

MOVING FROM GOOD TO GREAT IN NEW HAMPSHIRE:

Performance Assessment of Competency Education (PACE)

This overview summarizes the New Hampshire Department of Education's (NHDOE's) Performance Assessment Pilot, approved by the US Department of Education on March 1, 2015



OVERVIEW

New Hampshire was just awarded permission from the U.S. Department of Education to pilot an accountability system designed to support deeper learning for students and powerful organization change for schools and districts. The accountability pilot, referred to as Performance Assessment of Competency Education or PACE, is grounded in a competency-based educational approach designed to ensure that students have meaningful opportunities to achieve critical knowledge and skills. These opportunities are judged by the outcomes students achieve and not by inputs such as seat time. Therefore, students must achieve these competencies before moving on to the next major learning targets and/or graduating from high school. High quality performance assessments play a crucial role in the PACE system because of the need to have assessments that measure the depths of student understanding of these complex learning targets. Performance assessments are used as both summative and interim measures in the PACE system as a way to document student learning of the competencies and to support remediation or extension interventions.



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LEARNING ALONG THE WAY

The DOE is not blind to well-known challenges with implementing performance assessments as part of accountability systems as well as with the challenges of building the local capacity necessary for raising the level of student learning, improving local performance assessments, and supporting local accountability determinations. However, one of the most important things we are learning is that the cross district collaboration is a better professional learning structure than almost anything the state (or individual districts) could have supported on its own. Having districts join networks of districts focused on similar goals seems to be a very effective and sustainable strategy.

The DOE's major concern is scaling such efforts to all NH schools. The current PACE accountability system, even if wildly successful, is based on a voluntary proof of concept pilot with high-capacity schools. Improving chronically low-performing schools will be an enormous challenge. The DOE is committed to supporting the development of local leadership and capacity to help low performing schools implement the PACE system with fidelity.

KEY ASPECTS OF PACE

Who	<p>2014-2015: Sanborn Regional School District, Rochester School District, Epping School District, Souhegan School District</p> <p>Planning Districts (to implement in 2015-2016, or when ready): All of the above plus: Pittsfield School District, Seacoast Charter School, Monroe School District, Fall Mountain School District</p>
When	Two-year pilot (through 2015-2016), continuation contingent upon successful pilot outcomes.
“Guardrails”	Districts must demonstrate readiness to be invited to participate in the pilot and adhere to certain commitments to continue with the pilot.
Reciprocal	Compared with more compliance-oriented state accountability approaches, PACE is a true partnership among the participating districts, the DOE, and technical support personnel.
Pilot	This federally approved pilot is not a “waiver” and does not otherwise change the requirement that all districts participate in the Smarter Balanced assessment.
Assessment	<p>Smarter Balanced will be administered in grade 3 (English language arts), 4 (math), 8, and 11. In 2015-2016, the SAT will replace Smarter Balanced in grade 11.</p> <p>At least one, teacher-created, high-quality, common performance assessment, will be administered in all other grades in all districts to help calibrate scoring and expectations across districts. Local assessments of student competencies are administered and monitored throughout the year.</p>
“Over-testing”	Perceptions of over-testing are due, in large part, to having students take tests when parents and educators do not see any direct benefit to the students or the school/district. PACE avoids this problem because the same tests used for accountability are used for local grading and reporting.
Accountability	All parts of the assessment system described above count in accountability determinations, not just the Smarter Balanced assessments.
Support	The pilot is benefiting from significant financial support from the Nellie Mae and William and Flora Hewlett Foundations and technical assistance from the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment and the Center for Collaborative Education.



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