

For Immediate Release

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South Carolina Department of Education Releases Assessment Waiver Survey for Public Input

Columbia, S.C. -Today, the South Carolina Department of Education released an [online survey](#) for public input on the requested assessment waiver to the United States Department of Education. As required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the SCDE must provide public notice and give an opportunity for public input on the waiver request.

"It is critical that students, parents, educators, and anyone with a vested interest in our state's K-12 public education system take a moment to offer their feedback on South Carolina's waiver from federally mandated assessments for the 2020-2021 school year," said Molly Spearman, State Superintendent of Education. "As schools across our state reopen, we must focus on recouping the instruction time lost during COVID-19 school facility closures and ensuring that every member of the school community remains safe and healthy. Administering high stakes assessments in the current environment places undue stress on students, parents, and educators and takes time away from the classroom instruction and individualized support that every child needs."

During the summer of 2020, the South Carolina General Assembly and the Governor passed [Act 124](#), which allowed SCDE to seek a waiver for 2020-21 federally-required assessments and related accountability requirements, including:

- SC READY, grades 3-8 English language arts and mathematics;
- SCPASS, grades 4 and 6 science;
- End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) tests in Algebra 1, Biology 1, USHC, English 2, and English 1 (English 1 administered to specific students, as needed for accountability);
- English learning proficiency exams (ACCESS for ELLs); and
- All corresponding alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards.

The ESSA requires that states give end-of-year (or sometimes end-of-semester) tests to determine how schools, districts, and the state are doing in terms of students meeting proficiency in state standards. In addition, both the ESSA and the State require that the SCDE develop and publish report cards that rate schools and give information about assessment results and other important information.

If the waiver is granted, the SCDE would not administer the exams listed above, and whatever rating the district received last would stay in place until the SCDE resumes giving the exams, upon which the ratings are largely based. College entrance exams (like the SAT and ACT) and the state's Career Readiness Assessments, along with ASVAB (the exam used for military enrollment), the GED examination program will still be administered consistent with those vendors procedures. In addition, formative assessments/benchmark assessments will still be given to give teachers important information on how well students are progressing.

If the waiver is not granted, then the SCDE will be required to administer these assessments in the fall and spring to all students. Because of test security issues, and the test vendors' requirements, these assessments must be administered in person, although districts would need to ensure that they are following the applicable social distancing requirements in effect at that time.

Until the USED grants the waiver, the SCDE will continue preparing to administer these assessments.

The survey can be found [here](#).

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