



Guidance on the Use of Available Tools to Determine Instructional Achievement Gaps

*for Students in Grades 3-9
as Part of School Re-entry Process*

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West Virginia Board of Education
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Acknowledgements

Assessment Subcommittee for Re-entry

As part of the overall West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) work in providing guidance for counties as they develop and implement their re-entry plans for the 2020-21 school year, the Office of Assessment convened the Assessment Subcommittee for Re-entry. The purpose of this subcommittee was as follows:

- » To provide input to the WVDE on the role optional assessment tools might play in county/school plans for re-entry to schools in the 2020-21 school year.
- » To identify challenges that counties and schools face regarding the use of assessment tools to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in relation to the state's West Virginia College- and Career-Readiness Standards.
- » To identify professional learning that might be necessary to help educators better understand the proper use of assessment.
- » To assist in developing guidance for counties/schools/teachers in using optional assessment tools to identify student weaknesses and gaps in learning that may have been caused by school closures because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- » To identify challenges counties, schools, students, and parents/guardians face if optional remote assessment administrations were to be made available.

The Assessment Subcommittee for Re-entry included the following individuals, all of whom have experience and knowledge of the state's available assessment tools:

- » Rosella Amos, Doddridge County, Elementary Teacher
- » Felicia Backus, Cabell County, Middle School Teacher
- » Whitney Bennett, Pleasants County, Middle School Teacher
- » Vicky Cline, Greenbrier County, District Test Coordinator
- » Janna Coleman, Fayette County, Elementary School Principal
- » Gary Estep, McDowell County, Middle School Principal
- » Amy Funk, Hampshire County, Academic Coach
- » Walt Saunders, Ohio County, District Test Coordinator and Chief Instructional Leader
- » Debbie Schmidlen, Randolph County, Superintendent

The WVDE is grateful to the subcommittee members for their input into the development of this guidance document.

Introduction

As the 2020-21 school year gets underway, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a major impact on education. This summer, the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), working closely with the COVID-19 Outbreak to Recovery Advisory Council, released Re-entry and Recovery Guidance to assist counties with developing school re-entry plans for the 2020-21 school year. As stated on the WVDE website (<https://wvde.us/school-system-re-entry/>), “This guidance has been designed to offer flexibility within the fluid nature of COVID-19 in the state. This gives counties a range of allowances when deciding what their particular school days will look like for the upcoming school year.” The department has indicated two options for families: in-person/blended instruction or virtual learning.

At a time when the focus is on ensuring the safety and health of students and staff, determining how to address students’ social-emotional well-being, and providing high-quality, meaningful instruction, the last thing many people think about is testing. However, one thing is clear: The closing of schools because of the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to have had a differential impact on student learning and achievement. Unfortunately, because of the suspension of standardized testing in spring 2020, counties and schools will not have the usual assessment data to help them identify students’ strengths and weaknesses, as well as address any gaps in learning, so that teachers can make the necessary adjustments to instruction in the new school year.

Many county leaders and educators have made it clear that assessment tools that will allow them to measure where students are academically must be at their disposal, so they can include in their plans ways to help close any achievement gaps that might exist because of school closures. As counties prepare to implement their re-entry plans for 2020-21, they should consider how the proper use of assessments can help teachers and students by providing meaningful and useful data with the overall intent of maintaining grade-level expectations. This includes the use of optional state- or county-provided interim and diagnostic assessments, classroom assessments, and other tools.

Keeping in mind that assessment is an essential part of instruction that can help counties and schools know if their goals are being met. It can help teachers understand if students are learning what they are teaching – regardless of whether learning is occurring in-person, remotely, or through a blended model, or through virtual school. According to Edutopia (<https://www.edutopia.org/assessment-guide-importance>), “Assessment inspires us to ask these hard questions:

- » ***“Are we teaching what we think we are teaching?”***
- » ***“Are students learning what they are supposed to be learning?”***
- » ***“Is there a way to teach the subject better, thereby promoting better learning?”***

The question for counties and schools to ask is: How can we use assessments properly to help close the achievement gap for our students and help them meet grade-level expectations?

The WVDE is pleased to offer a variety of optional assessment tools (See Appendix A) and resources (See Appendix B). For students in Grades 3-8, state-provided interim and diagnostic assessments continue to be available to counties and schools. As in previous years, the state offers Fixed Form Comprehensive Interim Assessments (FF-CIA), which are the same CIAs many teachers have used over the past few years. This year the state also is pleased to introduce new Computer Adaptive Comprehensive Interim Assessments (CA-CIA), quasi-secure CIAs that replace the computer adaptive, highly secure (Policy 2340 training required) Classroom Benchmark Assessments (CBAs). Both the FF-CIA and CA-CIA are designed using the same test blueprints as the West Virginia General Summative Assessment (WVGSA) and include the same item types. As with the WVGSA, both the FF-CIAs and CA-CIAs are aligned to the West Virginia College- and Career-Readiness Standards for ELA and mathematics. Additionally, the Interim Module Assessments (IMAs), the Diagnostic Assessments (DIAs), and the Science Interim Assessments (SIAs) continue to be available (See Appendix A for complete descriptions).



Recognizing the desire of many counties and schools to measure what students learned about the previous grade-level standards, particularly in light of the absence of summative results from spring 2020, West Virginia has worked with Cambium Assessment to have the default grade-level setting of the interim and diagnostic assessments set to the students' current grade and last year's grade. Of course, the below grade-level assessments are not available for students in Grade 3 because we do not have Grade 2 interim and diagnostic assessments.

Although these optional assessment tools typically are not available to high school students, this year students in Grade 9 will be able to take the Grade 8 interim and diagnostic assessments even though no current grade-level interims are available. For high schools interested in administering the Grade 8 interim and diagnostic assessments to Grade 9 students, the Office of Assessment will be offering virtual training and assistance.

Because the ultimate goal is to move students toward grade-level expectations, the option to administer below grade-level interim and diagnostic assessments will be removed December 31, 2020. The current grade-level interim and diagnostic assessments will continue to be available throughout the year until each school's WVGSA testing window opens in spring 2021.

Recommendations for the Use of Assessment Tools

The WVDE and the subcommittee recognize it is up to each individual county to develop re-entry plans that are best suited for the staff and students in that county's schools. We understand the focus should be on addressing the social-emotional well-being of students and staff and on ensuring students receive high-quality instruction, regardless of whether that takes place in person, through a blended model, or through virtual school. However, the use of available assessment tools can play a role in identifying achievement gaps resulting from the closing of schools and allow teachers to use data to adjust instruction as needed. Therefore, this guidance document is just that – a means of guiding counties on how available assessment tools might fit into each county's needs for their students. The guidance provided here is not a mandate from the WVDE; it is merely a means of helping counties and schools consider the options available to them through optional assessment tools, whether those tools are provided by the state or purchased by each county.

The question for counties and schools to ask is: How can we use assessments properly to help close the achievement gap for our students and help them meet grade-level expectations?

Based on the input provided by subcommittee members, county and school leadership should consider the following recommendations regarding the use of assessment tools as they develop their re-entry plans:

Recommendation 1: Develop a comprehensive plan for how your county, school or classroom is going to use results before assessing students.

- » Considerations: The Evidence Project at CRPE (<https://www.crpe.org/publications/learning-we-go-principles-effective-assessment-during-covid-19-pandemic>) strongly recommend counties, schools, and classrooms have a comprehensive plan for how they are going to use results before administering any type of assessment. Having assessment data will not be meaningful unless you take the time to review and analyze the data, reflect on the results, and create actionable plans based on the results to improve student knowledge and understanding.

Recommendation 2: Identify what information you would like to obtain about students that will guide instructional decisions.

- » Considerations: With the absence of state summative assessment data from spring 2020, counties and schools should consider how best to obtain data concerning what students know and understand about the previous year's content standards or the current year's content standards.

Recommendation 3: Incorporate multiple means – including the use of the formative assessment process as well as optional interim and diagnostic assessments – to obtain data about what students know and can do.

- » Considerations: Beginning on Day 1, teachers can incorporate the formative assessment process to help them determine what students know and can do and to adjust their instruction as necessary. The formative assessment process also can be an effective way to determine students' social and emotional needs. Formative assessment is the deliberate daily process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides actionable feedback used to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended learning outcomes.

The formative assessment process includes the use of many assessment methods and tools to provide a continuous stream of accurate evidence of learning that is indicative of all areas of a student's holistic development. Data from optional interim and diagnostic assessments can be incorporated as part of the formative assessment process. With the absence of state summative assessment data from spring 2020, counties and schools should consider how best to determine what students know and understand about the previous year's content standards or the current year's content standards.

Recommendation 4: Clearly explain to teachers, students, and families how you will be assessing the students and how you will use the results.

- » Considerations: Teachers, students, and the students' parents/guardians may not understand why students are being administered assessments so early in the school year. It is important to provide a clear explanation regarding the reasons for testing and how the results are being used. Assessment results should not be used for grading or advancement, and this information must be communicated clearly.

Recommendation 5: Choose which optional assessment tools will provide the information you want to obtain about students.

- » Considerations: The WVDE provides several free, optional interim and diagnostic assessment tools aligned to the state's content standards in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science. This includes two types of comprehensive interim assessments in ELA and mathematics: computer adaptive and fixed form. These assessments are built from the same test blueprint as the West Virginia General Summative Assessment (WVGSA) administered in the spring. The new optional, state-provided Computer Adaptive Comprehensive Interim Assessment (CA-CIA) will provide opportunities for schools to measure student achievement early in the school year with the option of assessing students again toward the middle of the school year to see how much student performance improves following instruction. Other available state-provided assessment tools for Grades 3-8 include the Fixed Form Comprehensive Interim Assessment (FF-CIA), Interim Module Assessments (IMAs), West Virginia teacher-created Diagnostic Assessments (DIAs), and Science Interim Assessments (SIAs). Counties also may choose to use their own county-selected interims they have purchased from vendors.



Recommendation 6: Carefully consider whether to administer the below grade-level interim assessments, the current grade-level interim assessments, or a combination of both.

- » Considerations: When schools reopen for the 2020-21 school year, teachers will be able to administer state-provided interim or diagnostic assessments in the grade level below or at the current grade level of the students. The below grade-level interims will provide information on how well students perform on questions aligned to the previous year's content standards and can assist teachers in identifying where gaps might exist in student learning from the prior year. The current grade-level interims will provide information on how well students perform on questions aligned to the current year's standards and can assist teachers in identifying areas of students' strengths and weaknesses on grade-level standards. The Office of Assessment has developed possible scenarios for using either the CA-CIA or the FF-CIA (See Appendix A) as well as guidance for the use of IMAs, DIAs, and SIAs. Additionally, the Office of Assessment is developing a teacher toolkit that provides more details and guidance regarding the use of these optional assessment tools.

Recommendation 7: Administer an interim or diagnostic assessment when it is appropriate for your students.

- » Considerations: The Assessment Subcommittee for Re-entry agree that each county and school must decide when or if to administer the optional interim and diagnostic assessments based on the needs of their students. Subcommittee members recognize students are returning to school with different social-emotional and academic needs. Feedback has varied on this topic:
 - › Some county leaders believe it is better to give optional assessments as early in the school year as possible to identify where students are as they re-enter schools.
 - › Some members recommend at least one interim or diagnostic assessment be administered before a specific date to obtain data to help teachers adjust instruction as needed and to address each student's academic needs based on the results.
 - › Also mentioned, administration of assessments immediately upon returning to school may not result in high-quality data because students, with varying social-emotional needs, must re-acclimate to the school environment.
 - › Other members and county leaders suggest the tests should be administered after a few weeks. This time would allow students to adjust to returning to school while allowing schools to address other matters related to re-entry, including students' social-emotional needs.



The entire subcommittee agreed that during this time it is critical to ensure students are receiving appropriate, high-quality supports for their social-emotional needs.

The decision on when to administer interim or diagnostic assessments lies solely with each county and school.

Recommendation 8: Consider how often to administer the optional interim assessments.

- » Considerations: Teachers may administer the optional CA-CIAs and the FF-CIAs once or twice during the school year. Teachers also have multiple IMAs, DIAs, and SIAs that can be administered. It is recommended that each IMA, DIA, and SIA be administered only once. More details regarding the available state-provided assessment tools can be found in Appendix A.

Recommendation 9: Consider how best to communicate results from optional assessments to students and their parents/guardians.

- » Considerations: One of the primary purposes of administering optional interim or diagnostic assessments to students early in the school year is to obtain data that teachers can use to adjust their instruction to address any gaps in learning. Naturally, some students and parents/guardians may want to know the results of the early assessments. Parents/guardians may want to know if there are certain areas or standards where they might be able to aid their students at home. As in previous years on the state-provided interims, schools may print out individual student reports to give to students and/or their parents/guardians. However, schools should keep in mind that student performance at the beginning of the year as students return to school – especially if using current grade-level interims – may be low and could have a negative effect on students' social-emotional well-being if they see lower scores than what they might have seen if they had taken the WVGSA in spring 2020. Because of this, some schools may not want to print and distribute individual student reports; however, it is recommended that these reports be provided to parents/

guardians upon request. Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss assessment results with their student's teacher(s) to ensure they have a clear understanding why the assessment was given, what the results mean in the context of returning to school, and how the teacher will address any gaps in learning the assessment results show. The subcommittee requested the Office of Assessment develop an Assessment Communications Toolkit that will include talking points and letter templates to assist counties and schools with communicating information about assessments to parents/guardians. Your district test coordinator will provide information regarding the toolkit once it becomes available.

Recommendation 10: If students do not return to the school building, consider whether to use the optional interim and diagnostic assessments and how to provide them to students not in school while ensuring equity for all students.

- » Considerations: One thing the closing of schools and the implementation of remote learning has shown us is that many West Virginia students do not have access to usable devices and/or have little or no internet connectivity at home. Another issue schools should consider is how proper technical support can be provided either at home or in schools to assist students with testing. These are issues that must be addressed to ensure all our students have equitable access to remote learning. The WVDE and Cambium Assessment, the state's contractor for the state-provided interim and diagnostic assessments, are exploring various options that counties and schools might be able to use to administer the optional interim and diagnostic assessments to students should remote learning continue. The options being explored include the following:
 - › Remote administration and remote proctoring.
 - › Ability to download content on devices provided to students.
 - › Paper-pencil versions of some interim assessments.



Some of these options may not be available when schools re-open, but counties and schools must decide if the data provided from the optional interim and diagnostic assessments are essential enough to administer them remotely, and if so, how best to do so. The Office of Assessment will provide training and support should counties and schools choose to administer the state-provided assessments remotely.

Recommendation 11: When counties are determining whether to administer interims countywide, be sure to consider the needs of students at each individual school within the county.

- » Considerations: Because a one-size-fits-all approach to the use of optional interim and diagnostic assessment may not work for all counties, county leaders should consider the needs of each individual school when making decisions regarding the use of the available assessment tools and include school leadership in the decision-making process.

Appendix A: Assessment Tools to Support Re-entry

English Language Arts and Mathematics

Computer Adaptive Comprehensive Interim Assessments (CA-CIAs)

- » Computer adaptive, quasi-secure comprehensive interim assessments that replace the computer adaptive, highly secure (Policy 2340 training required) Classroom Benchmark Assessments (CBAs), have the same test blueprint as the WVGSA, and report group and individual student data on content standard mastery. Below are possible scenarios for use of the CA-CIAs.
 - › **Scenario 1:**
Test Students One Time Using Below Grade-Level CA-CIA (Available for Grades 4-9)
 - › **Scenario 2:**
Test Students One Time Using Current Grade-Level CA-CIA (Available for Grades 3-8)
 - › **Scenario 3:**
Test Students Two Times Using Below Grade-Level CA-CIA (Available for Grades 4-9)
 - › **Scenario 4:**
Test Students Two Times Using Current Grade-Level CA-CIA (Available for Grades 3-8)
 - › **Scenario 5:**
Test Students One Time Using Below Grade-Level CA-CIA and One Time Using Current Grade-Level CA-CIA (Applicable only for Grades 4-8)

Fixed Form Comprehensive Interim Assessments (FF-CIAs)

- » Fixed form, quasi-secure comprehensive interim assessments that have the same test blueprint as the WVGSA and report group and individual student data on content standard mastery. While the fixed form test does not provide the preferred level of student performance data as the CA-CIA, it can be accessed in the Teacher Item Previewer and offers item-level data.
 - › **Scenario 1:** Test Students One Time Using Below Grade-Level FF-CIA (Available for Grades 4-9)
 - › **Scenario 2:** Test Students One Time Using Current Grade-Level FF-CIA (Available for Grades 3-8)
 - › **Scenario 3:** Test Students One Time Using Below Grade-Level FF-CIA and One Time Using Current Grade-Level FF-CIA

Interim Module Assessments (IMAs)

- » Short fixed form module tests that assess groups of related clusters from the content standards and measure student progress throughout the year. IMAs focus on specific clusters and take less time to complete.

Diagnostic Assessments (DIAs)

- » Short fixed form tests, written by West Virginia educators, that assess individual clusters of content standards and measure student progress throughout the year.

Science

Science Interim Assessments (SIAs)

- » Grade-band, cluster tests that assess clusters of related content standards in elementary and middle school science and measure student progress throughout the year.

More details on each of the assessment tools are provided in the Educator Toolkit for the Computer Adaptive CIA and Fixed Form CIA.

Appendix B: Additional Assessment Resources

Teacher Item Previewer

<https://wv.portal.cambiumast.com/>

Allows teachers to preview and review the FF-CIA, IMAs, DIAs, and SIAs using a computer and/or projector.

Interim Resources Website

<https://tinyurl.com/slmurrell>

Provides resources for teachers, including documents, guides, and information related to the WVGSA and interim assessments.

WV PEAKS Team Site – Grades 3-12

<https://tinyurl.com/wvpeaks>

Provides PowerPoints, videos, and quick guides that can be used for professional learning related to assessment tools.

MetaMetrics Lexile and Quantile Resources – Grades K-12

<https://wvde.us/LexilesandQuantiles/>

Provides links to information about Lexile and Quantile measures, as well as a link to the Lexile & Quantile Hub, which includes a variety of resources available to assist educators, students, and parents/guardians to address differing instructional needs of students.

Learn More About Testing Webpage – Grades 3-12

<https://wvde.us/assessment/learn-more-about-testing/>

Provides links to documents, including informational guides and interpretive guides for the state's summative assessments.



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