

Innovative Assessment Implementation Support

Project Overview

Virginia Department of Education



WestEd's Experience

WestEd partners with state education agencies to strengthen and modernize statewide assessment systems. Our experience includes:

- Reviewing and evaluating statewide assessment models;
- Analyzing test blueprints, released items, scoring materials, reporting, and accessibility systems;
- Assessing technical quality and policy alignment with ESSA, federal peer review, and state legislative requirements;
- Studying innovative assessment approaches including performance tasks, adaptive models, multi-component systems, and curriculum-aligned designs; and
- Supporting states in developing assessment modernization options grounded in feasibility, cost, implementation complexity, and stakeholder needs.



Current Project Overview

1. Gather and Synthesize Exemplars

- Select high-quality state and national exemplars across VA's 10 identified focus areas
- Collect and review documentation (e.g., blueprints, released items, PLDs, scoring guides, reporting, accessibility, technology, technical reports, cost/RFP materials)
- Evaluate exemplars against Virginia's policy and technical requirements
- Develop tiered design options: Basic, Enhanced, and Transformative

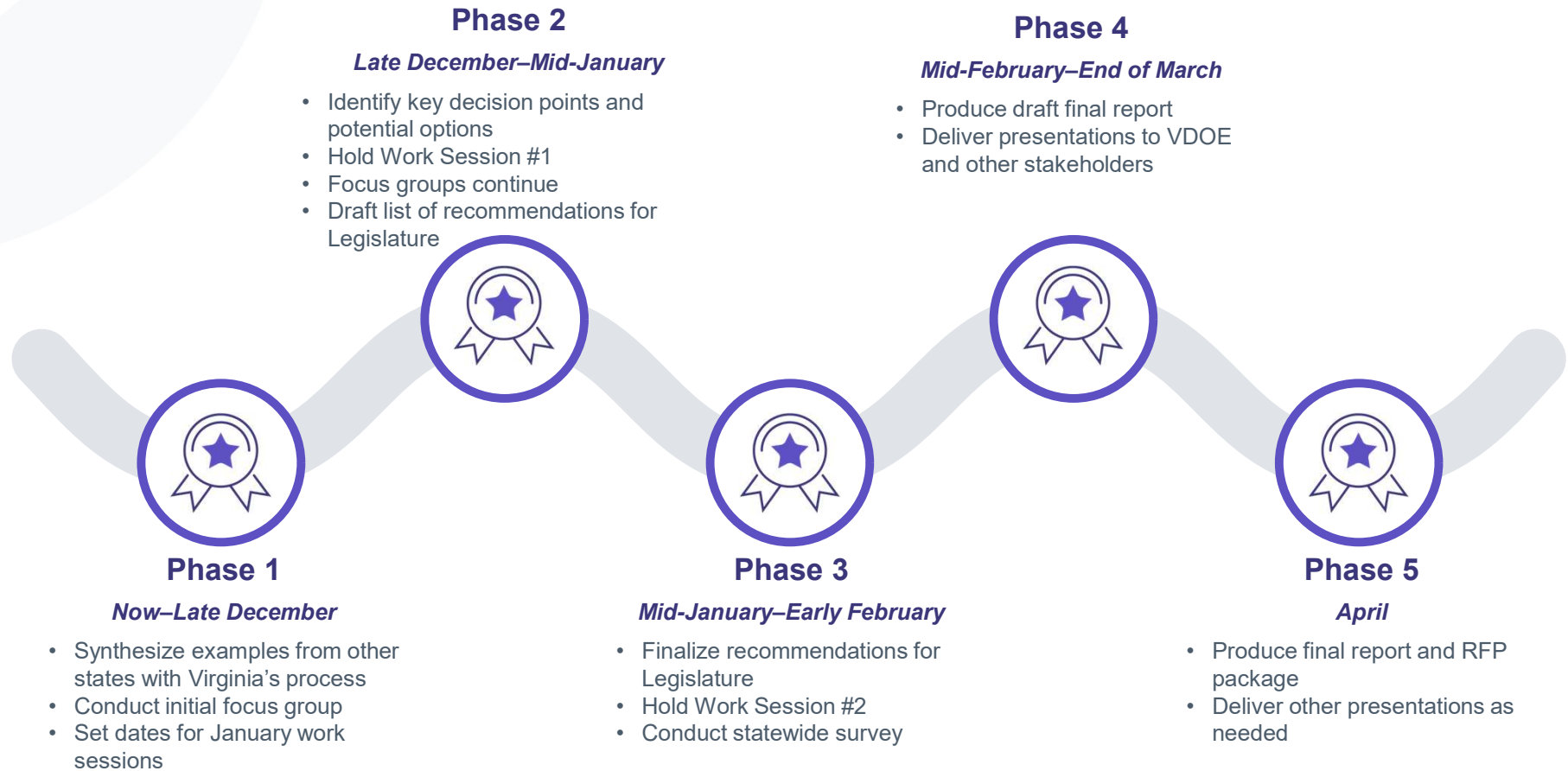
2. Engage Workgroup and Stakeholders

- Review findings and design options with this workgroup
- Facilitate broader statewide engagement sessions
- Incorporate feedback to refine priorities and options

3. Prepare Final Recommendations and RFP Guidance

- Develop final recommendations and an implementation plan identifying elements for statewide rollout or piloting
- Produce the final report, executive summary, and associated materials
- Deliver RFP guidance to support procurement planning for Spring 2026

Project Roadmap





VA Innovative Assessment Focus Areas

- 1. Alignment with standards and instructional goals**
- 2. Non-traditional assessment approaches**
including project-based, competency-based, and performance-based models
- 3. Accessibility for English Learners and students with disabilities**
- 4. Technology integration**
including adaptive testing and infrastructure requirements
- 5. Authentic growth measures with formative feedback**
- 6. Assessment of knowledge application and higher-order reasoning**
- 7. Transparent release of rubrics, items, and exemplars**
- 8. Innovative and reliable scoring practices**
- 9. Timely reporting to students, families, and educators**
- 10. Timely reporting to the state education agency**



Legislative Assessment Requirements: HB 1957

Growth System (Grades 3–8)

- At least 3 assessments: Fall, Winter, Spring
- Total testing time $\leq 150\%$ of an EOY SOL
- Computer-adaptive when possible
- Must measure performance below, at, and above grade level

Scoring and Reporting Requirements

- All assessments use a 100-point statewide scale
- Student score reports within 45 days
- Reports must include performance data and comparison to school/division/state
- Statewide results released publicly the same day

Assessment Administration Limits

- No more than one assessment per subject per quarter
- Required SOL sequence across grades 3–8
- Civics, Econ, and Virginia Studies each administered once (locally selected grade)

Local Alternative Assessments

- Required where no SOL exists
- Must include board-approved rubrics
- Annual certification and periodic audits

High School Requirements

- Only EOCs required for accountability and graduation
- EOCs given no earlier than 2 weeks before school ends
- EOCs count for $\geq 10\%$ of final course grade



Innovative Assessment Recommendations: HB 585

Standards

- Revise to increase clarity, coherence, and rigor
- Align assessments and proficiency levels to national expectations

Assessment Design

- Expand beyond multiple choice
- Add writing, open-ended tasks, and deeper reasoning items

Reporting

- Faster, clearer reports for educators and families
- Different versions for teachers, leaders, and parents
- Training on how to use results

Coherence

- Align SOL, interim, and local assessments
- Improve growth measures
- Add K–2 literacy and numeracy checkpoints
- Reduce duplicative local testing

Innovation

- Explore performance tasks and through-year models
- Use technology and AI for scoring and accessibility
- Consider federal flexibility for innovative designs



Work Group Preliminary Discussion: Emerging Themes

Student Growth & Progress

Individual growth measures that show progress over time, not just end-of-year snapshots. Multiple members emphasized growth as essential.

Faster, More Useful Results

Timely reporting with clear, actionable feedback that helps teachers and parents understand student learning.

Transparency & Instructional Support

Release test items, rubrics, and exemplars. Teachers need to see what proficiency looks like.

Rigor & Validity

Assessments must reliably measure standards mastery. Innovation should enhance measurement quality, not replace proven approaches with untested methods.

Post-Secondary Readiness

Strong correlation to college, career, and military readiness. The diploma should signal preparedness.

Accessibility

Improved supports for English Learners and students with disabilities.

Performance-Based Elements

Interest in technology-enhanced items and performance tasks where they demonstrate valid measurement.

Proposed Work Group Engagement

Full-Day In-Person / Hybrid Meeting (January 7–9 window?)

- Align on priorities and required features
- Identify promising design elements
- Merge innovation ideas with statutory requirements
- Build the draft set of recommendations

WestEd will synthesize the group's input into a consolidated recommendations list.

Half-Day Virtual Meeting (January 28–30 window?)

- Review the consolidated recommendations
- Confirm priorities and feasibility considerations
- Finalize direction

Lessons from the Field

Transparency Can Be Transformative

Providing transparent information about assessments can build broader trust in the system and allow educators to better incorporate assessments into their teaching.

Massachusetts:

- Releases all items, rubrics, and sample student work annually
- Teachers see what proficiency looks like

Considerations:

- Released items can provide instructional value at lower cost / risk than an entirely new assessment architecture.
- Items are costly and take a long time to develop, field-test, use operationally, and then release. Development cost increases substantially.
- MA is a fixed-form test. With a CAT you could release an “exemplar form” that may not represent what all students saw during that administration.

Assessment Tied to Purpose

Every assessment should have a clear purpose that contributes to improved outcomes for students. The assessment system overall should strive for a balance that maximizes useful information and minimizes the time students spend taking assessments.

Delaware Science:

- Summative: Performance levels only for accountability
- End-of-unit assessments to inform instruction
- Embedded classroom assessments
- Each serves a distinct purpose

Considerations:

- One assessment cannot do everything.
- Use end-of-year summative for accountability, interims to show growth, and formatives to support classroom instruction.

Through-Year Implementation

Through-year assessment has gained traction among states as a way to provide more timely information without drastically increasing time spent testing. However, implementing through-year assessment is a complicated matter.

Montana (through-year testlets / cumulative)

- Rapid implementation: pilot to statewide in 2 years
- Year 1 implementation surfaced some challenges

Delaware Social Studies (through-year cumulative)

- 8-year phased approach (2017–18 pilot to 2025 statewide)
- 2–3 administrations (depending on grade) with cumulative scoring; all-or-nothing participation

North Carolina (interims + summative)

- IADA authorization June 2019 to full statewide implementation 2024–25
- NC Check-Ins inform instruction; end-of-year multistage fixed adaptive assessment for accountability
- Students who complete at least 2 Check-Ins get assigned to a summative form (easy, medium, or hard) based on their Check-In performance. Otherwise assigned the medium form.

Considerations:

- HB1957's required testing will need significant field support.
- Requires an investment in communication and professional development.



Examples of States and Systems We Proposed to Review

- **Innovative / Higher-Order Reasoning Items**

- Missouri (SRSA IADA)
- Louisiana (IADA pilot)
- New Hampshire (PACE)
- Colorado (local performance tasks)
- Georgia (IADA pilot)
- Massachusetts (MCAS)
- Smarter Balanced

- **Accessibility & Alternate Assessments**

- California (CAASPP)
- Ohio
- Dynamic Learning Maps (multi-state)

- **Adaptive Technology & Infrastructure**

- Florida (FAST)
- Utah (RISE)
- Smarter Balanced CAT engine

- **Growth / Interim Models**

- Montana (MAST)
- North Carolina (NCPAT / IADA)
- Pennsylvania (Firefly interim)

- **Transparency Models**

- Massachusetts (MCAS)
- Alaska (AK STAR)

- **Reporting Models**

- Florida (FAST dashboards)
- Massachusetts (Next-Gen reporting)
- Utah (RISE)



Stakeholder Focus Group Plan for Workgroup Discussion

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Purpose of Today's Discussion

- Share the overall stakeholder engagement approach
- Review focus group audiences and timeline
- Gather feedback from the workgroup:
 - Are the goals aligned with the workgroup's expectations?
 - Are the right audiences included?
 - Are any groups missing or underrepresented?
- Align on what information is most useful to collect (and not redundant)



Stakeholder Engagement Timeline and Deliverables

Focus Groups: Mid-December – Mid-January

- **Deliverable:** Summary of Focus Groups (Mid-January)

Statewide Survey: Mid-January – Early February

- **Deliverable:** “What We Heard” Report and Visual Findings (early February)



Focus Group Goals

- Establish a shared understanding of the purpose and definition of an innovative assessment
- Identify the essential needs of the statewide assessment system
- Surface nontraditional assessment items and approaches that could meaningfully measure student learning
- Determine growth and feedback measures that would be useful to inform teaching and learning



Priority Audiences

- **State-level leaders** (policy, assessment, accountability)
- **Division leaders** (school board members, superintendents, division staff)
- **Workforce and Higher Education** (employers, community college and university representatives, chamber of commerce)
- **School administrators** (principals, assistant principals)
- **Teachers** (grades 3–6, with focus on 7–12)
- **Parents & caregivers**
- **Students** (grades 7–12)
- **Community-based organizations** (advocates, tutoring providers)



Why These Audiences?

- Each group interacts with the assessment system differently:
 - **State and Division Leaders** implement policy, accountability, and reporting
 - **Teachers and Administrators** use results to inform and improve instruction
 - **Higher Education** relies on students to be college ready
 - **Career** expects students to be workforce ready
 - **Parents and Students** lived experience of testing
 - **Community-Based Organizations** support students in preparing for assessments
- Ensures a balanced, non-redundant survey set



Focus Group Timing

Audience: State and Division Leaders

Timing: Week of Dec 15

Audience: Parents

Timing: Week of Jan 5

Audience: Students

Timing: Week of Jan 5

Audience: Teachers and Administrators

Timing: Week of Jan 12

Audience: Higher Education, Workforce, and
Community-Based Organizations

Timing: Week of Jan 12



Connecting to These Audiences

- Secure direct points of contact across agencies
 - Confirm the right people are in the room to provide feedback and guide next steps.
- We can either contact them directly, copying you on the email, or you can provide an introduction
 - If you are offering to introduce us, we will provide a sample message for your email.

Next Steps

Gather and synthesize exemplars

- Continue to research states
- Develop design options:
Basic, Enhanced, and Transformative

Engage workgroup and stakeholders

- Focus groups will start this month
- Look forward to future engagement with this group!