

## ***NWEA comments on USDOE's proposed priorities for the Competitive Grants for State Assessments program***

In January, Frank Brogan, Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education for the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE), proposed [a set of priorities](#) under the [Competitive Grants for State Assessments \(CGSA\) program](#) to be used as part of the selection criteria related to Federal financial assistance to states looking at innovative assessment solutions. As part of this, the USDOE asked for public comments.

The following is the comment letter from NWEA CEO – Chris Minnich – that speaks to the importance of programs like CGSA, the value of innovation in assessments and the need for proper financial resources to states to pursue this important work.

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January 29, 2020

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Attn: Donald Peasley  
Competitive Grants for State Assessment—Comments  
U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue S.W., Room 3W106  
Washington, DC 20202–6132

Docket ID ED-2019-OESE-0147

Mr. Peasley,

I am writing to provide the comments of NWEA on the U.S. Department of Education's proposed priorities under the Competitive Grants for State Assessment (CGSA) program. NWEA is a research-based, not-for-profit organization that supports students and educators worldwide by creating assessment solutions that precisely measure growth and proficiency—and provide insights to help tailor instruction. Across 40 years, NWEA has developed Pre-K-12 assessments and professional learning offerings to help advance all students along their optimal learning paths. We serve more than 11 million students in the United States.

NWEA applauds the Department's continued commitment to supporting states' efforts to explore new, innovative methods for developing and administering assessments. While it is important to hold all kids to the same high standards, provide teachers with valuable information, support school improvement efforts, and shine a light on inequities, the current accountability assessment system needs to evolve. Parents and students are tired of over-testing, teachers need support to fully use data and ensure instructional relevance, and results from summative tests arrive too late to be used in the classroom. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provided the opportunity for states to create a future where assessment moves beyond measuring learning to fostering it. In this future, testing is reduced, teachers

are armed with the information they need to serve students, and success does not come down to a single test event. By allowing CGSA funds to support states participating in the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA), the Department lessens the financial burden, which has proven a significant barrier to planning and implementation in the past.

NWEA is leading the vision for the future of high-quality assessment. We have invested heavily in the development of a through-year assessment, which will measure both growth and proficiency throughout the year, providing valuable information educators need to improve learning while also producing summative scores for federal accountability. A group of districts in Georgia will be piloting this solution as a part of Georgia's participation in IADA. NWEA is simultaneously working in Nebraska, which will be transitioning all of their districts to this through-year model in an effort to better connect assessment to teaching and learning. We are also one of many organizations involved in Louisiana's IADA pilot—an assessment for 7<sup>th</sup> graders that eliminates the summative test and combines English with Social Studies. This model could potentially have implications for equity as it uses passages from books students have studied in class to avoid disadvantaging students who have had less opportunity for exposure to books outside the classroom.

NWEA is committed to continuing to support states' assessment improvement efforts and, although these grant funds are an important first step, we encourage the Department to continue to channel resources towards enhancing the quality of state assessment systems. While ESSA provides the flexibility needed to move states on the pathway of transformation, the process is often overwhelming and burdensome to limited state budgets and capacity.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide NWEA's comments on this exciting opportunity for states. If we can offer any other information or support, please do not hesitate to contact me.



Chris Minnich  
Chief Executive Officer  
NWEA

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### **About NWEA**

[NWEA](#)® is a mission-driven, not-for-profit organization that supports students and educators worldwide by creating assessment solutions that precisely measure growth and proficiency—and provide insights to help tailor instruction. Educators in more than 10,000 schools, districts, and education agencies in 141 countries rely on our flagship interim assessment, [MAP® Growth™](#); our progress monitoring and skills mastery tool, [MAP® Skills™](#); our reading fluency and comprehension assessment, [MAP® Reading Fluency™](#); and our [new assessment solution](#) that combines growth and proficiency measurement. Visit [NWEA.org](#) to find out how NWEA can partner with you to help all kids learn.

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