

Principles for Good Assessments

The Administration's Testing Action Plan provides a set of key principles and steps to help States and districts reduce overtesting by eliminating unnecessary and low-quality assessments while protecting the vital role that good assessments play in measuring student progress each year so parents and teachers have the best information – thus improving outcomes for all learners and ensuring equity. As described in more detail in the Plan, every assessment should be:

- **Worth taking:** Assessments should be aligned with the content and skills a student is learning, require the same kind of complex work students do in an effective classroom and the real world, and provide timely, actionable feedback. Assessments that are low quality or redundant should be eliminated.
- **High quality:** Assessments should measure student knowledge and skills against the full range of State-developed college- and career-ready standards in a way that elicits complex student demonstrations of knowledge, and provide an accurate measure of student achievement and growth.
- **Time-limited:** States and districts must determine how to best balance instructional time and the need for high-quality assessments by considering whether each assessment serves a unique, essential role in ensuring all students are learning.
- **Fair – and supportive of fairness – in equity in educational opportunity:** Assessments should provide fair measures of what all students, including students with disabilities and English learners, are learning. As one component of a robust assessment system, States should administer key assessments statewide to provide a clear picture of which schools and students may need targeted interventions and supports.
- **Fully transparent to students and parents:** States and districts should ensure that students and parents have information on required assessments, including (1) the purpose; (2) the source of the requirement; (3) when the information about student performance is provided to parents and teachers; (4) how teachers, principals, and district officials will use student performance information; and (5) how parents can use that information to help their child.
- **Just one of multiple measures:** No single assessment should ever be the sole factor in making an educational decision about a student, an educator, or a school.
- **Tied to improved learning:** In a well-designed testing strategy, assessment outcomes should be used not only to identify what students know, but also to inform and guide additional teaching, supports, and interventions.

*from John B. King, Jr., Acting Secretary of Education, letter dated February 2, 2016