

**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**Alaska's Statewide Assessment**  
**Alaska Department of Education & Early Development**

**1. Why does DEED administer statewide summative assessments?**

As outlined in Alaska statutes and regulations, the state administers summative (end-of-year) assessments for three primary purposes. First, statewide assessments provide one of the resources parents, educators, and policy makers can use to determine how Alaska's schools are performing. Second, statewide assessments provide data for nurturing and tracking school improvement efforts. Finally, statewide assessments help to ensure equity for students since the results are available for all schools in Alaska and are disaggregated by subgroups including economically disadvantaged students, student with disabilities, English language learners, and ethnic groups.

**2. Why is DEED issuing a request for information (RFI) instead of a request for proposal (RFP)?**

An RFI process will provide DEED a concise snapshot of options that are currently available. The information received through the RFI process will be sufficient for DEED to understand the options that are available and determine the next steps in identifying a testing vendor that meets Alaska unique situation and needs.

**3. Why is DEED not seeking interim assessments?**

While Alaska's previous assessment contract included the development of interim assessments, discussions within DEED and with many stakeholders suggested that a more focused solution may be a better fit for Alaska at this time.

Additionally, most districts in Alaska are already successfully implementing a series of interim assessments that provides the detailed information needed by teachers to make instructional decisions. DEED does not wish to duplicate or complicate the practices that the districts already have in place, particularly during a time of such limited resources.

**4. Why is Alaska not pursuing the use of a series of interim assessments instead of one summative assessment at this time?**

While the new federal law does permit the use of interim assessments to produce an overall summative score (actually, breaking a summative assessment into a series of smaller modular assessments), this approach has not yet been developed and is unproven in practice. For now, both DEED and many educational stakeholders feel that securing a solid summative assessment, particularly given the short timeline for doing so, is the best course of action.

**5. By not pursuing an interim assessment, is DEED eliminating possible options for Alaska's accountability system that are allowed under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)?**

DEED is considering the incorporation of interim assessments into our new accountability system. As more detailed discussions begin around the state plan for ESSA, we are committed to thoroughly exploring how Alaska's new accountability system can acknowledge how districts are already using assessments.

**6. Is DEED seeking a paper-based or computer-based assessment for 2016-2017?**

DEED would prefer to administer a computer-based assessment in spring 2017; however, a paper-based assessment would be acceptable. If a district prefers to give a paper-based assessment, DEED hopes to be able to accommodate the district's preference

**7. Does House Bill 156 prohibit the state from offering a statewide summative assessment?**

HB 156 restricts DEED from requiring a school district or school to administer a statewide assessment before July 1, 2018. It does not relieve DEED from its responsibility to select and make a statewide summative assessment available to all districts and schools.

DEED looks forward to working with all stakeholders to identify and make available to Alaska districts and schools statewide summative assessments in English language arts, mathematics, and science for spring 2017. It is in the best interest of Alaska's students that data from statewide assessments is available to inform parents, educators, the public and policy makers about school performance, nourish school improvement, and ensure educational opportunity equity.