FAQ: What does remote learning mean for student assessments?

A Publication From Regional Educational Laboratory Central at IES

To access the RELs' evidence-based COVID-19 response resources, visit https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/covid-19.

Primary audience: State education agencies   **Secondary audience:** Local education agencies

The return to remote learning this fall has left state and local education agencies concerned about the impact of the remote model on student assessments. The Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Central has compiled resources that leaders can review to support decisionmaking about remote assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Testing vendors are adapting and providing guidance to support test-takers and education agencies during COVID-19 restrictions:

- The Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) has published resources to support Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) testing activities. Among these resources is a recorded webinar in which an expert panel provides guidance and recommendations for successful administration of the MAP tests during COVID-19 restrictions and information on precision and validity concerns when using the new NWEA 2020 norms. NWEA also has generated materials for schools and districts with recommendations for remote environments and technical support for the MAP Growth, MAP Reading Fluency, and MAP Accelerator assessments.

- DIBELS has published a supplement to its administration testing guide offering recommendations for the beginning-of-year benchmark testing. In addition, the supplement provides tips for interpreting benchmark data amid the disruptions to school.

- Early in the pandemic, some vendors moved forward with remote assessments. However, issues of internet access, test integrity, and technical malfunctions on test platforms during the 2020 spring administration have forced vendors to reevaluate those decisions. For example, the College Board has halted plans to offer the SAT at home, citing concerns about access to reliable internet. These concerns stemmed from issues that arose during the remote administration of Advanced Placement exams in spring 2020. The College Board has released a flexible policies overview for the SAT School Day, PSAT, and NMSQT.

- During remote learning, educators may still rely on formative assessments to monitor and adjust instruction to meet student needs. Vendors such as Smarter Balanced have published guidance for the formative assessment process in remote settings. Smarter Balanced defines the four attributes of the formative assessment process (clarify, elicit, interpret, and act), and describes how to adapt the process for synchronous and asynchronous remote learning.

- The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) team has developed resources to support educators administering the PALS assessment in remote environments. Included is a rundown of alternative scenarios and options for the fall 2020 administration of PALS.

Concerns grow over the impact of remote or distance assessments on reliability and validity:

- Although many vendors have moved to digital formats for test administration over the past several years, these formats differ from remote or distance assessments because they do not require remote proctoring.

- Test vendors such as i-Ready have published strategies for remote proctoring to address assessment security concerns. Some resources target current users of i-Ready programs, but other resources, such as those listed below, are applicable to everyone.

  - i-Ready provides tips for using Zoom to proctor assessments. These tips are related to three main areas: technology and privacy, planning and communication, and assessment day.

  - i-Ready also has published the resource *Proctoring Assessment Remotely: Considerations, Tips, and Ideas*, which synthesizes best practices for what to do before, during, and after remote assessments.

- Institutions of higher education, such as DePaul University, have used third-party programs, such as Respondus Monitor, to safeguard the integrity of postsecondary assessments.

State education agencies also have developed 2020/21 assessment administration guidelines in response to COVID-19 restrictions:

- Colorado Department of Education guidance for READ Interim Assessments

- Idaho State Department of Education guidelines for fall 2020/21 assessment administration

- Texas Education Agency guidance for 2020 STAAR [State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness] administration

Additional resources:

- The Center for American Progress has published *Student Assessment During COVID-19*. This issue brief defines four recommended actions that state education agencies can take to support districts in collecting and using data to monitor student development during COVID-19 restrictions.

- The Center for Assessment has provided several resources, including two featured resources that outline considerations for fall 2020 and spring 2021 assessment administration amid COVID-19 restrictions, and guidance for collecting, evaluating, and reporting data in 2020/21.