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| For NCSC Project Information | For State System Leadership Information | For State Policy Information | For Technical Information |
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National Testing Consortium (NCSC) to Release Enhanced Assessment Technology System as Open-source Software

(Minneapolis, June 8, 2015) — This summer, the [National Center and State Collaborative](#) (NCSC) multi-state educational testing consortium will release its new Assessment System as open-source software. The open-source NCSC system includes the assessment platform based on the open-source TAO®ⁱ system, and a test administrator portal based on the open-source Drupal CMS technology.

The NCSC Assessment System will benefit any large-scale testing purpose and population. This system delivered online assessments to students with significant cognitive disabilities. The NCSC alternate assessment is based on the same foundation of rigorous real-world content as the general assessments, and is adapted to unique student needs.

The NCSC Assessment System includes test creation and delivery, automated scoring, and accessibility and accommodation functionality. The enhancements to the system developed during the project include:

- Creation of a system to manage users and organizations and track progress;
- Addition of assessment features for user accessibility, including alternate color themes, answer masking, audio player, line reader, and magnification;
- Development of evidence upload functionality to capture and upload student work;
- Presentation of content on printable PDFs for paper-based administration;
- Improvement and expansion of delivery and navigation tools, such as bookmarking to allow users to mark an item for later review.

NCSC is a consortium of 24ⁱⁱ states along with University and non-profit expert partners, working together over four years to develop coordinated curriculum, instruction and assessment resources. All 24 states have been part of the joint effort to construct an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards, aligned to the college and career ready standards, for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in grades 3-8 and 11.

Of these states, 14 states have completed their first operational testing year, using the results of the 2015 Spring administration for the purposes of required Federal and State reporting and accountability, with additional states planning to begin operational testing in Spring of 2016.

NCSC state leaders are enthusiastic about the potential of this important work.

“I am pleased that the NCSC project is moving forward on schedule and that next year Rhode Island schools will be able to use this new assessment to measure the progress and achievements of students with significant cognitive disabilities,” said Deborah A. Gist, Rhode Island Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “The results of this assessment will help us meet the learning needs of all Rhode Island students.”

Dr. Leila Williams, Associate Superintendent Quality Assessment and Adult Education in the Arizona Department of Education notes, “The availability of this open-source solution has tremendous potential to broadly improve assessment practices beyond the current project, even as the NCSC state partners move forward with their multi-state alternate assessment in 2016 and beyond.”

The [NCSC](#) project is funded by the Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education, and is led by the National Center for Educational Outcomes at the University of Minnesota in partnership with four other entities: National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, University of Kentucky, University of North Carolina-Charlotte, and edCount, LLC. The goal of the NCSC project is to ensure that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities achieve increasingly higher academic outcomes and leave high school ready for post-secondary options.ⁱⁱⁱ

Several major testing industry partners have worked with the NCSC consortium in design and development of the open-source software, including Measured Progress, CTB, Breakthrough Technologies and Open Assessment Technologies S.A. Breakthrough Technologies developed the code for the software enhancements in collaboration with all NCSC partners and industry partners. Breakthrough Technologies is nationally recognized for developing all types of software systems, including assessment technology for custom large-scale state summative testing programs. As Open Assessment Technologies S.A.’s authorized partner for the TAO® Assessment Platform in the U.S. and Canada, Breakthrough is experienced in developing and deploying open-source applications and supporting custom implementations.

ⁱ TAO® is a registered trademark of Open Assessment Technologies S.A.

ⁱⁱ The NCSC state partners participating in the spring 2015 NCSC operational assessment are: Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Idaho, Indiana, Pacific Assessment Consortium, Maine, Montana, New Mexico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, and US Virgin Islands. As of spring 2015, additional states are members of the NCSC Consortium, representing varying levels of participation. They are: California, Delaware, Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Wyoming.

ⁱⁱⁱ The NCSC Assessment System was developed under a grant from the US Department of Education (PR/Award #: H373X100002, Project Officer, Susan.Weigert@ed.gov). However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education and no assumption of endorsement by the Federal government should be made.