



SPOTLIGHT

Nation's Largest Test Providers Answer Some Questions on Assessments During COVID | Forbes.com

Given national debate on the feasibility of administering statewide annual assessments this spring, Collaborative Director Jim Cowen and Sandi Jacobs of EducationCounsel recently [posed some questions](#) directly to major national assessment vendors, who, despite recognizing challenges, said that administration can move forward. The vendors additionally provided examples of the kinds of options states can consider to make administering tests and turning around the data simpler and more flexible - [options states are already considering](#).

The information comes as President-elect Joe Biden's pick for Education secretary - Connecticut Education Commissioner [Miguel Cardona](#) - faces all-but-certain confirmation following twin Democratic victories in this week's Georgia senate races. Cardona is already facing pressure to stand by the federal commitment to annually test students, with the [editorial board of the New York Times](#) urging the next secretary to "resist calls to put off annual testing" amid a shortage of data on the pandemic's impact on students. Repeating a fear voiced by many education and civil rights leaders in past months, the board states plainly their worry: "given a shortage of testing data for Black, Hispanic and poor children, it could well be that these groups have fared worse in the pandemic than their white or more affluent peers."



IN THE NEWS

Betsy DeVos Resigns as Education Secretary, Citing Trump's Role in Riot | Washington Post

With less than two weeks left in President Donald J. Trump's term, DeVos joined other Trump administration officials in quitting this week. DeVos said in her [resignation letter](#) that she was "deeply troubled" by the riot at the Capitol and the president's role. DeVos, who faced a rough confirmation process and was a polarizing figure throughout her tenure as secretary, had been fiercely loyal to Trump. DeVos was best known for her efforts in support of school choice friendly measures such as school vouchers and charter schools. "We should be highlighting and celebrating your Administration's many accomplishments on behalf of the American people," DeVos wrote to Trump. "Instead, we are left to clean up the mess caused by violent protestors overrunning the U.S. Capitol in an attempt to undermine the people's business."

In the wake of Wednesday's riots and the slew of government resignations, America's teachers [once again found themselves tasked with unwrapping a difficult and divisive national event with their students](#) – and some education leaders quickly sought to offer guidance and support. Kentucky Education Commissioner Jason Glass, for example, [said in a blog post Thursday](#), "Schools that fail to engage students on difficult (and often political) issues – whether willfully or through negligence – also fail in their responsibility to cultivate our nation's future" and offers a number of tips for educators to consider as they navigate the conversation with students.



[State Schools Chiefs Push Biden for Wiggle Room on Accountability During Pandemic](#) | Education Week

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is urging the incoming Biden administration to work on developing a “streamlined, consistent process that gives states the flexibility they need on accountability measures in the coming year,” while being clear that education leaders have a responsibility to focus on the most important aspect of assessment: measuring student learning and using the data to inform recovery and instruction. The statement from CCSSO followed some early state actions to begin decoupling accountability systems from assessments this school year, most notably in [Texas](#), where state officials announced annual STAAR exams will move forward this year, but that results won’t be used in issuing individual school rankings.



[Q&A: Rep. Bobby Scott on COVID-19 Aid, Segregation, and Judging Schools Amid the Pandemic](#) | Education Week

In an interview with Education Week’s Andrew Ujifusa, Rep. Bobby Scott, D-Va., chairman of the House education committee, reiterated his [firm support for administering annual state assessments](#) amid the pandemic. “If we don’t know how far behind these students are, we won’t know how much work we have to do to catch up,” Scott said. Scott also invoked ESSA, the federal law that requires states to administer assessments and use results to target improvements for low performing schools. The congressman echoed [Sen. Patty Murray](#), D-Wash., who in her own interview with Ujifusa a few weeks prior, said that measuring student learning represented a “moral responsibility.” When asked whether accountability measures should be waived during the COVID-19 pandemic, Scott said the matter could be discussed, but that schools should not be casual in their responsibility to assess student learning and identify where “work needs to be done.”



THE QUICK LIST

[How to Teach the U.S. Capitol Attack: Dozens of Resources to Get You Started](#) | Education Week

[The Stimulus Package: A Win for Incarcerated Students](#) | Diverse Education

[Broadband Access and the Digital Divides](#) | Education Commission of the States

[New Data: College Enrollment for Low-Income High School Grads Plunged by 29% During the Pandemic](#) | The 74 Million

[Report Provides Recommendations to Close Diversity Gap in Teacher Preparation Programs](#) | Diverse Education