exhibitions of mastery, portfolio assessment, competency-based learning, etc. Assessments that are administered over long periods of time or that integrate multiple subject areas also are within what the law contemplates. These approaches, if proposed, will need to be designed to provide the necessary information and data to support teacher and administrator evaluations and state data reporting, and be demonstrably as rigorous as state assessments.

Key considerations for districts and schools relative to designing a high-quality assessment system are as follows:

- The assessments are based on high expectations for student learning and aligned to the state's academic content standards;
- There is quality evidence that the assessments are valid measures of student learning, knowledge and skills;
- The assessments are administered to all students, and information from the assessments can be disaggregated into state and federally specified subgroups;

- The assessments are comparable to and no less rigorous than the statutorily prescribed state assessments, and there is evidence to support the comparability and a plan for ongoing benchmarking of the alternative assessments to the state assessments;
- The assessments result in reportable data that is comparable to the data generated by the statutorily prescribed state assessments and consequently can be used to support the state’s accountability system for schools and districts;
- The data generated by the assessments can be reported to parents in a manner that informs parents about a student’s performance;
- The data generated by the assessments can be used by teachers to help improve instruction;
- Assessment results are available in a timely manner;
- There is clear evidence of the capacity of the district to implement with integrity the proposed alternative assessments; and
- There is a process in place that evaluates the validity and usefulness of the alternative assessments on an ongoing basis.

Applicants may wish to consult the document prepared by the Council of Chief State School Officers entitled [“Criteria for Procuring and Evaluating High-Quality Assessments.”](#) This document contains rubrics for evaluating assessments along several criteria, including meeting overall goals; alignment to standards; yielding valuable reports; and adhering to best practices for test administration. It also includes examples of other state-specific criteria.

Request Instructions and Requirements

Submit waiver requests **no later than 4:59 p.m. on Feb. 15, 2016**, to Nasrin Javid at the Ohio Department of Education by email to Nasrin.Javid@education.ohio.gov. Include the information or responses to the questions specified below. Requests may include additional information at the discretion of the applicant in the form of appendices. A list of appendices should be included as part of the application. Additional information should be useful to those evaluating the requests to better understand a district or school proposal. Please do not submit letters of support as part of the application package.

Submit requests as a single PDF file with one-inch margins, double-spaced, using 12 point font, not to exceed 15 pages. Tabular information may be single-spaced. Appendices and the required list of appendices do not count toward the 15-page limit. Email questions about the submission of waivers to Nasrin Javid at Nasrin.Javid@education.ohio.gov.

- 1. Name of applicant.**
- 2. Innovation Lab Network number.**
- 3. Education program overview:** Provide an overview of the proposed or current education programs or strategies offered at the school or schools to which the waiver will apply. What is the district’s or school’s vision for public education, teaching and learning? Describe the instructional design used by the district or school; how does it support the vision? What is innovative about the district’s or school’s education program? Why has this education program been implemented—what is the district or school trying to achieve?
- 4. Statement of waiver need:** Provide a statement and explanation of why the district or school is seeking a waiver. What challenges or hurdles does the current assessment system present to the district’s or school’s vision that receiving a waiver would help alleviate?
- 5. Waiver of assessments:** From which state achievement assessment requirements is the applicant seeking a waiver:
 - a. 3rd grade reading
 - b. 3rd grade mathematics
 - c. 4th grade reading
 - d. 4th grade mathematics

- e. 4th grade social studies
- f. 5th grade reading
- g. 5th grade mathematics
- h. 5th grade science
- i. 6th grade reading
- j. 6th grade mathematics
- k. 6th grade social studies
- l. 7th grade reading
- m. 7th grade mathematics
- n. 8th grade reading
- o. 8th grade mathematics
- p. 8th grade science
- q. For students who entered ninth grade on or after July 1, 2014:
 - i. High school end-of-course exam in English language arts I
 - ii. High school end-of-course exam in English language arts II
 - iii. High school end-of-course exam in physical science
 - iv. High school end-of-course exam in Algebra I
 - v. High school end-of-course exam in geometry
 - vi. High school end-of-course exam in American history
 - vii. High school end-of-course exam in American government
 - viii. 11th grade nationally standardized assessment in English
 - ix. 11th grade nationally standardized assessment in mathematics
 - x. 11th grade nationally standardized assessment in science
 - xi. 11th grade nationally standardized assessment in social studies

Note: By implication, the assessments for which a waiver is being requested also are the assessments for which the school or district is requesting a waiver for reporting student achievement data and for which the school or district will report alternative assessment data. Additional required details about alternative assessment data can be found below.

- 6. **Alternative teacher/administrator evaluations:** For which teachers and/or administrators is the applicant requesting a waiver in order to use the proposed alternative assessments rather than the state assessments for the student growth component of the evaluation? Specify “all teachers,” or if not “all teachers,” specify the grade level and/or content area as appropriate. Further detailed information is required below.
- 7. **Waiver duration:** Applicants may apply for a waiver for up to five years. Indicate the years the applicant is applying for a waiver. *(Note: A waiver recipient may relinquish its waiver as long as it is done with sufficient time for students to take state assessments in a normal manner during an entire school year.)*
- 8. **Assessment specifications:** Based on the assessments selected above, for each assessment or cluster of assessments for which the applicant is proposing an alternative, provide the following information:
 - a. If the alternative assessment system has not yet been developed:
 - i. Provide a timeline to develop and implement the alternative assessment system; including specific dates by which the description of the proposed alternative assessment system will be available (see b. ii. below for the required elements of a description).
 - ii. Present an overview of the general approach to the alternative assessment system envisioned and any proposed or implemented planning details. This description should include the approach for providing accommodations and alternative methods of assessment for students with disabilities.
 - iii. Provide an overview of any linkages to state-accepted and nationally accepted metrics,

assessments and evaluations.

- iv. Describe the approach the applicant will use in designing the alternative assessment system. Provide any documentation from educational networks, established educational consultants, state institutions of higher education and employers or workforce development partners.
 - v. Describe the approach the applicant will use to determine whether performance on the proposed alternative assessments is comparable to performance on the statutorily prescribed assessments being waived. Include a description of the process the applicant will use to evaluate the validity and comparability of the alternative assessments on an ongoing basis.
 - vi. Provide the plan for ensuring that the alternative assessments can be used to support teacher and administrator evaluations. Include an approach to determining valid measures to compute student growth for school, district or educator accountability using the alternative assessments. Include references to any consultants or experts the applicant will use in determining how the assessments will be used to support teacher and administrator evaluations.
 - vii. Include the plan for ensuring that the alternative assessments can be used to provide data for the school's report card, including providing individual students with designations into five categories (advanced, accelerated, proficient, basic, limited) for each of the assessments waived, as well as value-added data.
- b. If the alternative assessment system has been developed:
- i. Include a timeline for the implementation of the alternative assessment system.
 - ii. Provide a detailed description of the alternative assessment system, including design features, administration plans, scoring approaches, etc. Include who will be involved in administering the assessments; how they will be trained; who will be involved in scoring the assessments; how they will be trained; and the scoring range that will be used. Also include how the assessments can produce five categories of student designations (advanced, accelerated, proficient, basic and limited), as well as value-added data.
 - iii. Describe accommodations and alternate methods of assessment for students with disabilities in a manner similar to the accommodations and alternate methods of assessment allowed under the state's current assessment system.
 - iv. Describe any linkages or alignments between the proposed alternative assessments to state-accepted and nationally accepted metrics, assessments and evaluations. Indicate how the applicant determined that performance on the alternative assessment is comparable to performance on the state's statutorily prescribed assessments.
 - v. Describe and provide any documentation about the validity and reliability of the alternative assessments and how the assessments can be equated to the state assessments for which they serve as an alternative. Documentation may come from educational networks, established educational consultants, state institutions of higher education and employers or workforce development partners.
 - vi. Describe how alternative assessments will be used to support teacher and administrator evaluations. Include the approach to be used to determine valid measures to compute student growth for school, district or educator accountability using the alternative assessments.
 - vii. Describe how the alternative assessments will generate data that can be provided to the department for the school's and district's Ohio School Report Cards, including providing individual students with designations into five categories (advanced, accelerated, proficient, basic, limited) for each of the alternative assessments as well as value-added data.
 - viii. Describe the process that will be used to evaluate the validity and comparability of the alternative assessments on an ongoing basis.

9. Capacity for implementation: Provide a description of the capacity of the applicant to implement alternative assessments and teacher/administrator evaluations and data reporting based on those alternative assessments:

- a. What are the qualifications and experience of the applicant's assessment staff and/or any

consultants/contractors retained by the applicant to design, administer and score the proposed alternative assessments? Does the applicant's staff and/or consultants/contractor have specific prior experience with the type of alternative assessments being proposed (e.g., with performance-based assessments, etc.).

- b. What is the applicant's current experience with the implementation of evaluations for teachers and administrators? Describe the leadership, process and professional development provided to ensure the implementation of high-quality evaluations? How will the applicant manage the implementation of a modified evaluation approach using the alternative assessments?
- c. What is the applicant's current experience with the reporting of student achievement data to the Ohio Department of Education? How will the applicant manage the implementation this reporting with data produced by the alternative assessments?

10. Stakeholder engagement: How have stakeholders been engaged, or how will they be engaged, in designing and implementing the alternative assessments? How has the district/school reached out to parents, students, teachers and others to explain the alternative assessment strategy?

11. Acknowledgements and signatures

By signing and submitting the waiver, the applicant acknowledges the following:

- a. The applicant will provide regular and periodic updates on the alternative assessment development and implementation and any related data or research.
- b. The continuation of the waiver is contingent on an ongoing review and evaluation by the state superintendent of the program and its meeting appropriate progress and validity measures. Districts and schools will be asked to provide a written report on the assessment process, use of the assessments for evaluations and use of the assessments for state accountability reporting. The districts and schools will be asked to provide ongoing evaluative information about the validity and reliability of the tests.
- c. Obtaining a waiver may negatively impact the receipt of federal funds by the applicant in the case where the federal government does not approve of the proposed alternative assessment approach. Also, if the Ohio Department of Education is unable to secure federal approval for the proposed alternative assessment, the applicant agrees to modify the assessment approach in a manner that can meet federal approval.
- d. The district and school agree to participate in any formal evaluation of the project, including but not limited to participating in interviews, surveys, focus groups, data analyses, etc.
- e. If an applicant is granted a waiver based on a plan for developing an alternative assessment system, the assessment system developed must be specifically approved by the state superintendent of public instruction prior to use.

Signatures to be included:

1. District superintendent or chief executive officer;
2. President of the district board of education;
3. Presiding officer of the labor organization representing the district's or school's teachers (if any);
4. If the district's or school's teachers are not represented by a labor organization, the signatures of the principals and a majority of the administrators and teachers of the district or school.

State Achievement Assessment Waiver Request Checklist

Content

Name and eligibility of applicant (Items 1-3 above)

Statement of need and educational program overview (Items 4-5)

Requests for waiver and duration (Items 6-8)

Assessment design specifics (Item 9)

Capacity for implementation (Item 10)

Stakeholder engagement (Item 11)

Acknowledgements and signatures (Item 12)

Format

PDF format

Not to exceed 15 pages – one-inch margins, 12 point font, double spaced

Appendices list