



DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

Grades 3 - 10 State Assessment June 2022

Summative Assessment

During the spring of 2021, ACT notified the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) that no additional product development would occur on the ACT Aspire summative assessment. They committed to provide the ACT Aspire summative assessment to Arkansas through the spring of 2023. As a result, DESE began the process of researching statewide assessment options. To meet the requirements of §6-15-2904 (Act 930 of 2017), it was necessary to procure a new partnering vendor by July 2022 and develop the assessment by winter of 2024, in order to administer the new statewide summative assessment by spring of 2024 to replace the ACT Aspire.

Procurement Process

DESE worked with the Arkansas Office of State Procurement (OSP) through a competitive bid process to procure a partner vendor to develop our state assessment for ELA, math, and science in grades 3-10. Arkansas adhered to the following RFP schedule:

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| ● Gather feedback from 3,753 educators and 220 families | July 2021 to October 2021 |
| ● Update provided to Joint Education Committee | July 2021 |
| ● Present feedback results and update to State Board | October 14, 2021 |
| ● RFP Release - Led by OSP | November 12, 2021 |
| ● Release Commissioner's Memo about procurement | November 19, 2021 |
| ● Proposal Due Date for vendors | December 10, 2021 |
| ● Final Vendor Proposal Evaluation | January 7, 2022 |
| ● Update provided to State Board | February 10, 2022 |
| ● Anticipation to Award posted | February 10, 2022 |
| ● Protest period closed | February 24, 2022 |

The initial proposals were scored by a panel of Arkansas educators including practicing educators and DESE Assessment experts through a blind process. The RFP review team scored the vendors based on initial proposals and live interviews to determine which vendor could best meet the following essential elements of the RFP:

- Design, develop, administer, and score a valid and reliable adaptive general summative assessment in grades 3-10 for ELA, math, and science that is aligned to the Arkansas Academic Standards;
- Provide access to formative and interim assessments to be used locally to drive instruction;
- Provide students with college and career readiness indicators;
- Provide scores that contain national comparisons of achievement, a student growth measure, and Lexile and Quantile Levels;
- Involve Arkansas educators in the development of the assessment throughout all stages of design;
- Meet all requirements of federal and state laws pertaining to assessment and accountability.

OSP then factored in cost based on a predetermined formula to identify the most advantageous vendor. This vendor was then presented to a team of DESE representatives from Learning Services, Public School Accountability, senior leadership, and the technical advisory committee to:

- review the details of the proposed plan to confirm the vendor could meet the technical requirements,
- refine the contract language, and
- agree upon final contract terms including value-added features.

Through the competitive bid process, **Cambium Assessment Incorporated (CAI)** was identified as the most advantageous vendor. The contract procured under this RFP is anticipated to begin in July of 2022 for development and training for the new assessment. The first administration of the new assessment will occur in the 2023-2024 school year.

Development Process and Implementation Timeline

Arkansas students will continue to take the ACT Aspire in the spring of 2022 as well as spring of 2023. This continuity will allow for a smooth transition to a new assessment and provide consistent data as we continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19.

Upon approval of the contract, DESE will begin working with CAI in July 2022 to develop the assessment through the following process:

Fall 2022

- Convene committees of Arkansas educators to review CAI item bank
- Convene committees of Arkansas educators for Bias and Sensitivity Review
- Develop test blueprint based on Arkansas Academic Standards

Spring 2023

- Host item writing workshops with Arkansas educators
- Develop test policies and procedures
- Communicate assessment information to districts

Fall 2023

- Make periodic and classroom assessments available to districts
- Continue to develop policies and procedures

Spring 2024

- Administer first summative

Summer 2024

- Conduct Linking study to provide a cohesive transition between the two assessment systems
- Convene committees of Arkansas educators to determine achievement and national comparison levels

The assessment will be created using a combination of items from CAI's national test bank as well as custom created items where the existing bank does not provide sufficient coverage of Arkansas Academic Standards. By utilizing CAI's existing item bank, which is used by 5 other states and 1.4 million students, Arkansas will be able to ensure the items on our assessment align to what is expected to be taught in Arkansas schools, while maintaining the rigor that is expected across the nation. After the first administration, committees will be formed to review student results and set achievement levels for the Arkansas assessment. This process will be guided by CAI with practicing educators and educational partners being represented on the committees. Cut scores from other national assessments will be used in the standard setting process to ensure Arkansas achievement levels are comparable to established national measures and provide a comprehensive context of how Arkansas student achievement compares both locally and nationally.

Legislative History and Legal Requirements

Act 930 of 2017, codified at Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-2901 et seq., repealed the previous public school state accountability system, the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program (ACTAAP), and established the Arkansas Educational Support and Accountability Act (AESAA). Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-15-2904 and 6-15-2905 specify that DESE is responsible for maintaining "a statewide student assessment system," which shall be approved by the State Board, and that the Division shall implement the statewide student assessment system and continue to provide for statewide student assessments that are obtained or developed through contracts. DESE is responsible for providing statewide student assessments that are valid and reliable, aligned to the Arkansas Academic Standards, and scored and returned for public school and school district use.