

Peer Review of State Assessment Systems Outcomes Report

To comply with Section 1111(e) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states are required to submit evidence associated with their assessment systems to the United States Department of Education (ED) for peer review. [Thirty-eight states submitted evidence](#) for their assessment systems to the peer review process in 2016. As of May 2017, ED has issued [thirty-seven decision letters](#) in response.

The peer review process requires cohorts of trained experts to evaluate state-submitted evidence as it relates to a number of established criteria, organized by and divided into Critical Elements (CEs). Each decision letter outlines the CEs for which states must submit additional evidence to meet the statutory and regulatory requirements for standards and assessment based on peer review feedback on state-submitted documentation.

This report will look at the CEs for which many states have been required to submit additional evidence across high school assessments for reading/language arts (R/LA) and mathematics, grades 3–8 assessments for R/LA and mathematics, and alternate assessments. Lessons learned from high school and grades 3–8 science assessment feedback are also included.

Peer Review of State Assessment Systems

The assessment peer review process is in place to ensure that states implement rigorous academic standards and high-quality assessments. The process is evidence-based, focusing on documentation of the process used to develop and administer the assessments, and data to confirm the quality of the assessment system. The review is conducted by cohorts consisting of external assessment experts. Since ED paused peer review in 2012, almost every state has

developed and/or adopted new academic content standards and associated assessments. As a result, all states must submit documentation for peer review of R/LA, mathematics, and science general and alternate assessments.¹

There are four possible outcomes for each CE of an assessment system:

- ◆ **Meets requirements** – The component meets all of the requirements of the statute and regulations. The State is not required to submit any additional documentation for peer review unless significant changes are made to the State’s standards or assessment.
- ◆ **Substantially meets requirements** – The component meets most of the requirements of the statute and regulations. The State is required to submit some additional information, and the Department expects that this information should be able to be provided within one year. The State must submit a timeline for submission of the additional documentation, and the Department may take additional action if adequate progress is not made.
- ◆ **Partially meets requirements** – The component does not meet many of the requirements of the statute and regulations, and/or the State will need to submit substantial information to show that it meets the requirements. The Department expects that this information may not be able to be provided within one year, and a condition will be placed on the State’s Title I grant award. A condition may also potentially be placed upon the State’s grant award under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) if the matter pertains to requirements in the IDEA. The State will participate in regularly scheduled progress calls with ED, and, depending upon the component in question, the State may be placed on high-risk status and/or the State may be asked to enter into a compliance agreement.
- ◆ **Does not meet requirements** – The component does not meet most of the requirements of the statute and regulations and will require substantial work by the State to revise. It is unlikely that the State will be able to make the necessary changes within one year, and may be required to halt administration of the assessment component in question. The State will participate in regularly scheduled progress calls with ED, and a condition will be placed on the State’s Title I grant award. A condition may also potentially be placed upon the State’s grant award under Part B of IDEA if the matter pertains to requirements in the IDEA. Depending upon the component in question, the State may be placed on high-risk status and/or the State may be asked to enter into a compliance agreement.²

Summary of Peer Review Outcomes

Each decision letter issued to a state provides detailed information for which assessments a state must provide additional evidence to meet the peer review requirements for a specific CE.

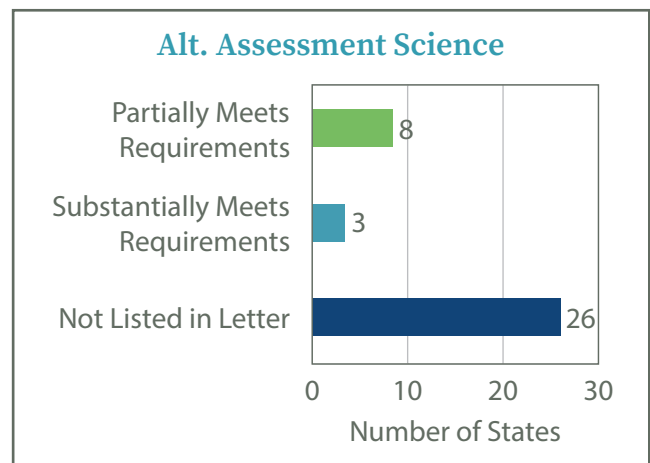
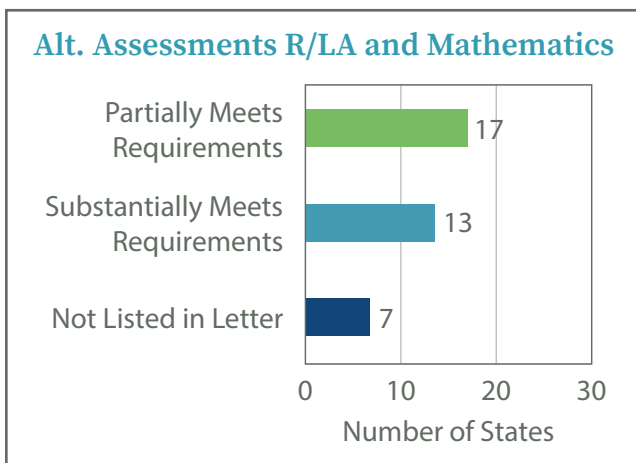
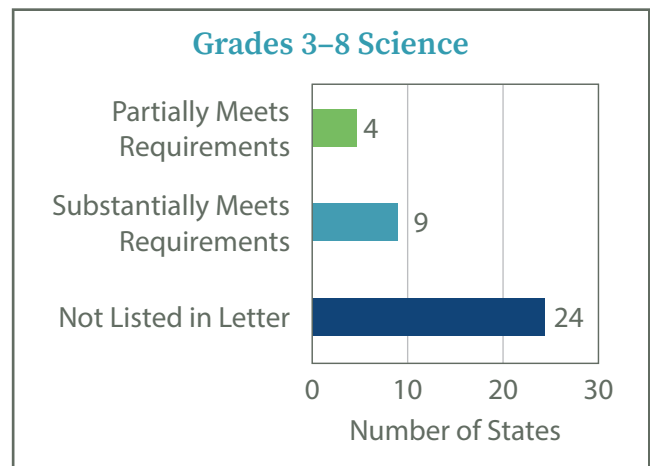
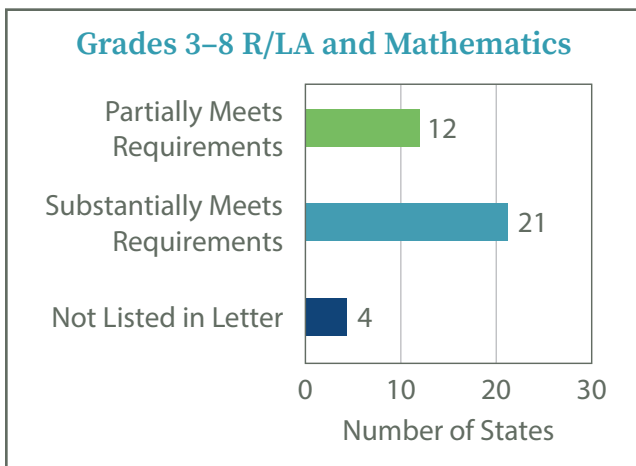
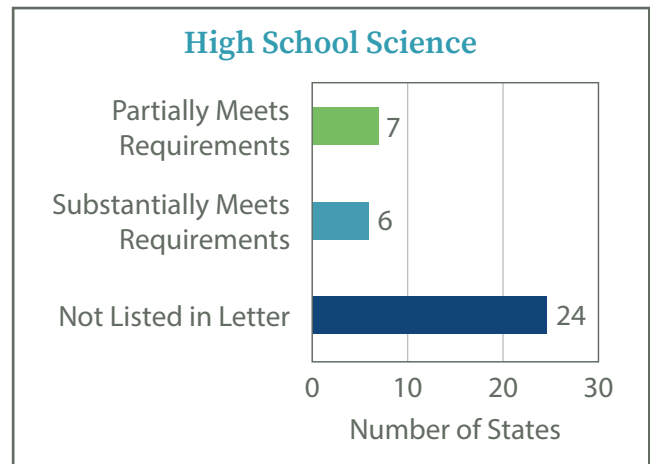
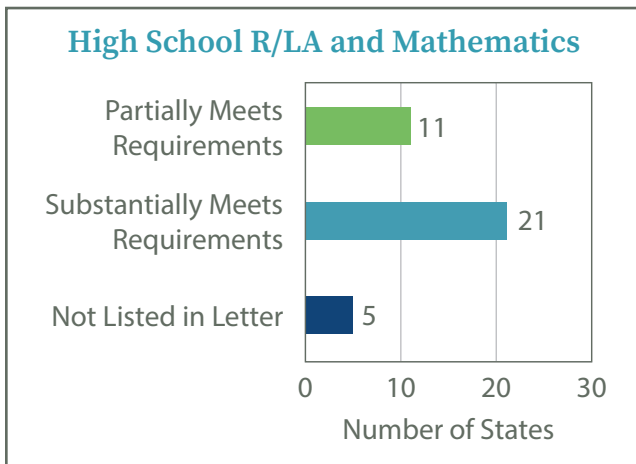
The thirty-seven decision letters listed components that either substantially met requirements or partially met requirements. None of the submitted components were found to not meet requirements, per the decision letters issued. Not all assessment components are listed in all letters. In some cases, ED references a state’s entire assessment system in its request for additional evidence to meet the requirements of a CE. For the purposes of this report, this request for evidence has been applied to all assessments the state is required to administer, regardless of whether the assessment is specifically noted as having substantially or partially met requirements in the state’s decision letter.

¹ U.S. Department of Education Peer Review of State Assessment Systems: Non-Regulatory Guidance for States for Meeting Requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (1st ed.). (2015, September 25). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/assessguid15.pdf>.

² Whalen, A. (2016, October 6). *Dear colleague state assessment system*. [Letter from the U.S. Department of Education to the Council of Chief State School Officers, State Assessment Directors, State Title I Directors, and State Special Education Directors]. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/saa/dclletterassepeerreview1072016ltr.pdf>.

Not all assessments are included in decision letter feedback, as the requirements may have been met, or, the assessment may not have been submitted for review.

A visualization of each assessment component and its compliance level of 37 out of the 38 submissions has been created below:



After an analysis across all the decision letters issued, it was determined that a number of states were required to submit additional evidence in reference to like CEs. It is worth noting, however, that the evidence requested for the same CE across the decision letters sometimes differed. This report will analyze a sample of the CEs most widely cited as needing additional evidence submitted for general assessments in high school R/LA and mathematics, grades 3–8 R/LA and mathematics, alternate assessments across content areas and grade levels, and high school and grades 3–8 science assessments.

High School R/LA and Mathematics

CE 2.1 – Test Design and Development

- ◆ Appears in 32 Decision Letters for High School R/LA and Mathematics Assessments

CE 2.1 requires states to provide evidence that “the State’s test design and test development process is well-suited for the content, is technically sound, aligns the assessments to the full range of the State’s academic content standards, and includes:

- ◆ Statements(s) of the purposes of the assessments and the intended interpretations and uses of results;
- ◆ Test blueprints that describe the structure of each assessment in sufficient detail to support the development of assessments that are technically sound, measure the full range of the State’s grade-level academic content standards, and support the intended interpretations and uses of the results;
- ◆ Processes to ensure that each assessment is tailored to the knowledge and skills included in the State’s academic content standards, reflects appropriate inclusion of challenging content, and requires complex demonstrations or applications of knowledge and skills (i.e., higher-order thinking skills);
- ◆ If the State administers computer-adaptive assessments the item pool and item selection procedures adequately support the test design.”³

The additional evidence requested to be submitted for CE 2.1 for high school R/LA and mathematics is varied, but the feedback provided to consortium states is generally consistent across decision letters.

Peer Review Feedback

The feedback given for all Smarter Balanced consortium states that submitted evidence for initial review requires them to submit evidence for CE 2.1 for high school R/LA and mathematics to show that the “test design aligns the assessments to the full depth and breadth” of the content standards, “that item selection procedures for computer adaptive test online assessment adequately deliver tests that meet test design requirements for the intended depth of knowledge (DOK) of the assessments,” “that...assessments produce grade level student achievement scores that are based only on grade-level content items,” and “that the item pools for all versions of the assessments...are sufficient to support the test design requirements” ([Smarter Balanced Decision Letters](#)). [California](#) was also asked for “clarification as to whether (and, if so, how) CDE has incorporated its supplemental content standards into the test design and development process for its assessments.”

All PARCC states that submitted evidence for initial review were asked to provide additional “evidence that the assessment design measures the full breadth and depth of the state’s academic content standards” ([PARCC Decision Letters](#)).

³ U.S. Department of Education Peer Review of State Assessment Systems: Non-Regulatory Guidance for States for Meeting Requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (1st ed.). (2015, September 25). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/assessguid15.pdf>.

States administering the ACT as their assessment for accountability purposes were asked to submit “evidence in reference to the State’s plan to assess the full breadth of the State’s R/LA standards” for CE 2.1 ([WI, WY Decision Letters](#)).

For a variety of reasons, states that administer state-specific assessments were required to submit additional evidence for CE 2.1, including “evidence that describes how cognitive complexity is used for test construction” ([NC Decision Letter](#)). In the cases of [Missouri](#) and [Florida's](#) R/LA assessment, the additional evidence requested was the same as that requested of PARCC consortium states.

Some letters include examples of evidence that states may wish to consider submitting to meet the panel’s requirements for this CE. For instance, [Kentucky](#) was given the example of submitting “an independent alignment study” to provide evidence that “test blueprints align to the full range of academic content standards.” States are not expected to submit additional evidence surrounding speaking and listening if they have received a waiver.

Submission of Additional Evidence Requested

Based on ED’s Map of the Critical Elements (see [Appendix](#)), CE 2.1 is “likely addressed by coordinated evidence,” so states in a consortium may wish to coordinate efforts to submit the additional evidence requested. However, states must also submit evidence specific to their state’s standards/assessments.

Looking at the decision letters received by other states may provide some insight as to the types of additional evidence that states may choose to submit. The Guidance also provides examples of evidence states may submit for CE 2.1 to address issues, but “a State may determine that other types of evidence better address a critical element.”

A sampling of examples of evidence from the Guidance that may address CE 2.1 include:

- ◆ Relevant sections of State or regulations, language from contract(s) for the State’s assessments, test coordinator or test administrator manuals, or other relevant documentation that states the purposes of the assessment and the intended interpretations and uses of results;
- ◆ Test blueprints that:
 - Describe the structure of each assessment in sufficient detail to support the development of a technically sound assessment, for example, in terms of the number of items, item types, the proportion of item types, response formats, the range of item difficulties, the types of scoring procedures, and applicable time limits;
 - Align to the State’s grade-level academic content standards in terms of content (i.e., knowledge and cognitive process), the full range of the State’s grade-level academic content standards, the balance of content, and cognitive complexity;
- ◆ Documentation that the test design is tailored to the specific knowledge and skills in the State’s academic content standards (e.g., includes extended response items that require demonstration of writing skills if the State’s reading/language arts academic content standards include writing).

See the Guidance document for a full list of potential examples of evidence that may address CE 2.1.

Refer to the Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation (CSAI) [Peer Review Assistance](#) document for more information on how CSAI can provide support to your state throughout the peer review process.

CE 5.4 – Monitoring Test Administration for Special Populations

- ◆ Appears in 25 Decision Letters for High School R/LA and Mathematics Assessments

CE 5.4 requires states to submit evidence that “the state monitors test administration in its districts and schools to

ensure that appropriate assessments, with or without appropriate accommodations, are selected for students with disabilities under IDEA, students covered by Section 504, and English learners so that they are appropriately included in assessments and receive accommodations that are:

- ◆ Consistent with the State's policies for accommodation;
- ◆ Appropriate for addressing a student's disability or language needs for each assessment administered;
- ◆ Consistent with accommodations provided to students during instruction and/or practice;
- ◆ Consistent with the assessment accommodations identified by a student's IEP team or 504 team for students with disabilities, or another process for an English learner;
- ◆ Administered with fidelity to test administration procedures.⁴

This CE will be checked for completeness by ED, and for consortium states, is likely to be addressed by a mix of state and coordinated evidence per the Map of the Critical Elements.

Peer Review Feedback

All states that are required to submit additional evidence for this CE are required to do so, not just in relation to high school R/LA and mathematics, but also for additional portion(s) or the entirety of their state assessment systems. This is the case across all types of assessments that a state may give (Smarter Balanced, PARCC, ACT, or state-specific assessments).

States should be aware that the type of evidence submitted is important to the review process. The documentation submitted to ED should include procedural evidence (e.g., documentation of procedures and protocols, studies that indicate how a particular feature or part of an assessment will function), as well as confirmatory evidence (e.g., proof that procedures and protocols were followed, analyses that indicate that a particular feature or part of an assessment functioned as intended). In the case of CE 5.4, states may wish to submit procedural documentation regarding test administration (e.g., protocols, etc.), in addition to evidence that the prescribed monitoring protocols were followed during the assessment event.⁵

Submission of Additional Evidence Requested

The Guidance document provides examples of evidence states may choose to submit to support their assertion that they meet CE 5.4.

"Evidence to support this critical element for the State's assessment system includes documents such as:

- ◆ Description of procedures the State uses to monitor that accommodations selected for students with disabilities, students covered by Section 504, and English learners are appropriate;
- ◆ Description of procedures the State uses to monitor that students with disabilities are placed by IEP Teams in the appropriate assessment;
- ◆ The State's written procedures for monitoring the use of accommodations during test administration, such as guidance provided to districts; instructions and protocols for State, district and school staff; and schedules for monitoring;
- ◆ Summary of results of monitoring for the most recent year of test administration in the State." (p. 48)

⁴ U.S. Department of Education *Peer Review of State Assessment Systems: Non-Regulatory Guidance for States for Meeting Requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended* (1st ed.). (2015, September 25). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/assessguid15.pdf>.

⁵ U.S. Department of Education *State Assessment Peer Review Update*. (2017, February 23). [PowerPoint slides]. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

The type(s) of documentation a state will choose to submit to fulfill the request for additional evidence should be guided by the specific feedback and comments provided to the state from peer reviewers and ED. Unlike CE 2.1 detailed above, the requests for additional evidence to be submitted for CE 5.4 cannot be compartmentalized by assessment system (i.e., ACT, PARCC, Smarter Balanced, or state-specific). States must look to their specific feedback to provide the documentation necessary to address the requests of the peer reviewers and ED. Examples of the types of documentation requested include:

- ◆ Evidence that test monitoring procedures and training address test accommodations and fidelity to test administration procedures ([AL Decision Letter](#));
- ◆ Evidence that [the state] monitors test administrations for special populations for consistency among individualized education programs, classroom instruction, and accommodations ([DC Decision Letter](#), [RI Decision Letter](#));
- ◆ Evidence that the state monitors test administration in districts and schools to ensure that appropriate assessments and accommodations are selected for students with disabilities under IDEA, students covered by Section 504, and English learners ([IA Decision Letter](#), [WV Decision Letter](#)).

Grades 3–8 R/LA and Mathematics

CE 3.1 – Overall Validity, Including Validity Based on Content

- ◆ Appears in 33 Decision Letters for Grades 3–8 R/LA and Mathematics Assessments

CE 3.1 asks states to submit evidence that shows “adequate overall validity evidence for its assessments, and the State’s validity evidence includes evidence that the State’s assessments measure the knowledge and skills specified in the State’s academic content standards, including:

- ◆ Documentation of adequate alignment between the State’s assessments and the academic content standards the assessments are designed to measure in terms of content (i.e., knowledge and process), the full range of the State’s academic content standards, balance of content, and cognitive complexity;
- ◆ If the State administers alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards, the assessments show adequate linkage to the State’s academic content standards in terms of content match (i.e., no unrelated content) and the breadth of content and cognitive complexity determined in test design to be appropriate for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.”

This analysis is only considering validity evidence surrounding the assessments for grades 3–8 in reading/language arts and mathematics, and is not looking at validity evidence for a state’s alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards.

On ED’s Map of the Critical Elements, CE 3.1 is shown as likely to be addressed by coordinated evidence.

Peer Review Feedback

PARCC states that did not meet the documentation requirements for this CE have all been requested to submit “additional alignment evidence that addresses all remaining grades (grades 3, 4, 6, and 7) in both R/LA and mathematics content areas.” With the exception of Maryland, the entire group must also submit “alignment evidence that supports a test design that assesses the full range of the State’s academic content standards for all tested grades” ([PARCC Decision Letters](#)).

States in the Smarter Balanced consortium required to submit additional evidence for CE 3.1 were all asked to provide:

- ◆ Evidence as noted for all item pools in element 2.1;
- ◆ Evidence that Smarter Balanced assessments that include off-grade-level content conform to the on-grade-level blueprint for the assessment;
- ◆ Evidence of alignment of sample test forms for grades 3, 4, 6, and 7 in R/LA and mathematics;
- ◆ Evidence of improved alignment of the ([Smarter Balanced Decision Letters](#)).

North Dakota and Vermont, members of the Smarter Balanced consortium, were also asked to provide “evidence of a summary report that the CAT administered test forms matched test blueprints” ([ND, VT Decision Letter](#)).

Submission of Additional Evidence Requested

Both of these groups of consortium states were required to submit alignment evidence across grades 3, 4, 6, and 7 in R/LA and mathematics. Submission of alignment evidence at grades 5 and 8 is not sufficient for meeting ED’s requirements for CE 3.1, and states in these consortia will have to go back to their respective test developers and request that they compile the stated alignment evidence.

States administering non-consortia assessments were asked to submit a range of additional evidence and documentation for CE 3.1 ([AL, AZ, FL, IA, IN, KS, KY, MN, NC, NY, PA, TX, UT, VA, WY Decision Letters](#)). Many statements of additional evidence requested are tied to ED’s requests for additional evidence of CE 2.1, as well as evidence of alignment or improved alignment based upon previously submitted evidence.

CE 6.4 – Reporting

- ◆ Appears in 25 Decision Letters for Grades 3–8 R/LA and Mathematics Assessments

CE 6.4 asks states to submit evidence that “the State reports its assessment results, and the reporting facilitates timely, appropriate, credible, and defensible interpretations and uses of results for students tested by parents, educators, State officials, policymakers and other stakeholders, and the public, including:

- ◆ The State reports to the public its assessment results on student achievement at each proficiency level and the percentage of students not tested for all students and each student group after each test administration;
- ◆ The State reports assessment results, including itemized score analyses, to districts and schools so that parents, teachers, principals, and administrators can interpret the results and address the specific academic needs of students, and the State also provides interpretive guides to support appropriate uses of the assessment results;
- ◆ The State provides for the production and delivery of individual student interpretive, descriptive, and diagnostic reports after each administration of its assessments that:
 - Provide valid and reliable information regarding a student’s achievement;
 - Report the student’s achievement in terms of the State’s grade-level academic achievement standards (including performance-level descriptors);
 - Provide information to help parents, teachers, and principals interpret the test results and address the specific academic needs of students;
 - Are available in alternate formats (e.g., Braille or large print) upon request and, to the extent practicable, in a native language that parents can understand;

- ♦ The State follows a process and timeline for delivering individual student reports to parents, teachers, and principals as soon as practicable after each test administration.”

It has been indicated on the Map of the Critical Elements that CE 6.4 is likely addressed with a mix of coordinated (for consortium states) and state-specific evidence, and will also be checked for completeness by ED.

Peer Review Feedback

Though listed in this report under R/LA and mathematics for grades 3–8, the feedback requested for CE 6.4 has been requested across multiple areas of the affected states’ assessment systems, regardless of the type of assessment administered. However, the type(s) of evidence requested are varied across assessments.

For states that need to submit additional documentation for this CE and also administer the Smarter Balanced assessment, evidence that individual student score reports are available in alternate formats (upon request) must be provided ([CA, CT, ID, OR, SD, VT, WA Decision Letters](#)). With the exception of Idaho and Vermont, documentation regarding the process and timeline for delivery of individual score reports to parents, teachers, and principals must also be submitted.

PARCC consortium states required to submit additional evidence have been asked to provide documentation surrounding multiple components of CE 6.4. Some states were asked to provide the same evidence as the affected Smarter Balanced states, and others were also asked to provide other additional evidence in order to meet the requirements of this CE. The documentation requested includes evidence that state departments of education and PARCC “provide reports that enable itemized score analyses to local educational agencies and schools” ([CO, IL, MD, NJ, NM, RI Decision Letters](#)). The District of Columbia is required to provide “evidence that all information in [state] reports of PARCC assessments support the same interpretations as those in the PARCC-produced reports” ([DC Decision Letter](#)).

States that administer state-specific assessments were required to submit much of the same additional evidence as Smarter Balanced and PARCC consortium states. Additionally, states were required to provide “examples of state-level reports that include the percentage of students not tested as required for this element” ([AL Decision Letter](#)), “evidence of current individual student reports that shows student achievement in terms of State grade-level achievement standards” ([FL Decision Letter](#)), and “evidence that performance or achievement level descriptors are included with individual score reports” ([TX Decision Letter](#)).

Submission of Additional Evidence Requested

The Guidance document explains that the evidence and supporting documentation states choose to submit to ED for review of CE 6.4 must “demonstrate that the State’s reporting system facilitates timely, appropriate, credible, and defensible interpretation and use of its assessment results.” However, states must also protect the privacy of test takers when this information is submitted. Samples “should be redacted to protect personally identifiable information ... or populated with information about a fictitious student for illustrative purposes.” To support this CE, a state may provide the same types of evidence for grades 3–8 and high school general assessments, as well as for alternate assessments administered (if required based on feedback).

Alternate Assessments (R/LA, Mathematics, Science)

Alternate Assessments (R/LA, Mathematics, Science)

Note: Some states were required to submit additional evidence for CEs across different combinations of assessment types within their assessment systems. CE 4.1 and CE 5.1 were chosen to be examined specifically for the Alternate Assessment portion of this brief because they had some of the highest occurrences of needing additional evidence submitted for a state’s alternate assessment suite. States that were given feedback with regard to their “entire assessment system” for a particular CE have been included.

CE 4.1 – Reliability

- ◆ Appears in 27 Decision Letters for Alternate Assessments

CE 4.1 requires that “the State has documented adequate reliability evidence for its assessments for the following measures of reliability for the State’s student population overall and each student group, and if the State’s assessments are implemented in multiple States, for the assessment overall and each student group, including:

- ◆ Test reliability of the State’s assessments estimated for its student population;
- ◆ Overall and conditional standard error of measurement of the State’s assessments;
- ◆ Consistency and accuracy of estimates in categorical classification decisions for the cut scores and achievement levels based on the assessment results;
- ◆ For computer-adaptive tests, evidence that the assessments produce test forms with adequately precise estimates of a student’s achievement.”

Coordinated evidence likely addresses CE 4.1 for consortium states.

Though use of the word “adequate” in the description of CE 4.1 does not provide an explicit level of detail of the volume of evidence that will meet ED’s requirements, the Guidance document does provide States with examples of evidence they may wish to provide.

Peer Review Feedback

The decision letters sent to states that contained requests for additional documentation and evidence for CE 4.1 for alternate assessments included feedback for R/LA, mathematics, and science content areas. Not all states are required to submit additional evidence for all subject areas/grade levels for their alternate assessments. Decision letters indicate for which components of a state’s alternate assessment suite additional evidence is required.

States that submitted evidence to peer review, administer the National Center and State Collaborative Multi-State Alternate Assessment (NCSC/MSAA), and are requested to submit additional evidence for CE 4.1 were provided with the same feedback, directing them back to the explanatory note(s) already provided for writing items in CE 3.1 – Overall Validity, including Validity Based on Content. CE 3.1 has been analyzed previously in this report in the context of a state’s grades 3–8 general assessments, but many of the same types of evidence submitted to address CE 3.1 for the NCSC/MSAA can also be used to provide additional evidence to support a state’s claim that it meets requirements for CE 4.1 ([AR, AZ, CT, DC, ID, NM, RI, SD Decision Letters](#)).

States that administer the Dynamic Learning Maps Integrated (DLM-Int) assessment model for their alternate R/LA and mathematics assessments are also directed back to feedback provided for CE 3.1, and are asked specifically for “evidence of model fit analysis.” These states are also required to submit “evidence regarding consistency and accuracy of classifications, which will be satisfied by the response to element 3.3.” CE 3.3 – Validity Based on Internal Structure is

likely addressed by coordinated evidence, and requires that a state “has documented adequate validity evidence that the scoring and reporting structures of its assessments are consistent with the sub-domain structures of the State’s academic content standards on which the intended interpretations and uses of results are based” ([IA, KS, MO, ND, UT, VT Decision Letters](#)).

States administering the Dynamic Learning Maps Year End (DLM-YE) model for R/LA and mathematics are required to submit “evidence of monitoring and refinement of the diagnostic classification models from subsequent test administrations” ([CO, IL, NJ, WI, WV Decision Letters](#)).

State-specific alternate assessments that must submit additional evidence to meet the requirements of CE 4.1 must submit a variety of documentation across content areas and grade levels (available in ED’s comments to the state in the decision letter issued). The documentation requested includes “reliability estimates for all student sub-groups, where feasible to do so given minimum n-size” ([HI Decision Letter](#)), “evidence of...reliability estimates by gender and dichotomous demographic categories to demonstrate lack of bias” ([DE Decision Letter](#)), and “evidence of...inter-rater reliability” ([WY Decision Letter](#)), among others.

CE 5.1 – Procedures for Including Students with Disabilities

- ◆ Appears in 21 Decision Letters for Alternate Assessments

CE 5.1 – Procedures for Including Students with Disabilities requires states to submit evidence that it “has in place procedures to ensure the inclusion of all public elementary and secondary school students with disabilities in the State’s assessment system, including, at a minimum, guidance for individual educational program (IEP) teams to inform decisions about student assessments that:

- ◆ Provides clear explanations of the differences between assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards and assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards, including any effects of State and local policies on a student’s education resulting from taking an alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards;
- ◆ States that decisions about how to assess students with disabilities must be made by a student’s IEP Team based on each student’s individual needs;
- ◆ Provides guidelines for determining whether to assess a student on the general assessment without accommodation(s), the general assessment with accommodation(s), or an alternate assessment;
- ◆ Provides information on accessibility tools and features available to students in general and assessment accommodations available for students with disabilities;
- ◆ Provides guidance regarding selection of appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities;
- ◆ Includes instructions that students eligible to be assessed based on alternate academic achievement standards may be from any of the disability categories listed in the IDEA;
- ◆ Ensures that parents of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are informed that their student’s achievement will be based on alternate academic achievement standards and of any possible consequences of taking the alternate assessments resulting from district or State policy (e.g., ineligibility for a regular high school diploma if the student does not demonstrate proficiency in the content area on the State’s general assessments);
- ◆ The State has procedures in place to ensure that its implementation of alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities promotes student access to the general curriculum.”

CE 5.1 contains many components, and sufficient evidence must be submitted for each to meet the peer review requirements and comply with ESSA.

Peer Review Feedback

The additional evidence these states are required to submit includes:

- ◆ Evidence including guidelines for IEP teams to use in determining whether to assess a student on the general assessment without accommodation(s), the general assessment with accommodation(s), or an alternate assessment ([IA, KY Decision Letters](#));
- ◆ Evidence that [the state] provides clear explanations of the differences between assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards and assessments based on alternate achievement standards ([AR, AZ, KS, KY, MO, WI Decision Letters](#));
- ◆ Evidence that sufficient information is provided to parents of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, and that they are informed that their student's achievement will be based on alternate academic achievement standards and/or are informed of any possible consequences/implications of taking the AA-AAAS (e.g., ineligibility for a regular high school diploma if the student does not demonstrate proficiency in the content area on the State's general assessments) ([AR, CO, CT, IL, KS, MO, NJ, OR, SD, TX, VT, WY Decision Letters](#)).

The additional evidence requested is not delineated by assessment type. States that administer the same alternate assessments (e.g., DLM-YE, DLM-INT, or NCSC/MSAA) may be required to submit different pieces of additional evidence, most likely because much of the documentation needed to meet the requirements of CE 5.1 consists of communication and protocols at the state and district levels. Additionally, the Map of the Critical Elements indicates that CE 5.1 is "likely addressed by state-specific evidence."

Submission of Additional Evidence Requested

Examples of evidence to support CE 5.1 are provided in the Guidance document. However, based on the feedback they receive from ED, states may have to submit additional documentation not listed in the examples. This may include evidence of stakeholder communication that outlines the key differences between assessments based on grade-level academic standards and those based on alternate achievement standards, documentation of evidence provided to parents of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, and evidence of the procedures and guidelines in place for use by individualized education plan (IEP) teams to determine which assessment/accommodations are needed by each student.

Science Assessments

Of the thirty-seven decision letters issued, thirteen explicitly reference whether high school science assessments partially or substantially meet requirements ([CO, DE, FL, HI, IA, ID, KY, MN, NC, TX, UT, VA, WY Decision Letters](#)), and twelve explicitly reference whether grades 3–8 science assessments partially or substantially meet requirements ([AL, CO, DE, FL, HI, IA, MN, MO, NC, OH, TX, UT, VA Decision Letters](#)).

Other decision letters issued to states did not explicitly mention science assessments, but some of the feedback provided to states for specific CEs reference the entire assessment system.

Of the letters that do reference science assessments directly as either partially or substantially meeting requirements, the CEs that were cited most often as in need of additional documentation include CEs 2.1, 3.1, 4.2, 5.1, and 5.4 for high school science assessments, and CEs 2.1, 3.1, 5.4, and 6.4 for science assessments at grades 3–8. A full description of each CE can be found below:

High School Science Assessment CEs Most Cited for Assessments That Partially/Substantially Meet Requirements:

- ◆ CE 2.1 – Test Design and Development

The State’s test design and test development process is well-suited for the content, is technically sound, aligns the assessments to the full range of the State’s academic content standards, and includes:

- Statement(s) of the purposes of the assessments and the intended interpretations and uses of results;
- Test blueprints that describe the structure of each assessment in sufficient detail to support the development of assessments that are technically sound, measure the full range of the State’s grade-level academic content standards, and support the intended interpretations and uses of the results;
- Processes to ensure that each assessment is tailored to the knowledge and skills included in the State’s academic content standards, reflects appropriate inclusion of challenging content, and requires complex demonstrations or applications of knowledge and skills (i.e., higher-order thinking skills);
- If the State administers computer-adaptive assessments, the item pool and item selection procedures adequately support the test design.

- ◆ CE 3.1 – Overall Validity, Including Validity Based on Content

The State has documented adequate overall validity evidence for its assessments, and the State’s validity evidence includes evidence that the State’s assessments measure the knowledge and skills specified in the State’s academic content standards, including:

- Documentation of adequate alignment between the State’s assessments and the academic content standards the assessments are designed to measure in terms of content (i.e., knowledge and process), the full range of the State’s academic content standards, the balance of content, and cognitive complexity;
- If the State administers alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards, the assessments show adequate linkage to the State’s academic content standards in terms of content match (i.e., no unrelated content) and the breadth of content and cognitive complexity determined in test design to be appropriate for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

- ◆ CE 4.2 – Fairness and Accessibility

The State has taken reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure that its assessments are accessible to all students and fair across student groups in the design, development, and analysis of its assessments.

- ◆ CE 5.1 – Procedures for Including Students with Disabilities

The State has in place procedures to ensure the inclusion of all public elementary and secondary school students with disabilities in the State’s assessment system, including, at a minimum, guidance for individual educational plan (IEP) teams to inform decisions about student assessments that:

- Provides clear explanations of the differences between assessments based on grade-level academic achievement standards and assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards, including any effects of State and local policies on a student’s education resulting from taking an alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards;

- › States that decisions about how to assess students with disabilities must be made by a student’s IEP Team based on each student’s individual needs;
 - › Provides guidelines for determining whether to assess a student on the general assessment without accommodation(s), the general assessment with accommodation(s), or an alternate assessment;
 - › Provides guidelines for determining whether to assess a student on the general assessment without accommodation(s), the general assessment with accommodation(s), or an alternate assessment;
 - › Provides information on accessibility tools and features available to students in general and assessment accommodations available for students with disabilities;
 - › Provides guidance regarding selection of appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities;
 - › Includes instructions that students eligible to be assessed based on alternate academic achievement standards may be from any of the disability categories listed in the IDEA;
 - › Ensures that parents of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are informed that their student’s achievement will be based on alternate academic achievement standards and informed of any possible consequences of taking the alternate assessments resulting from district or State policy (e.g., ineligibility for a regular high school diploma if the student does not demonstrate proficiency in the content area on the State’s general assessments);
 - › The State has procedures in place to ensure that its implementation of alternate academic achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities promotes student access to the general curriculum.
- ◆ CE 5.4 – Monitoring Test Administration for Special Populations
The State monitors test administration in its districts and schools to ensure that appropriate assessments, with or without appropriate accommodations, are selected for students with disabilities under IDEA, students covered by Section 504, and English learners so that they are appropriately included in assessments and receive accommodations that are:
 - › Consistent with the State’s policies for accommodations;
 - › Appropriate for addressing a student’s disability or language needs for each assessment administered;
 - › Consistent with accommodations provided to the students during instruction and/or practice;
 - › Consistent with the assessment accommodations identified by a student’s IEP team or 504 team for students with disabilities, or another process for an English learner;
 - › Administered with fidelity to test administration procedures.

Grades 3–8 Science Assessment CEs Most Cited for Assessments That Partially/Substantially Meet Requirements:

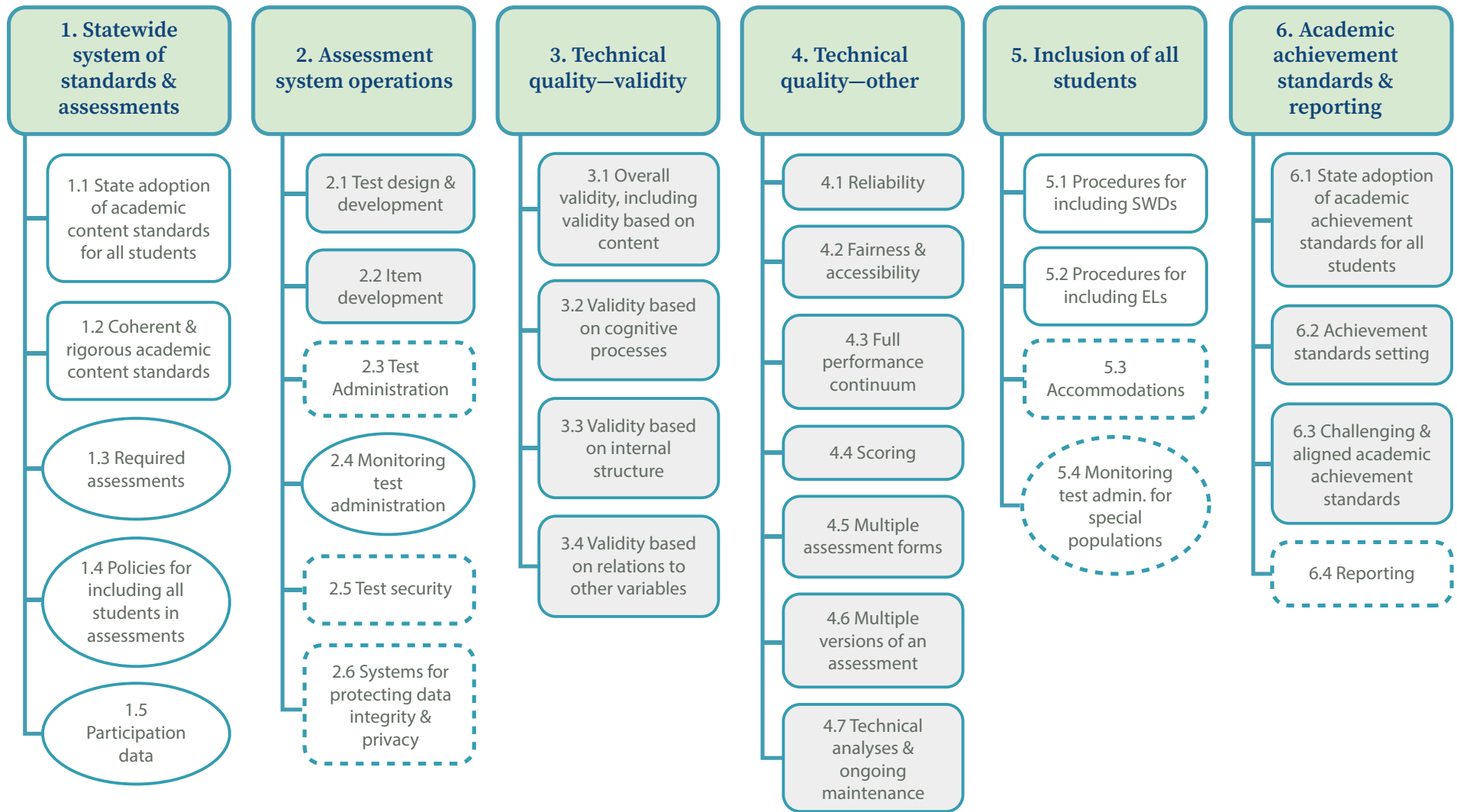
- ◆ CE 2.1 – Test Design and Development (see CE 2.1 above)
- ◆ CE 3.1 – Overall Validity, Including Validity Based on Content (see CE 3.1 above)
- ◆ CE 5.4 – Monitoring Test Administration for Special Populations (see CE 5.4 above)
- ◆ CE 6.4 – Reporting

The State reports its assessment results, and the reporting facilitates timely, appropriate, credible, and defensible interpretations and uses of results for students tested by parents, educators, State officials, policymakers and other stakeholders, and the public, including:

- › The State reports to the public its assessment results on student achievement at each proficiency level and the percentage of students not tested for all students and each student group after each test administration;

- The State reports assessment results, including itemized score analyses, to districts and schools so that parents, teachers, principals, and administrators can interpret the results and address the specific academic needs of students, and the State also provides interpretive guides to support appropriate uses of the assessment results;
- The State provides for the production and delivery of individual student interpretive, descriptive, and diagnostic reports after each administration of its assessments that:
 - Provide valid and reliable information regarding a student's achievement;
 - Report the student's achievement in terms of the State's grade-level academic achievement standards (including performance-level descriptors);
 - Provide information to help parents, teachers, and principals interpret the test results and address the specific academic needs of students;
 - Are available in alternate formats (e.g., Braille or large print) upon request and, to the extent practicable, in a native language that parents can understand;
- The State follows a process and timeline for delivering individual student reports to parents, teachers, and principals as soon as practicable after each test administration.

Appendix: Map of the Critical Elements for the State Assessment System Peer Review



KEY

- Critical elements in ovals will be checked for completeness by Department staff; if necessary, they may also be reviewed by assessment peer reviewers (e.g. Critical Element 1.3). All other critical elements will be reviewed by assessment peer reviewers.
- Critical elements in shaded boxes likely will be addressed by coordinated evidence for all States administering the same assessments (e.g. Critical Element 2.1).

- Critical elements in clear boxes with solid outlines likely will be addressed with State-specific evidence, even if a State administers the same assessments administered by other States (e.g. Critical Element 5.1).
- Critical elements in ovals or clear boxes with dashed outlines likely will be addressed by both State-specific evidence and coordinated evidence for States administering the same assessments (e.g. Critical Element 2.3, 5.4).



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