

What are Educators and Education Stakeholders Asking for in Arkansas’s Next Summative Assessment?

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OVERVIEW

“Our goal is to unleash the professionalism and creativity of educators to provide student-focused learning opportunities for all students.” - Commissioner Key¹

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 ushered in an unprecedented opportunity to reframe state assessment, support, and accountability systems within states’ unique contexts, enabling each state to personalize its approach to ensuring equity, access, and opportunity for all of its students (Arkansas Department of Education, 2018). Arkansas used the opportunity under ESSA to align assessment, support, and accountability efforts to support its vision of leading the nation in student-focused education. In its approved plan, Arkansas indicated its intent to “move to a system of multiple measures” using several instruments within its existing system of assessments which included the ACT Aspire Assessment.

Once again, the Arkansas Department of Education’s Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is embracing an unforeseen opportunity to advance its Vision, Mission, and Goals. Specifically, Arkansas is in the final years of its contract with ACT to administer the ACT Aspire Assessment and ACT will no longer offer ACT Aspire as a summative option after 2023. Replacing this seminal summative assessment provides an opportunity to reimagine Arkansas’s system of assessments responsive to the current needs of the field while capitalizing on advances in measurement and assessment that have occurred since 2016 that are allowable under ESSA.

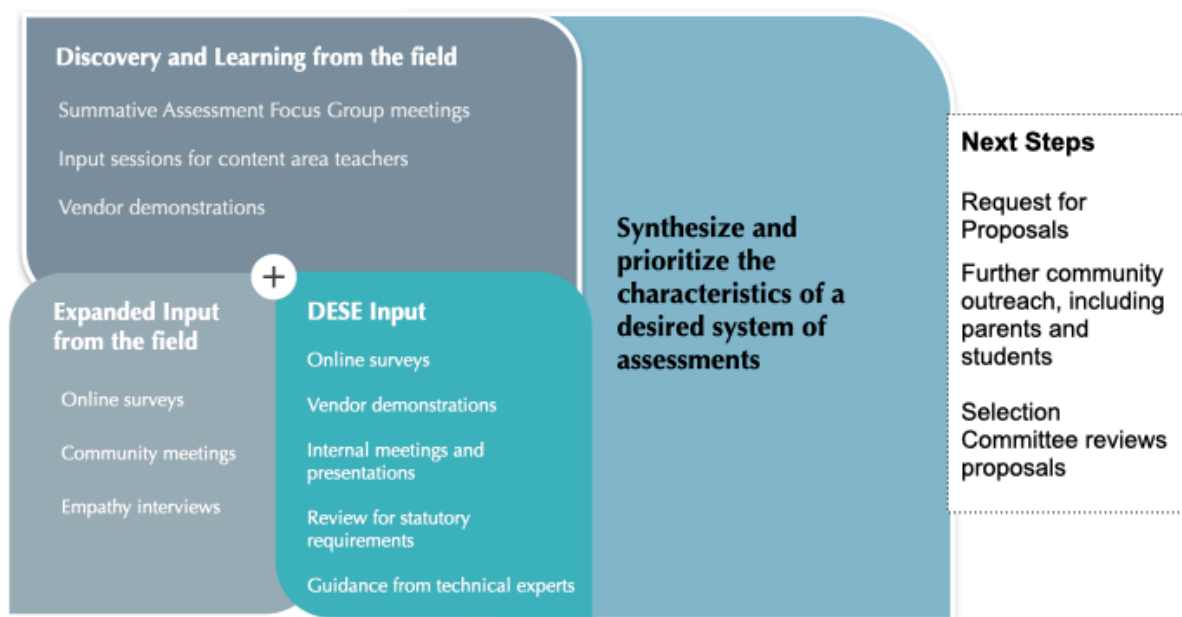
To reimagine Arkansas’s system of assessments, DESE sought input from practicing educators in the field, educational measurement experts, DESE leadership, and education advocacy and support groups. *The purpose of these efforts was to investigate the current needs of practicing Arkansas educators and identify the characteristics of a system of assessments that will enable educators to support student learning while providing critical information to stakeholders regarding the progress and achievement of students in Arkansas.* In turn, the results of this work will inform DESE’s formal Request for Proposals (RFP) for a system of assessments to replace the ACT Aspire.

DESE partnered with the Office of Innovation for Education (OIE) to engage 3,708 stakeholders to obtain concrete, actionable input and guidance from the field. This process included convening focus group meetings for a dedicated core of educators (Summative Assessment Focus Group), expanded input sessions for content area teachers across K - 12 grade levels, community meetings, vendor demonstrations, and an online survey to increase access to providing input.

DESE and OIE used an iterative process that allowed for clarification of initial feedback followed by expanding and deepening the information shared by stakeholders. This process enabled the Summative Assessment Focus Group, OIE, and DESE participants to provide an increasingly clearer and richer picture of what would be desired in a system of assessments. The process is summarized in Figure 1.

¹https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/20201126163549_Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_January_16_final_2_2018.pdf, pg. 1

Figure 1. *Iterative Process for Stakeholder Input*



The Summative Assessment Focus Group started with materials to extend their understanding of the principals of assessment and assessment design, as well as a summary of state and federal requirements to establish an understanding of minimum required grade levels and content areas for assessment as indicated in Table 1. Additionally, the [Critical Elements for State Assessment Peer Review](#) were made available to guide their learning and discussions.

Table 1. *Minimum Federal and State Requirements for Summative Assessment*

Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act	Arkansas A.C.A. § 6-15-2907
States must implement a set of high-quality student academic assessments in math, reading or language arts, and science.	The department shall provide for statewide student assessments that are:
These assessments must meet the requirements of Federal Peer Review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valid and reliable; Obtained or developed, as appropriate, through contracts and project agreements; Aligned to the Arkansas Academic Standards; and, Scored and returned for public school and school district use by July 1 of each year.
At a minimum, assessments must be given: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually in Grades 3-8 for math and reading or language arts; Once in Grades 9-12 for math and reading of language arts; and, Once per year in each grade band 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12 for science. 	

As each input session convened, participants were asked to synthesize their learning and prioritize the characteristics of an assessment system that were most highly valued to support student learning recognizing the system of assessments could go beyond minimum requirements. The following characteristics of a desired system of assessments emerged from educators in the field.

Validity-based Considerations

- Alignment to what students are expected to learn and demonstrate as required by the AR Standards
 - Arkansas educators vetting any existing items, contributing to blueprint development, contributing to item development, etc.
- Transparency of expectations
 - Released items and exemplars
 - Aligned materials to support instructional planning
- Passage-based writing component aligned to AR standards

Assessment System Design

- Adaptive capability that can be expanded to serve instructional purposes (not exclusive to summative information)
- Capable of supporting through year or periodic/interim assessment
- Enable and support equity and accessibility for all students

Scoring and Reporting

- Capable of supporting calculation of student academic growth indicator for accountability for all grade levels for which growth can be calculated, including elementary and secondary schools that are not high schools
- Capable of providing information about student performance against defined expectations within Arkansas Academic Standards (i.e., criterion referenced) and against defined reference groups to include state and national reference groups (i.e., norm-referenced)
- Capable of providing scoring information that communicates student achievement and progress within-year on the same score scale or in some way enabling comparable inferences across within-year testing windows
- Capable of parent-friendly reporting (video-based student reports)

Platform

- User-friendly platform for all stakeholders--especially students
- Single management platform across system of assessments

Additional characteristics of a desired system of assessments emerged from DESE input groups and are summarized below.

- Capable of providing information about student performance on college and career readiness standards as defined by a college admission assessment vendor
- Capable of providing scores to support longitudinal trend analyses regarding criterion- and norm-referenced performance of students

- Capable of supporting claims about students' readiness for the next grade level or postsecondary opportunities
- Capable of providing scores to inform large grain-size program and curriculum evaluation decisions
- Capable of providing scores to inform large grain-size professional development needs

Survey Findings

Stakeholder input was gathered within a compressed timeframe and necessitated the use of a survey to seek broad representativeness regarding key factors in assessment design. The purpose and use of summative assessments are foundational to the design of the assessment. Thus, an online survey was used to garner wide-spread input regarding purpose and use from teachers, leaders, and support organizations. The survey also asked educators to indicate the amount of time they thought appropriate to spend on summative assessment. Responses were received from 3,344 educators and summarized by classroom, building, and district/support roles.

Identifying what students know and are able to do at the end of the school year was rated the highest purpose of the assessment across all roles. The second highest-rated purpose in common across all roles was to ***identify students' ability to demonstrate achievement of grade level standards***. The highest rated ***primary uses of a summative assessment were to help plan the next steps in instruction and to document student growth***.

Stakeholders weighed in on their perception of the appropriate amount of time for students to engage in summative assessment. Currently, the ACT Aspire summative assessment takes between five to six hours to administer at the end of the year. The focus group and survey results supported ***staying within this range of testing time for the purpose of obtaining summative scores***. Concurrently, participants expressed that ***assessing at earlier time periods in the school year would be appropriate if it resulted in actionable and reliable feedback to support student learning***. An aligned system of assessments would make this possible.

Conclusion

DESE and OIE used an iterative process to gather stakeholder input to inform the contents of a Request for Proposals that will reflect the current needs of practitioners in the field and meet federal and state requirements for summative assessment. This process allowed for cyclical clarification of input that expanded and deepened the information shared by stakeholders. The process enabled the Summative Assessment Focus Group, OIE, DESE participants, and the broader field of educators to provide an increasingly clearer and richer picture of what would be desired in a system of assessments. Details describing the participants, process, timeline, and activities are provided in the remaining sections of this report.

Summative Assessment Focus Group Participants

A core group of educators from the field were recruited to participate in dedicated discovery and learning sessions as part of a dedicated focus group. Participants for the Summative Assessment Focus Group were recruited through DESE, the Arkansas Association of Curriculum and Instruction Administrators, AR Educational Cooperative Teacher Center Coordinators, and Arkansas Public Resource Center (APSRC).

Educators from all regions were invited, including APSRC and a representative from the central AR districts. Of the 54 stakeholders, 28 participants committed to full participation and played an active role in the summer input sessions. The purpose of convening this group of educators was to provide focused, dedicated space for expanding educator knowledge about the changes and advances in summative assessment and systems of assessment since 2016 and gather more in-depth feedback than could be offered through a survey. In turn, the Summative Assessment Focus Group expanded input sessions to content subgroups to collect deeper information from practitioners as well.

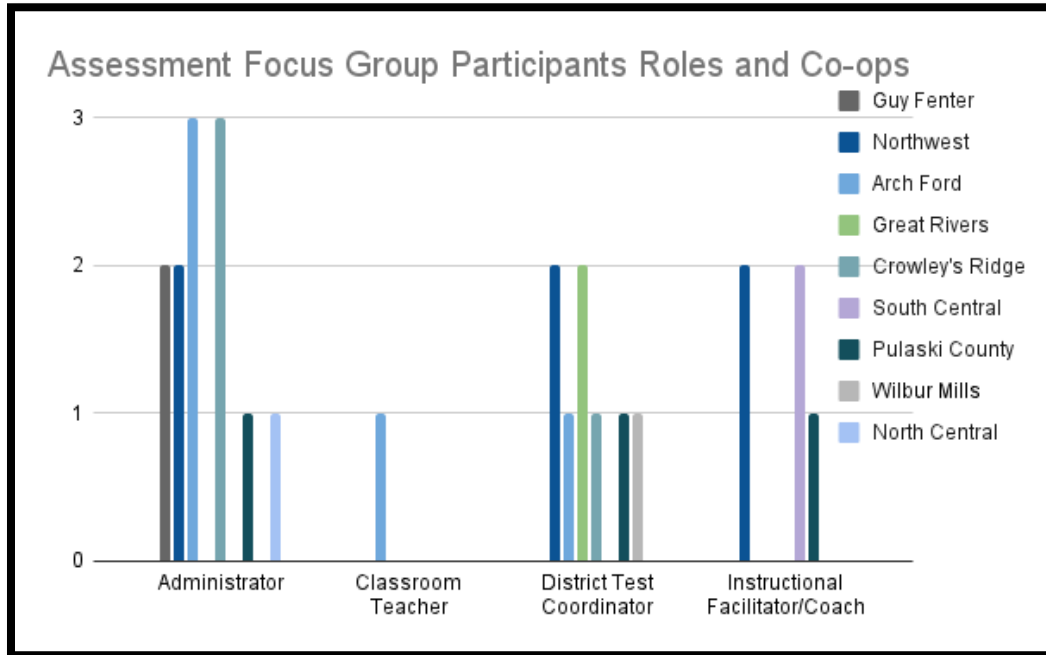
Table 2 is a breakdown of the Summative Assessment Focus Group participants who participated in the full process and activities.

Table 2. *Summative Assessment Focus Group Participants*

Role	Number of Participants
Administrators	12
District Test Coordinators	8
Instructional Facilitators	5
Teachers (classroom and other)	1

The Summative Assessment Focus Group represented all regions of Arkansas as indicated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. *Summative Assessment Focus Group Members' Roles and Education Cooperatives*



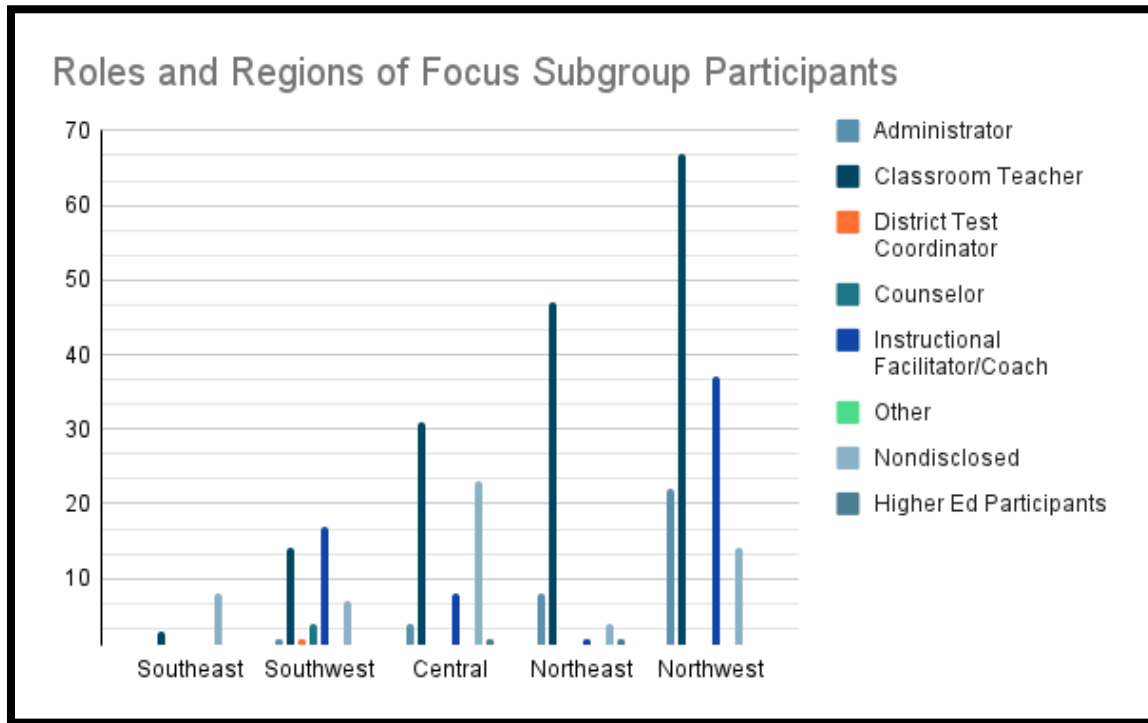
The Summative Assessment Focus Group members expanded the input process by serving as leaders of local content area and grade-level focus groups for collecting input from a broader representation of practicing educators. They were successful in gathering direct input from content and grade-level teachers from across Arkansas. In all, 333 stakeholders participated in these content area and grade-level focus group input sessions. Table 3 provides the grade bands represented by these stakeholders.

Table 3. *Content Area and Grade-Level Focus Group Meeting Participants*

Grade Band	Number of Participants
3rd - 5th grade	120
6th - 8th grade	86
9th- 12th grade	128

The content area and grade-level focus group participants represented all regions of Arkansas and multiple roles in education as indicated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. *Sub-group Participants' Roles and Regions*



The Summative Assessment Focus Group members served as leaders for these deeper input sessions. They were provided with suggested agendas, guidance, and input gathering links to enable the feedback being collected to be shared with DESE and OIE in real time. This allowed for clarification as needed to ensure the input shared was interpreted as intended.

The Summative Assessment Focus Group members convened the following focus groups.

- Grades 3-5 ELA, math, science
- Grades 6-8 ELA, math, science
- Grades 9-12 ELA, math, science

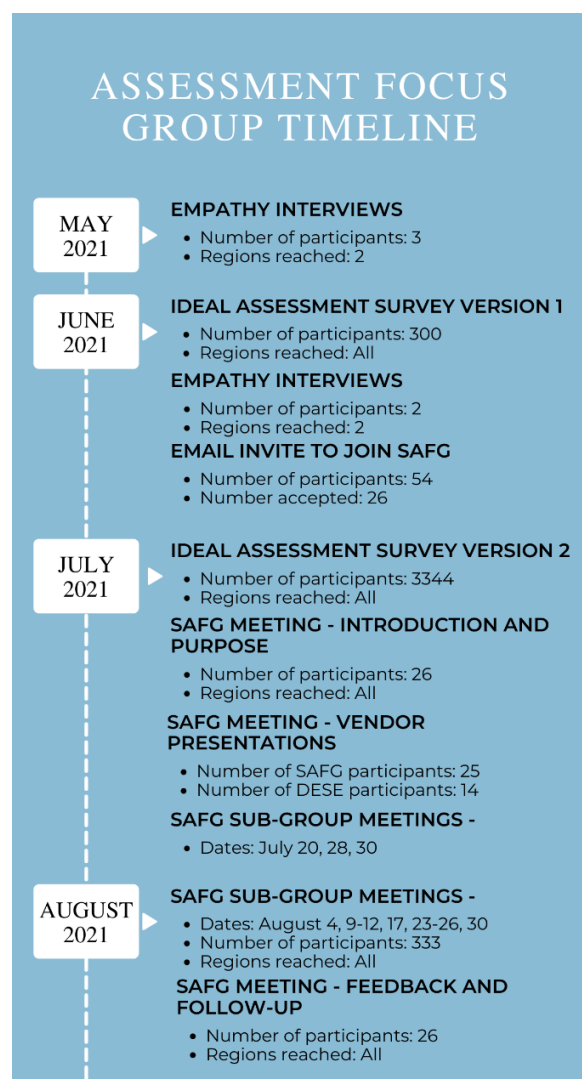
A list of Summative Assessment Focus Group members and their extended content areas and grade-level focus group participants are available upon request.

Focus Group Timeline, Process and Activities

Timeline

DESE and OIE collaboratively developed and implemented the process to gather and extend stakeholder input. Stakeholders were asked to deepen and clarify the input from the field prior to synthesis of the information to inform the writing of a Request for Proposals. This work was compressed into a short timeframe. Specifically, all activities were completed by August 31, 2021, and synthesis followed during September 2021. Figure 4 provides details of the timeline of activities.

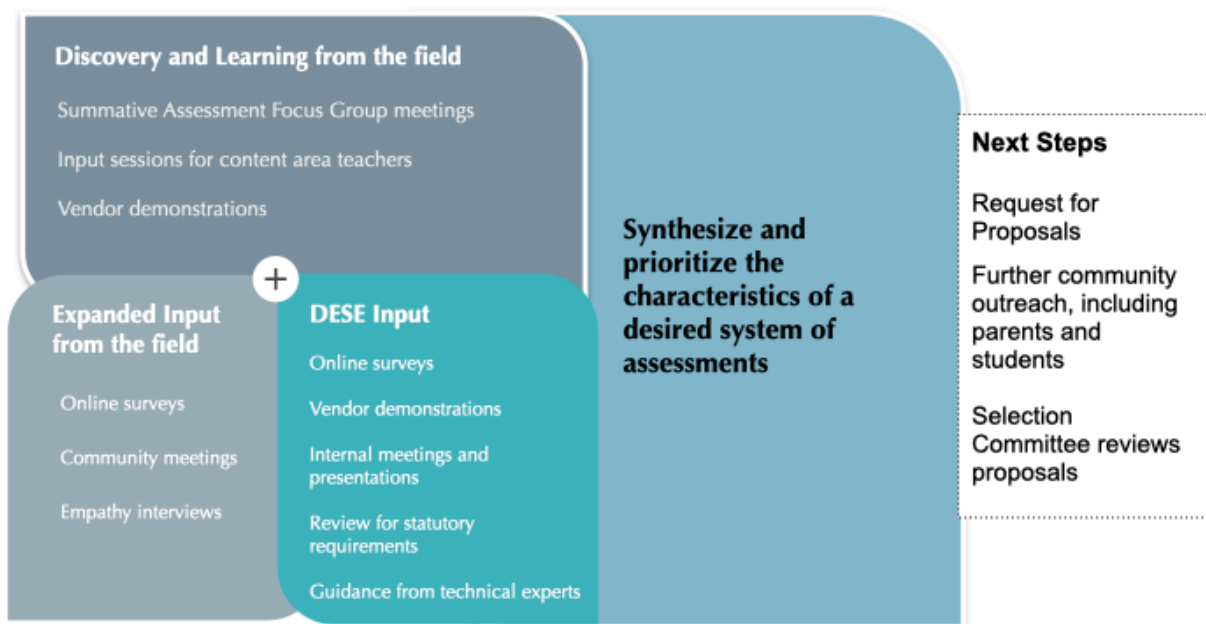
Figure 4. *Timeline for Summative Assessment Focus Group Activities*



Process and Activities

DESE and OIE used an iterative process that allowed for clarification of initial feedback followed by expanding and deepening the information shared by stakeholders. This process enabled the Summative Assessment Focus Group, OIE, and DESE participants to provide an increasingly clearer and richer picture of what would be desired in a system of assessments. The process is summarized in Figure 1 (repeated).

Figure 1 (repeated). *Iterative Process for Stakeholder Input*



Agendas for the Summative Assessment Focus Group input sessions are provided in Appendix B and illustrate the pattern of learning, question and discussion, reflecting, and synthesizing that characterized these meetings. The guiding questions in each agenda illustrate the progress made by participants as they did the work.

Throughout the process it was clear that the more the group learned about assessment options and advances, addressed misconceptions, worked with their local stakeholders, and re-convened as a group, the more some original thinking and feedback on assessment changed.

For example, early input from the July 9th meeting, prior to the vendor presentations, the Summative Assessment Focus Group participants expressed the following questions/concerns.

- Are there formative and progress monitoring options leading up to a summative?
- Will we have access to released items or the ability to see how students respond?
- What level of customization is allowed?
- What examples are available of student view/question format/tech and teacher

- tools/culturally sensitive and equity types of reading and writing passages?
- What teacher level and admin level reports/PD for all users; usable reports for staff and parents are available?
- Can we require alignment to AR standards?

[Commissioner's Memo LS-22-002](#) requested vendors present to the Summative Assessment Focus Group and a DESE Focus group from the Office of Student Assessment. Vendors were asked to highlight their capabilities to develop and implement an innovative, balanced system of assessment to support improved teaching and learning. The Summative Assessment focus group members and DESE members attended these presentations separately in their respective groups. Vendors who responded by the deadline and presented to the focus groups are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. *Vendors Who Responded to CM LS-22-002 and Presented to Summative Assessment and DESE Focus Groups*

Assessment Vendor	City, State	Website
Pearson	Cedar Rapids, IA	https://www.pearsonassessments.com/
NWEA	Portland, OR	https://www.nwea.org/
Cambium Assessment	Washington D.C.	https://www.cambiumlearning.com/brands/cambium-assessment
Smarter Balanced	Oakland, CA	https://smarterbalanced.org/
Data Recognition Corporation	Maple Grove, MN	https://www.datarecognitioncorp.com/

Following the vendor presentations, DESE participants and the Summative Assessment Focus Group members moved beyond what they would change about what they have in the current summative assessment. They began to expand their thinking toward what might be possible in a desired summative assessment if they could ‘write the recipe’ so to speak.

Expanded Input Through Content-Area and Grade Span Groups

To ensure details related to specific grade spans and content areas were addressed, the Summative Assessment Focus Group participants served as leaders of additional content area and grade-level input sessions in their schools, districts, and communities. Agendas (see Appendix B) and guidance provided by DESE and OIE, as well as their own experience in focus group input process, enabled them to lead these sessions. They tasked the content area and grade-level teachers with the following questions.

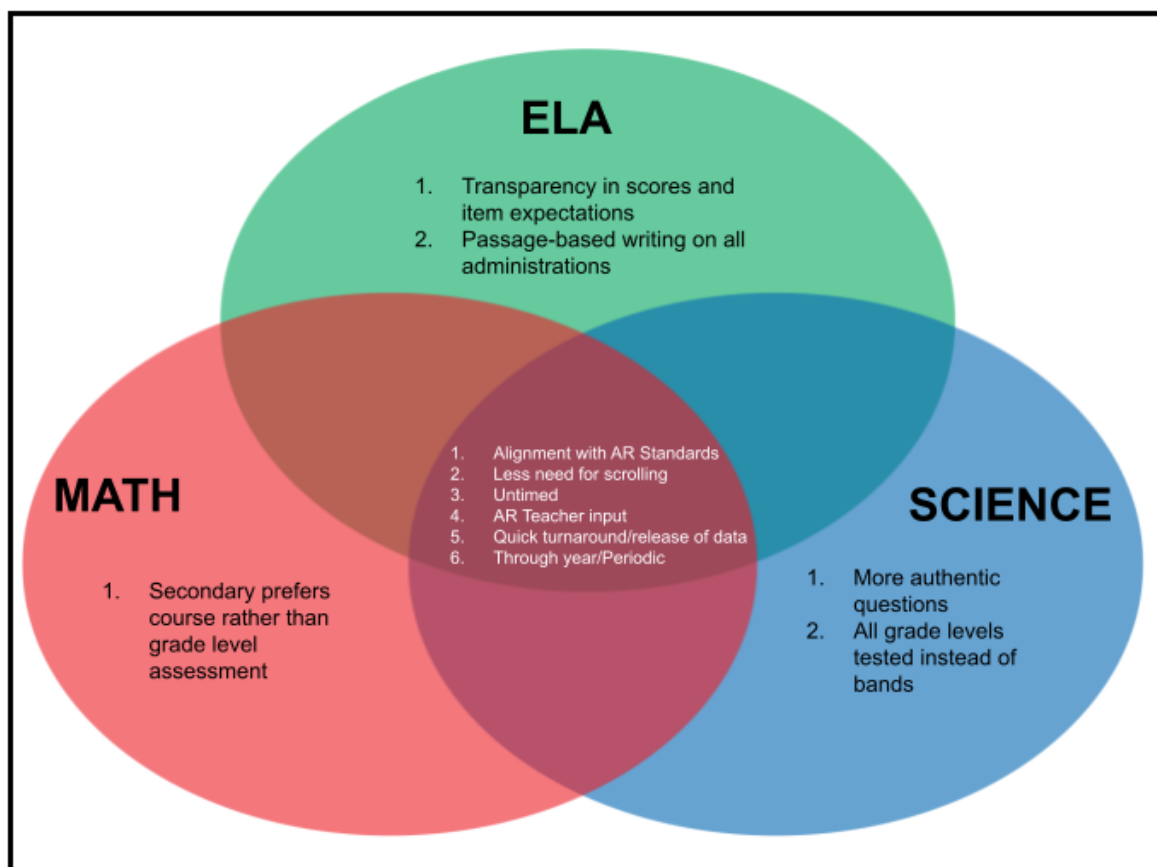
- In your content area, what are the top 5 features you would like to see in a summative assessment?
- Compare and contrast the advantages/disadvantages of an adaptive computer-based test and a linear computer test?
- What type of assessment would best benefit you in supporting student learning: through year, periodic, or end of year?

High schools had a few special considerations and were prompted to reflect on the following:

The federal government only requires ELA, Math and Science to be assessed once in grades 9-12. Some states are using ACT/SAT to meet this requirement while others give tests at different grades or at the end of courses. What might you value from a state assessment in the high school grade span? (Example: Testing in more than one grade, testing at the end of/during a specified course(s), growth score across grades, College/Career/Community preparedness score.)

Content area and grade-level focus group input sessions surfaced several subject-specific considerations that are highlighted in Figure 5.

Figure 5. *Subject Specific Priorities*



The final meeting of the Summative Assessment Focus Group served as a time to synthesize across all learning and input from stakeholders, incorporating input from the content area and grade span sub-group meetings. Participants in the final meeting summarized their priority considerations and competing tensions (possible trade-offs). The summary is provided in Figure 6. To view the original in full size, click this [hyperlink](#).

Figure 6. Summary of Priorities and Competing Tensions for the Characteristics of a Desired System of Assessments

		Math	ELA	Science
3-5	Priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Enough Time to show what students know. Test Items Equitably relate to our background knowledge, vocabulary. Variety of DOK level questions. Priority Standards Through year aligned to local scope and sequence. Reports with next steps for teachers and easily understood. User friendly platform and layout for students. Teacher selection of test items AFTER AMPLE TRAINING 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> timeliness with data aligned directly with AR standards AR teacher input/vetted questions useable data that can directly support planning and instruction passage based writing instead of writing prompt 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Test students on what is taught in their grade (match science standards) Through year-3 times with only summative counting (first two: guide instruction) Test every year for accountability. Platform-student friendly-find info needed on one slide with no scrolling. No time constraints Question transparency: released items-teacher vetted Make sure there is a growth score
	Tensions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose: formative vs. summative Who determines power standards. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> timeliness along with writing scores essential standards different state wide (5) Similar cut and scale scores How K-2 State Assessments correlates with 3-5 testing time vs. loss of instructional time (3) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> If assessment is through year, pacing is a concern (mobility issues, comparing to other districts) If adaptable will it be 1 yr above/below
		3-5 Math Feedback	3-5 ELA Feedback	3-5 Science Feedback
6-8	Priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment with AR standards Choosing what we can test on through year model Input on test content Make sure math doesn't really assess literacy Strong predictive and prescriptive data by standard Specific item feedback Measure proficiency and growth Online calculator matching classroom calculator DTC/Proctor friendly management portal 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Release more samples of expectations from year to year--help teachers and students grow. (increase the number of released items) When students have to scroll between passages and up and down to read and compare texts they struggle and do not get to fully focus and apply literacy skills over computer skills. (paper copy of the readings would be helpful even if students are entering their answers on the computer) Align the reading and writing assessments to the Science of Reading - ensuring that reading passages and writing prompts take background knowledge into consideration. (see Louisiana pilot) Utilize a custom assessment so that AR educators can ensure alignment to state standards. Authentic writing assessment with clearer feedback about student abilities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Students are tested on scientific phenomenon much like standards. Test every year Assess science not reading Growth Released items - transparency Through year(s) model to help drive instruction
	Tensions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Can a linear result be predicted from a computer adaptive system. Difference between what "we want" and "what is possible" How will the scores be used? Do we assess by grade (8th) or course (Algebra 1) or both? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Timing - untimed vs. timed for students and the logistics of students being able to truly show what they know. Through year assessment and how the accountability score is figured. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Equitable access for reading How will the scores be used for accountability? Cost factor of every year assessments Consider a more robust type of assessment for critical thinking, problem solving, inquiry Possibility of through year(s) of adaptive science
			6-8 ELA Feedback	6-8 Science Feedback
9-12	Priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Align to Arkansas Standards Course Driven rather than grade driven Computer Adaptive test Periodic/Interim assessments available We need to initiate a campaign to target students on the importance of the state test and doing their best. It's not for a grade and there are so many who have "checked out" because of that. What motivation can we give to make them try their best.....? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Limit on testing days (or testing time) Protect Instructional time. AR teacher input on testing items t avoid background knowledge bias Technology should be user-friendly for test takers with a variety of question types Access to support materials, resources, and released items. Writing Prompt not dependent upon text; artificial intelligence scoring for quick turn around (through-year model). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Content-based state standards teacher friendly reports, good feedback, released items and material fo support User friendly in navigating test for students Equity for equitable opportunities for different languages and college ready vs career ready one test in the highschool experience after the last science course
	Tensions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Not clear expectations of the assessment When should we assess the students? After they had the class or 3 years after they've had the class? Language used on the tests should be consistent with what students are accustomed to Tests should provide clear feedback that can drive instruction and provide feedback to both learner and instructor Are students meeting important milestones or are students able to add fractions....? Think logically? WHAT is important? Do we need a summative test? Or an assessment system? Can we please have a consistent platform among assessments (ELPA, Summative assessment, etc.) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Some teachers feel as if the ACT is more relevant for HS students because of scholarships etc. Others argue that te test doesn't line up to standards. Growth? Some do not want a return to EOC because of the pressure on the exit course/teacher. Make-up tests for the through year model. HS students may "throw" on adaptive test...results of years of testing. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Paper pencil vs computer dynamic test- we couldn't get a good read on how teachers felt. Some liked but others thought it would take too long how many times we test in the high school types of questions, more lab experience with analytical questions vs basic mc type question
		9-12 Math Feedback	9-12 ELA Feedback	9-12 Science Feedback

Stakeholder Recommendations

A summary of the prioritized consensus characteristics for a desired assessment system resulting from the input process are provided below.

Validity-based Considerations

- Alignment to what students are expected to learn and demonstrate as required by the Arkansas Academic Standards to include appropriate depth of knowledge.
 - Arkansas educators vetting any existing items, contributing to blueprint development, contributing to item development, etc. in each assessed subject area.
 - A preference to complete required testing by the end of sophomore year was noted.
- Transparency of expectations
 - Released items and exemplars to increase their understanding of how test items relate to the standards being assessed and the various item types used on the assessment.
 - Aligned materials to support instructional planning.
- Passage-based writing component aligned to AR standards.

Assessment System Design

- Adaptive capability that can be expanded to serve instructional purposes (not exclusive to summative information)
 - For the purposes of summative assessment, participants indicated a preference for an adaptive assessment that assesses one level above or below grade level in all grades.
 - In the case of students with disabilities and English learners the potential to adjust for more levels above and below grade level was also noted.
- Capable of supporting through year or periodic/interim assessment
 - Feedback was mixed with support for through-year assessment designed as a periodic. The first two assessments taken in the school year would be designed for educators to plan instruction based on results, while the final assessment would be a summative assessment.
 - Educators noted an important factor for a through-year/periodic assessment would be the identification of power standards or essential standards.
- Enable and support equity and accessibility for all students
 - Educators suggested integration of academic and standard vocabulary aligned with Arkansas Academic Standards, with hyperlinked non-academic vocabulary when appropriate, culturally appropriate context, and questions that apply to both college-bound and career-bound students.
 - A further consensus was to focus on a power test (untimed within reason) versus a speed test (tight time limits) to enable all students to have adequate time to demonstrate what they know and can do.

Scoring and Reporting

- Capable of supporting calculation of student academic growth indicator for accountability for all grade levels for which growth can be calculated, including elementary and

secondary schools that are not high schools

- Capable of providing information about student performance against defined expectations within Arkansas Academic Standards (i.e., criterion referenced) and against defined reference groups to include state and national reference groups (i.e., norm-referenced)
- Capable of providing scoring information that communicates student achievement and progress within-year on the same score scale or in some way enabling comparable inferences across within-year testing windows
 - Classroom teachers expressed a desire for reporting that enables drilling down to reliable, standards-level information to help identify skill gaps efficiently coupled with guidance for the next step in instruction.
- Capable of parent-friendly reporting (video-based student reports) to include intuitive graphs and other visuals, free from statistical jargon, identification of strategies for helping their student at home, and delivered in parents' native language to the extent possible.
- Summary reports will need to be available at the grade, school, and district levels to inform local planning and follow-up.
 - Desired reports would communicate progress and mastery information that is comparable across periodic and summative assessments.
 - Dynamic reporting would enable user-friendly rostering and re-rostering, customized manuals, and training provided to assist educators in appropriate use of the results for planning next steps in instruction.

Platform

- User-friendly platform for all stakeholders--especially students
 - Student experience in taking the test should minimize barriers to students' demonstrating what they know and can do.
 - Test management and administration should be user-friendly.
- Single management platform across system of assessments.

The participants in the Summative Assessment Focus Group and content subgroups attested to the power of the process and activities leading to consensus on the characteristics of a desired system of assessments.

"I utilize the data from the assessment in my classroom, like other teachers across the state, so being able to discuss the ways and options for receiving and applying the data with our own students made me feel supported in advocating for my students by allowing our voices to be heard during the decision making process." Kasey Johnston, Teacher, Hermitage School District

"We, as educators, know what we teach in our classrooms and how we teach it. It was wonderful to hear all sides and to discuss the pros and cons of the different types of tests. We have seen the same format year after year, and change can be scary. However, by breaking out into groups to discuss the methods and then bringing it back together to see what others had said really opened my eyes to new possibilities." - Melissa Cluck, Teacher, Siloam Springs School District

“I always enjoy hearing other perspectives from educators from all sizes and areas of the state. While we universally share some of the same struggles, each district has its own unique set of challenges, and it is from hearing about those, we can learn.” - Dr. K.K. Bradshaw, Teacher and DESE Lead Group, Conway Public Schools

“Seeing the same ideas shared on a common recording form validated the feedback my teachers provided me and was reassuring that change is needed.” - Tammy Bullock, Teacher, Farmington School District

“My coop was great in helping assist me with reaching out to educators in my region. The resources provided by this group were also essential in helping explain new ways of thinking about assessments. The one page sheet, that had the nuts and bolts of testing, was a great resource for educators in the field.” - Jennifer Fithen, Teacher, East Poinsett County School District

“Both teachers, administrators as well as other support personnel were included in our discussions, so we were able to hear from multiple perspectives.” - Jennifer Murphy, Teacher, South Central Service Cooperative

Next Steps

The goal of the stakeholder input process is to inform the writing of the Request For Proposals (RFP) for the system of assessments and/or instrument that will replace the ACT Aspire. This report and the RFP will be provided to DESE leadership to engage the State Board of Education in the process and seek State Board members’ input as well. Further revisions to the RFP may result from these additional reviews.

Concurrently, OIE will conduct parent and student input sessions, to the extent possible, through a process of empathy interviews in October. Additional findings will be reported to the selection committee with regards to the design of score reporting.

Following the release of the RFP a selection committee composed of five members—educators and DESE representatives—will review and score submitted proposals and present a recommendation for the proposal that is most responsive to the priorities outlined in the RFP.

Appendix A: Survey Results

An iterative survey was conducted to gather responses on the purpose and use of a statewide summative assessment from three general perspectives: the classroom, the building level, and district level. 3,344 professionals in education responded from all over the state of Arkansas. The top three results from each perspective are listed below.

Identified Purpose of Summative Assessment Statements

Classroom Top 3 Identified Purpose of Summative Assessment Statements

- Statement 1: Identify what my students know and are able to do at the end of the school year.
- Statement 3: Identify whether my students can perform on grade level standards.
- Statement 5: Validly and reliably pinpoint my students' areas of strength and areas that need more work to perform on grade level standards.

Building Top 3 Identified Purpose of Summative Assessment Statements

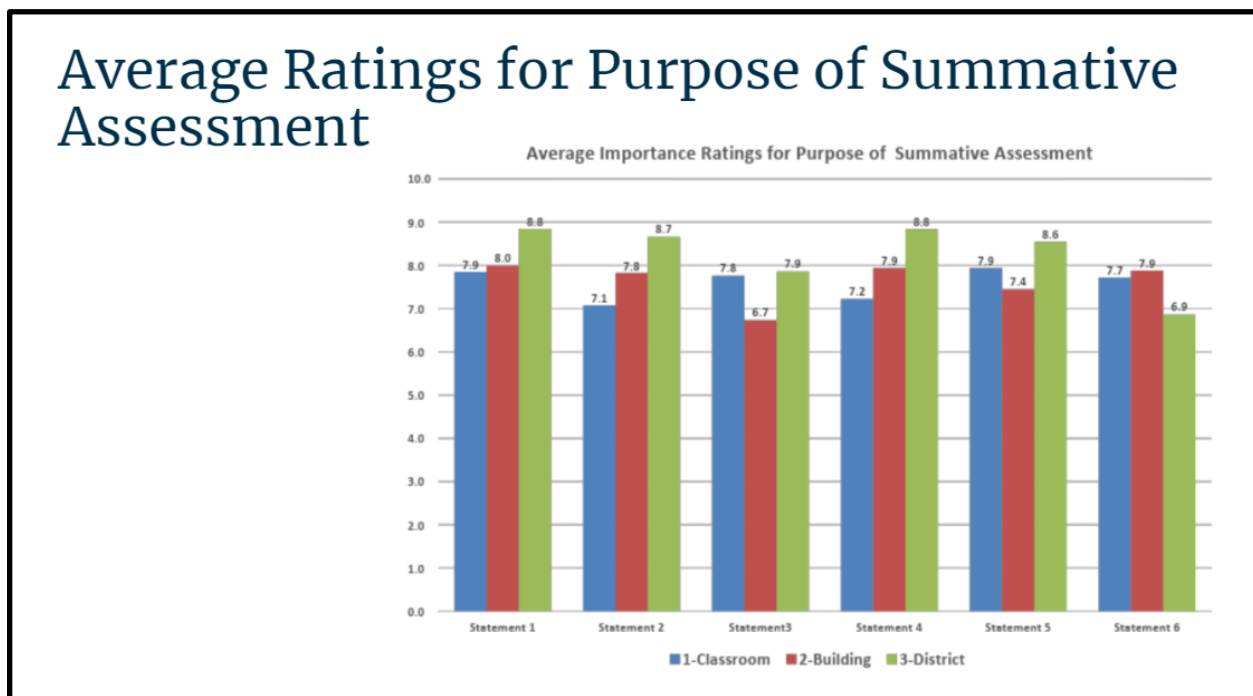
- Statement 1: Identify what my students know and are able to do at the end of the school year.
- Statement 5: Predict whether students in my school are on track to demonstrate mastery on grade level standards at the end of the school year.
- Statement 6: Plan next steps for learning for students in my school.

District/Cooperative Top 3 Identified Purpose of Summative Assessment Statements

- Statement 1: Identify what my students know and are able to do at the end of the school year.
- Statement 2: Identify whether students can perform on grade level standards.
- Statement 4: Validly and reliably pinpoint students' areas of strength and areas that need more work to perform on grade level standards.

Figure 7 provides the full results for the survey responses for primary purpose of assessment.

Figure 7. *Survey Results Average Ratings for Purpose of Summative Assessment*



Identified Use of Summative Assessment Statements

Classroom Top 3 Identified Use of Summative Assessment Statements

- Statement 2: Use results to inform my next steps for instruction.
- Statement 3: Use results to inform where my students might have unfinished learning from prior years.
- Statement 6: Understand how my students are progressing or growing based on where they have been (their prior achievement).

Building Top 3 Identified Use of Summative Assessment Statements

- Tie - Statement 1: Report internally to teams and whole staff how students in grade-levels and across the school are doing at the end of the year; Statement 3: Use results to inform where students in my school might have unfinished learning from prior years.
- Statement 2: Use grade-level and/or school summaries to inform teacher teams/PLC discussion and next steps.
- Statement 6: Understand how students in my school are progressing or growing based on where they have been (their prior achievement).

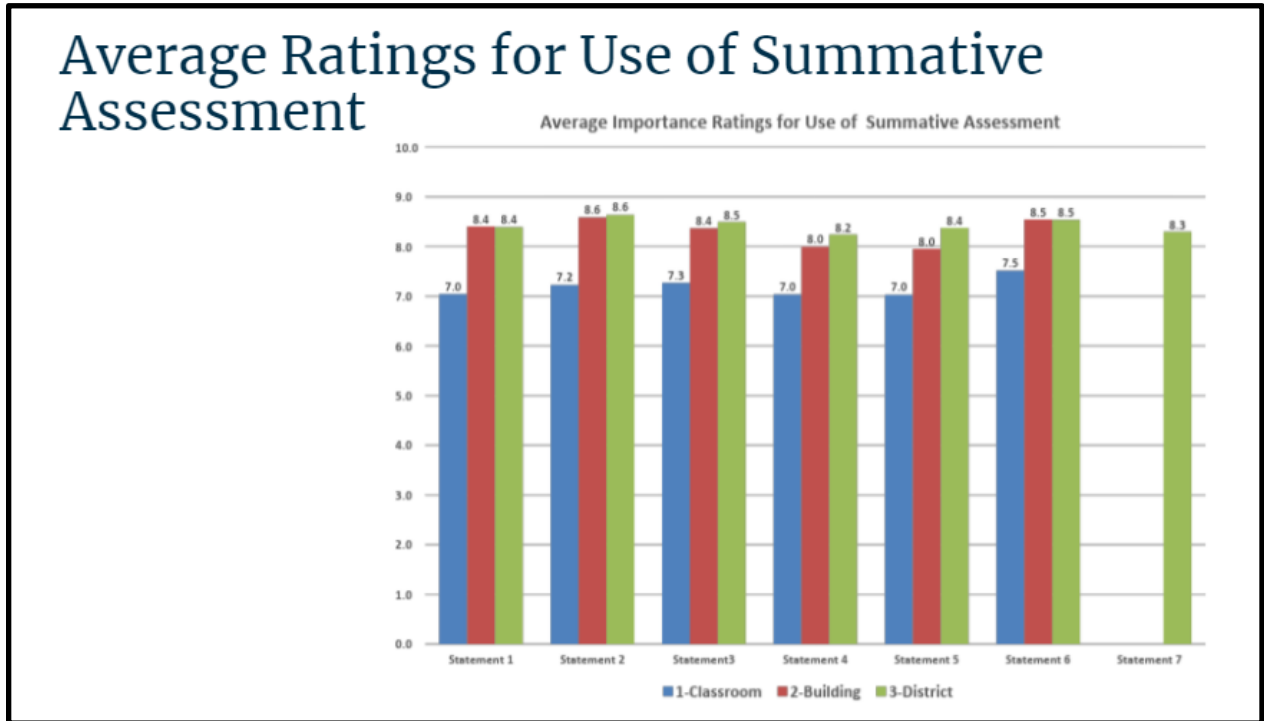
District/Cooperative Top 3 Identified Use of Summative Assessment Statements

- Statement 2: Use school and/or district summaries to inform teams/PLC discussions and next steps.
- Statement 3: Use results to inform where students in schools or districts might have unfinished learning from prior years.

- Statement 6: Understand how students in schools or districts are progressing or growing based on where they have been (their prior achievement).

Figure 8 provides the full results for the survey responses for use of assessment results.

Figure 8. *Survey Results Average Ratings for use of Summative Assessment*



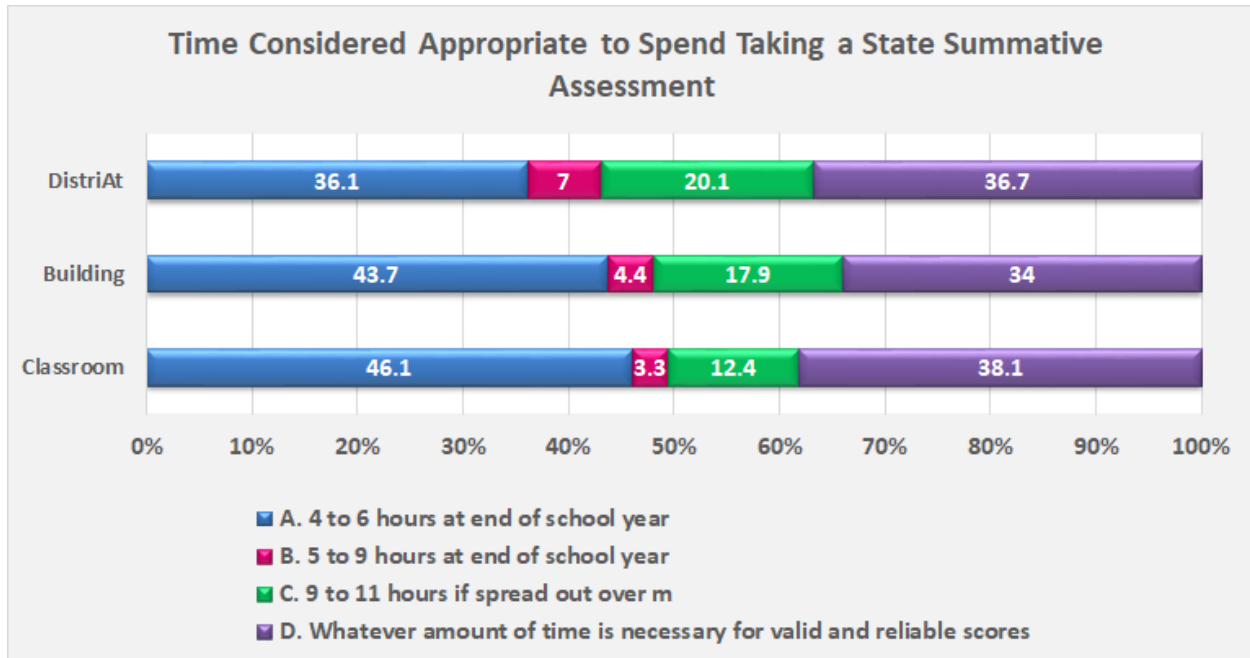
Appropriate Time for Summative Assessment

The two predominant choices for respondents' thoughts about the appropriate amount of time for summative assessment were:

- Four to six hours at the end of the year
- Whatever amount of time is necessary for valid and reliable scores

The question regarding time was specific to summative assessment and not the broader idea of a system of assessments used throughout the year. The results are provided in Figure 9.

Figure 9. *Survey Results for Time Considered Appropriate to Spend Taking a State Summative Assessment*



Appendix B. Processes and Activities Supporting Documents

Agenda screen shots are provided in this Appendix. Materials shown as hyperlinked within the screen shots are available upon request.

July 9 Agenda



Summative Assessment Focus Group

July 9

Zoom Info:

<https://uark.zoom.us/j/5823852016?pwd=UitTV2tnbWNSdzlxd29qdFpNMUNRdz09>

Time	Topic	Links	Notes
09:00 - 09:15	Welcome, introductions and purpose	Slides	
09:15 - 09:30	Grounding Activity	Jamboard	
09:30 - 09:50	Working Agreements	Slides	
09:50 - 10:30	Overview of Assessment	Jamboard Assessment Overview Document Peer Review Info Survey Answer Key	
10:30 - 10:45	Break		
10:45 - 12:15	4 Big Chunks	Slides 4 Square for 4 Chunks	
12:15 - 01:00	Lunch		
01:00 - 02:15	Co-Design Vendor Criteria	Handouts	
02:15 - 02:30	Wrap-up next steps	Content Subgroups	Vote on Criteria for Vendor Presentations Sign up for a Subgroup

July 21-22, 2021



Assessment Educator Focus Group

Agenda

Purpose: Gather concrete, actionable input and guidance from the field to help inform elements essential to an RFP for assessment.

At times you may be asked to:

- Provide *input* from your perspective in terms of your knowledge of the work and your opinions regarding how it can be done in order to ensure that multiple and divergent ideas are generated and considered;
- Identify *foreseeable risks and benefits and/or* vet the input from different perspectives from the field; and/or,
- Suggest ways to *synthesize divergent input* into viable options for consideration by recommenders and decision-makers.

July 21, 2021

Room: Rock Island V-VI

Time	Topic	Responsible	Notes
8:30-9:00	Welcome, Purpose, Roles, Breakfast	Denise	Note Taking Tool
9:00 - 10:30	NWEA Demonstration		PPT Slides
10:30 - 10:45	Debrief/Break	Crystal	Add your top 2 pluses, 2 deltas, and 2-3 essential questions to the collective note taking tool .
10:45 - 12:15	Smarter Balance Demonstration (Virtual)		Overview Document Fairness Paper PPT Slides
12:15 - 1:00	Lunch/Debrief	Crystal	
1:00 - 2:30	DRC Demonstration		
2:30- 3:00	Debrief/Next Steps	Crystal	Reflect back on your wonderings, are there questions you need answered before you can formulate your feedback?

July 22, 2021

Room: Rock Island V-VI

Time	Topic	Responsible	Notes
8:30-9:00	Welcome, Purpose, Roles, Breakfast	Denise	
9:00 - 10:30	Pearson Demonstration		PPT Slides
10:30 - 10:45	Debrief/Break		
10:45 - 12:15	Cambium Demonstration		PPT Slides Overview
12:15 - 1:00	Debrief/Lunch		
1:00 - 1:30	Whole Group Debrief		Reflect back on your wonderings, are there questions you need answered before you can formulate your feedback.
1:30-1:45	Break		
1:45-3:00	Planning for subgroup work	Hope	Subgroup Work Record Keeping Subgroup Meeting/Feedback Template Resources Google Form about Sub Groups

Assessment DESE Team

Agenda

July 21, 2021

Room: Murray

Time	Topic	Responsible	Notes
8:30-9:00	Welcome and Intro		DESE: Collective Note Taking Tool
9:00 - 10:30	Smarter Balance Demonstration (Virtual)		Overview Document Fairness Paper PPT Slides
10:30 - 10:45	Break		
10:45 - 12:15	DRC Demonstration		
12:15 - 1:00	Lunch/Debrief		
1:00 - 2:30	NWEA Demonstration		
2:30-2:45	Break		
2:45-3:30	Debrief		

July 22, 2021

Room: Murray

Time	Topic	Responsible	Notes
8:30-9:00	Welcome, Purpose, Roles, Breakfast		
9:00 - 10:30	Pearson Demonstration		
10:30 - 10:45	Debrief/Break		
10:45 - 12:15	Cambium Demonstration		
12:15 - 1:30	Debrief/Lunch		

August 31, 2021



Summative Assessment Focus Group

August 31, 2021

Location: Hilton Garden Inn West Little Rock and Zoom

Facilitators: Hope Worsham & Crystal Beshears, Face to Face Denise Airola, Virtual

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/97985161928>

Time	Topic	Notes
09:00 - 09:15 Crystal	Welcome, introductions and purpose	Slides for Today
9:15-11:30 Subgroup Debrief 11:30-12:30 Lunch 12:30-2:30 Synthesis feedback, discuss tensions and provide final priorities	What resonated with you from the survey? What's emerging from Top 10 and Survey? Subgroup Work Debrief/Share Grade Band Groups	Survey Data <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slides• Survey Key Top 10 as reference <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emerging Themes• Synthesis of Top 10 ACTION: Highlight a content subgroup leader that we can contact for additional feedback as needed. Turn their cell YELLOW HERE . <i>What was clarified, answered, anything new emerging?</i> Record top attributes/tensions on the Priorities Tab HERE . Goal: What are the priorities given the additional data and dialogue? (remember we are informing the decisions but not making the final decisions)
2:30-3:00	RFP ToolKit	https://www.nciea.org/rfp-toolkit Show the table of contents with call outs to where their input will be utilized.
3:00-3:15	Wrap-up	

Appendix C: Stakeholder Feedback

What were some of the highlights you experienced in being part of this process?

“It gave our teachers a real voice.” - Robin Baugher, Teacher, Manila Public Schools

“It was good to hear that I am not alone in recognizing that our current assessments are obstructive to student learning and does not align with classroom expectations.” - Caleb Johnson, Teacher, Springdale Public Schools

“I'm thankful each co-op area was represented. It was refreshing to be included in this conversation about what we want to see in a state assessment.” Meagan Padgett, Teacher, DeWitt School District

“Appreciating the process and how ADE DESE values the voice of their districts; enjoyed learning the diverse needs of educators in the same and different positions.” - Judy Dunmire, Teacher, Camden Fairview School District

“My team and I were able to brainstorm actively without interruption and work collaboratively to find common goals for the future assessment.” - Nikki Gordon, Teacher, Jonesboro Public Schools

“It was truly a collaborative process that began by our being given academic reading to equip us to be able to come to conclusions. This foundational knowledge base was essential to understanding the "big picture" as well as being able to guide our subcommittees to a deeper understanding of the opportunities for change in our assessment system.” - Dr. K.K. Bradshaw, Teacher and DESE Lead Group, Conway Public Schools

“Working in small groups to discuss key questions and determine group answers and sharing out with the whole group. Capturing all group feedback on one document that all could see and review. Processing in small group, whole group, and then individually.” - Kelle Meeker, Teacher, Siloam Springs School District

“Collaborating with educators from other schools about what is important in their districts. I was surprised that despite our size and locations, for the most part, we all agreed on assessment priorities. I enjoyed hearing from testing companies about options for testing. I appreciated that state level officials were willing to listen to the voice of educators in the field about how testing is occurring in our schools. I LOVED the conversations we had openly as a group.” - Jennifer Fithen, Teacher, East Poinsett County School District

“It was nice to hear feedback from other districts and know that we all recognize the same strengths and weaknesses. The discussion helped us think through some areas we might not have considered previously.” - Tracy Kinney, Teacher, Bentonville Public Schools

“The activities that helped us refine our own thinking and see from other lenses was a highlight

of this experience. Those activities made us better equipped to better articulate our feedback.” - Teisha Weisenfels, Teacher, Rogers Public Schools

What are some ways you felt supported in gathering more input from other educators in the field?

“Oftentimes, educators feel left out of conversations involving standardized assessments. We feel as if we are voiceless in that regard. However, being involved in this focus group and being able to connect, collaborate, and brainstorm with colleagues was empowering and suggested that we could have a voice in the decision-making process.” - Dr. Adam Eckard, Teacher, Jonesboro Public Schools

“I felt validated in that educators from other places felt the same way I did about some things.” - Paula Harris, Teacher, Conway Public Schools

“The Arkansas Council for Teachers of Mathematics and The Arkansas Association of Mathematics Leaders supported by sending an email blast to math educators for the content/grade level Zooms.” - Judy Dunmire, Teacher, Camden Fairview School District

“I utilize the data from the assessment in my classroom, like other teachers across the state, so being able to discuss the ways and options for receiving and applying the data with our own students made me feel supported in advocating for my students by allowing our voices to be heard during the decision making process.” Kasey Johnston, Teacher, Hermitage School District

“We, as educators, know what we teach in our classrooms and how we teach it. It was wonderful to hear all sides and to discuss the pros and cons of the different types of tests. We have seen the same format year after year, and change can be scary. However, by breaking out into groups to discuss the methods and then bringing it back together to see what others had said really opened my eyes to new possibilities.” - Melissa Cluck, Teacher, Siloam Springs School District

“I always enjoy hearing other perspectives from educators from all sizes and areas of the state. While we universally share some of the same struggles, each district has its own unique set of challenges, and it is from hearing about those, we can learn.” - Dr. K.K. Bradshaw, Teacher and DESE Lead Group, Conway Public Schools

“I felt that we had a voice and that we were heard. Sometimes in education, changes are made by those who are not in the classroom and those people are not cognitive of the true classroom dynamics.” - Kenna Patterson, Teacher, Dardanelle High School

“Listening and engaging in conversations over things we agreed on and things that I hadn't thought of. There was a varying degree of expertise and how options for one grade band would counteract other grade bands.” - LaDonna Oates, Teacher, Little Rock School District

“Seeing the same ideas shared on a common recording form validated the feedback my teachers provided me and was reassuring that change is needed.” - Tammy Bullock, Teacher, Farmington School District

“My coop was great in helping assist me with reaching out to educators in my region. The resources provided by this group were also essential in helping explain new ways of thinking about assessments. The one page sheet, that had the nuts and bolts of testing, was a great resource for educators in the field.” - Jennifer Fithen, Teacher, East Poinsett County School District

“Both teachers, administrators as well as other support personnel were included in our discussions so we were able to hear from multiple perspectives.” - Jennifer Murphy, Teacher, South Central Service Cooperative

Appendix D: References and Resources

- An Act to Amend Provisions of the Arkansas Code Concerning the Public School Accountability System; And For Other Purposes. S.B. 647, 91st General Assembly. (2017).
<https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/Acts/Documenttype=pdf&act=930&ddBienniumSession=2017%2F2017R>
- Arkansas Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2018, January 16). *Arkansas ESSA Plan*. Arkansas Department of Education. Retrieved September 20, 2021, from https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/20201126163549_Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_January_16_final_2_2018.pdf, pg. 1.
- Arkansas Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2018, January 16). *Arkansas ESSA Plan*. Arkansas Department of Education. Retrieved September 20, 2021, from https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Files/20201126163549_Arkansas_ESSA_Plan_January_16_final_2_2018.pdf, pg. 15.
- Arkansas Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2021). *Vision for Excellence in Education*. Arkansas Department of Education. Retrieved September 20, 2021, from <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/About/vision-for-excellence-in-education>.
- National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment. *Brief #1: An introduction to assessment types and uses*. Center for Assessment: Assessment Types and Uses. 2 June 2020, pg. 5.
- Transparency in Stakeholder Engagement: *A Tool to Help Demonstrate How Stakeholders Informed the State ESSA Plan* (2021, September 15). Council of Chief State School Officers. Retrieved September 20, 2021 from <https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/TransparencyinStakeholderEngagement08012017.pdf>.

Family and Student Feedback Addendum to What are Educators and Education Stakeholders Asking for in Arkansas's Next Ideal Summative Assessment?

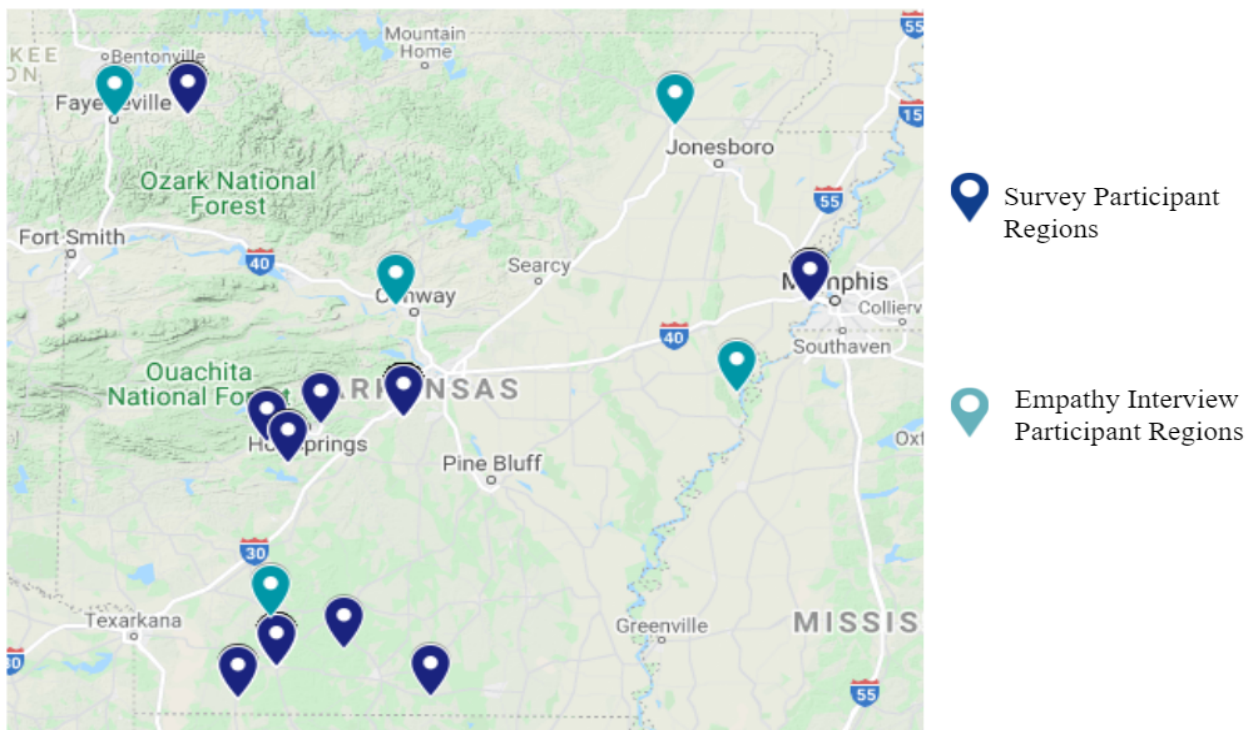
November 2021

This addendum expands stakeholder feedback and ideas for ideal assessment by including analysis of input from families and students--which were not available in the main report. It is intended to be used in conjunction with the main [Arkansas Statewide Summative Assessment Focus Group Report](#).

Family Survey Feedback

The Educator Focus Group and subcommittees group members distributed a survey to families in their educational cooperatives, districts, and schools and collected feedback from 220 families in 4 regions. Perceptions of formal and statewide summative assessments were the focus of the family survey.

Figure 1. *Map of Family Stakeholder Participants*



Survey Design and Findings

Stakeholder input was gathered within a compressed timeframe and necessitated the use of an open-ended survey to identify key factors in assessment design. The top three results from each question can be accessed [here](#). The survey was also the entry point for more detailed input from parents and students through empathy interviews.

Most families see the purpose of the summative assessment as a tool to identify their students' strengths and weaknesses and to identify where their student is in the curriculum. However, almost a third of families see the summative assessment as lacking purpose and describe it as a negative experience overall. Using follow-up empathy interviews for further questioning about family's perception of summative assessments and other assessments given within a district, the areas of improvement for a summative assessment become clearer. Key findings are shared in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Family Stakeholder Survey Participant's Purpose of a Summative Assessment

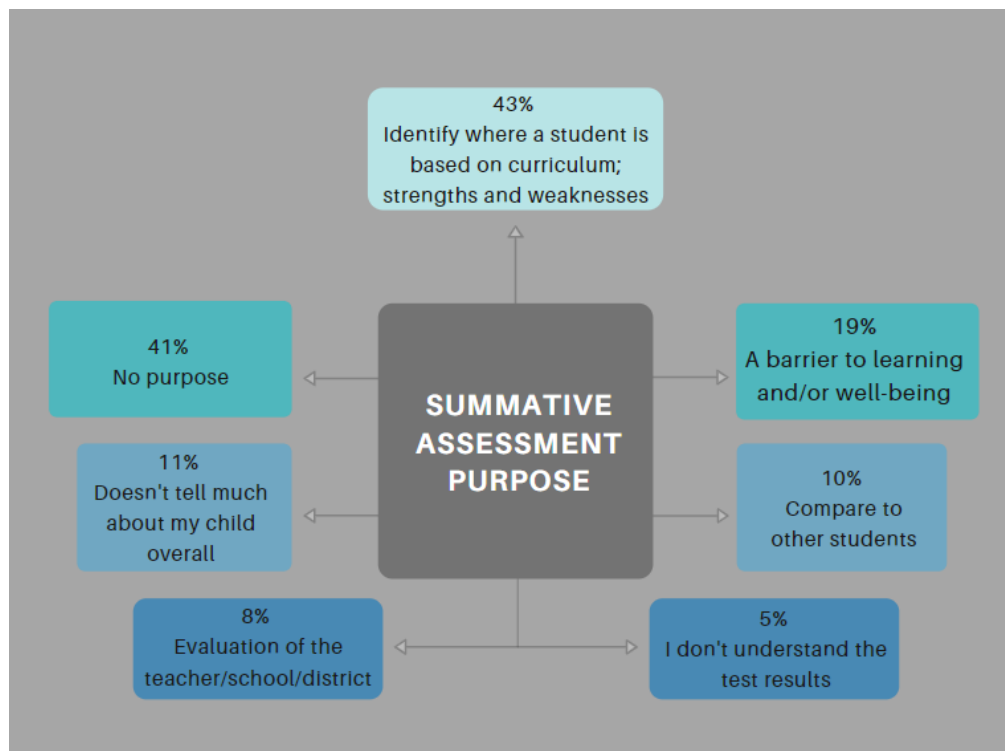
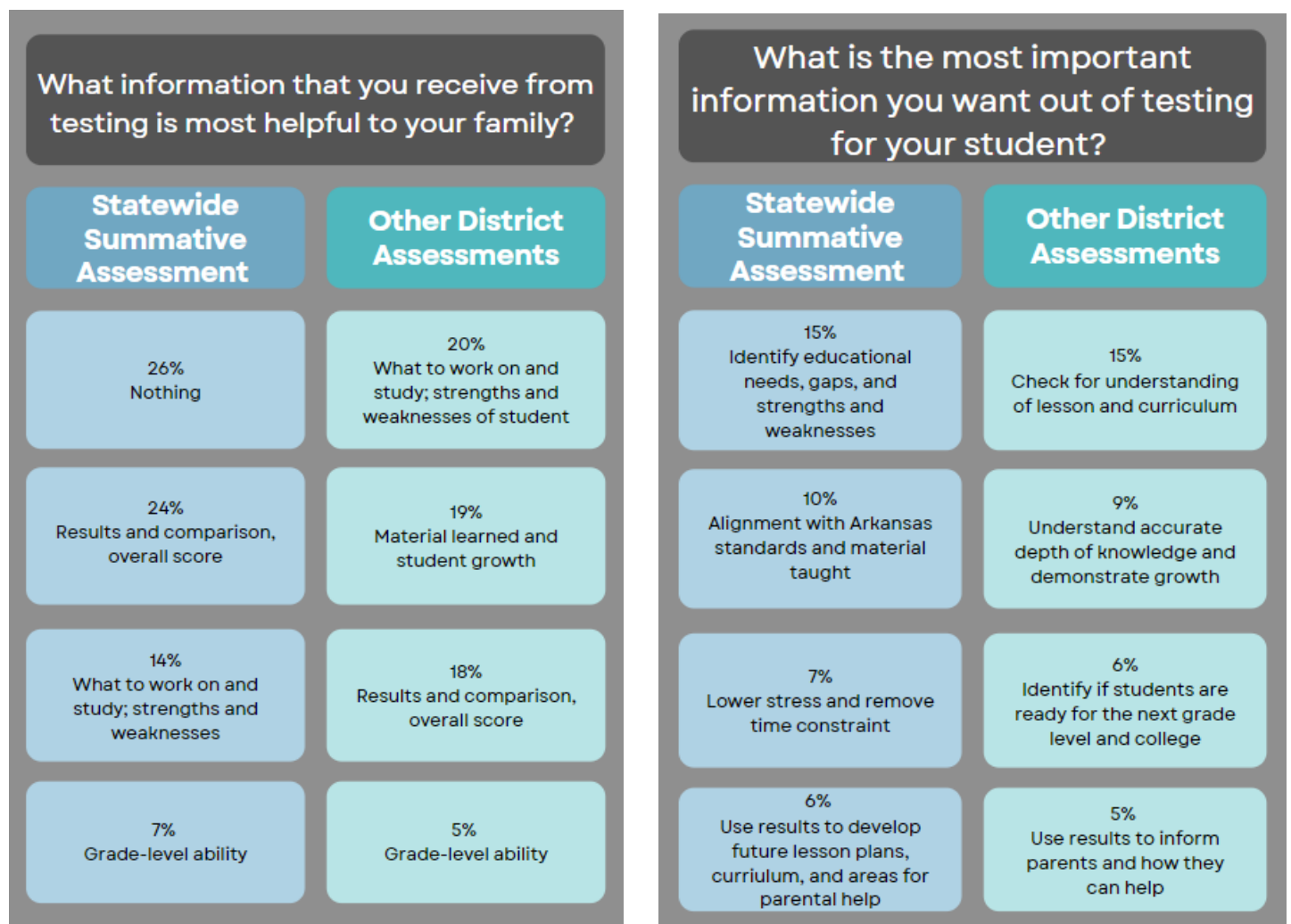


Figure 3 & 4. Family Stakeholder Survey Participant's Summary of Input



Almost half of the families responding to the survey view summative assessment as *an opportunity to identify where their student is based on curriculum and instruction and to identify strengths and weaknesses of their student*. Close to a third of families responding **did not see a useful purpose of the current summative assessment** (26%) or did not understand the results (5%). Families noted that other assessments given through their school districts provide families with information they find helpful for their family including *what to work on, areas of and for growth, understandable results, and their student's grade-level ability*.

Family Empathy Interviews Design and Findings

Empathy interviews were conducted regionally by following up with families who indicated they would be willing to engage in an interview following the family survey. The empathy interviews conducted by focus group and subcommittee members were one-on-one conversations with families (parents, guardians, and students were welcomed). Typically, interviews were conducted by phone using a menu of open-ended questions designed and vetted by OIE form which interviewers could select. The process and questions were designed to take a deeper dive in understanding needs, capturing insights, and revealing personal stories that might inform new ideas for assessment from those most impacted by system-level decisions regarding assessment. While the goal of the process was to engage families who represented the diversity of the communities they served, there is still work to be done to capture more voices, especially from families that are underserved, as many of the participants already had ties to the local educational system and/or community.

Some of the families interviewed shared personal challenges related to their students' education, such as raising adopted children, meeting special education needs of their students, academic struggles their children experience, and personal challenges in balancing their home, work, and “parenting” life. Interviewers documented, anonymized, and shared interview notes with OIE, which allowed OIE to look for themes, insights, and new change ideas, which are offered below.

Table 1. *Theme: Purpose and Alignment Matter*

Theme: Purpose and Alignment Matter		
QUOTES FROM FAMILIES	WHAT FAMILIES WANT	INSIGHTS FROM FAMILIES
<p>A lot of kids don't perform well on testing. Its not fair for one test to judge students and teachers on the capacity and learning they have accomplished over a year.</p> <p>I want the test to reflect what they are being taught in schools and...[I want] the standards that teachers are teaching [to match].</p> <p>It is important that they [students] learn what possibilities they have; some KNOW that they do not want to go to college, but if they knew there was a trade, [they should be able to] learn that trade, apprenticeship etc.</p> <p>I understand this test is used to monitor their progress. I would rather have small “chunk” test throughout the year to help teachers determine the needs of their students...schools put a lot of emphasis on this one test.</p>	<p>Families who participated want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their students tested more than once a year to determine growth and learning. • to see the relationship between the school and the test. • to know that the curriculum on the test and the lessons taught in school are aligned • the test to reflect knowledge and ability for career bound students as well as college bound. 	<p>Assessments throughout the year based on multiple measures may be more useful to families and students.</p> <p>State tests, particularly test items, should be tied to state standards, reflect classroom learning, and be co-developed by teachers and administrators.</p> <p>Every child and community are different and assessments that capture information representative of what happens at the student and community level may be more useful to families.</p> <p>An ideal assessment system would help families and students plan for the future (particularly in understanding students' strengths or interests and potential future options)</p>

Table 2. Theme: Real and Actionable Results

Theme: Real and Actionable Results		
QUOTES FROM FAMILIES	WHAT FAMILIES WANT	INSIGHTS FROM FAMILIES
<p>I received the ACT Aspire results information in the mail. I have not gotten guidance from the school on interpreting the results since the fall of 2019... Last year's results have not been discussed this year as of yet.</p> <p>Because it takes until the next school year to receive the report, it is completely irrelevant by the time I receive it.</p> <p>The perfect assessment situation needs to have a component to provide information to help parents know how to help at home. I know many parents don't help, but many of us do or want to, but we don't know what they need help with.</p> <p>It [summative assessment] helps me understand where my son falls overall based on standard expectations...it doesn't necessarily give me information on how to address needs or concerns without direction and interpretation from the teacher.</p> <p>Did not receive [assessment] from high school; did from elementary. [I don't] really care where my student "falls" within the 'state' (all other kids) I want to know that my student is learning.</p>	<p>Families who participated want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the test results to be discussed with them in a timely manner. to know how they can support their student following up on the test results; and want to be involved in their student's education, but they aren't sure how. to understand the results of the test as to better understand what their students have learned over the course of a school year. 	<p>Schools and districts have an opportunity to help parents and guardians understand test results and what they might do with results to help their students. Families want support from schools and districts to help them help their students.</p> <p>Some families indicated they did not receive results from state and local assessments in a timely manner to help them help their student. They indicated a desire for results to be shared more quickly (e.g. not by mail several months later), in a way that both students and families can understand.</p> <p>Families expressed the greatest interest in information regarding their learners' personal growth continuum. They valued this over other information such as comparing their child to other learners in the state or nation.</p>

Table 3. Theme: Student Perspectives

Theme: Student Perspectives		
QUOTES	WHAT STUDENTS WANT	INSIGHTS FROM STUDENTS
<p>A time I felt successful at school was when I got my MAPS scores and I realized I scored the highest of my friend group.</p> <p>I don't like doing three [test per year] because they are really long (like 50 questions each) and we are usually staring in silence at the computer for 2 hours.</p> <p>I last felt successful when we had parent teacher conferences and my mom got the paper that said I did great.</p> <p>I felt confused on the last test we took because there were a lot of words that I couldn't read, so I didn't know how to do it or understand it.</p>	<p>Students want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> shorter tests throughout the year. to understand the value of the test. tests to be more individualized to highlight their abilities beyond academic content. their teachers to bridge the gap and help their parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand reports, use reports to address their personal needs, and help them set personal goals 	<p>In general, students said that they are motivated when they understand, see, take action on their progress and growth, and share their success.</p> <p>Students expressed feelings that indicate it is helpful to keep in mind physical, mental, and emotional needs when planning for testing, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> length of time in testing; making them partners in testing for learning by making the environment/process known and involving students in improving the process; considering physical and emotional needs (such as being able to take breaks and considering the stress that high stakes, one-time tests create); design for people versus statistics; and, help students better connect where they are right now to future possibilities and help them plan for career and/or college.

Ideas Offered by Families

Families offered ideas on how to improve assessment through the surveys and empathy interviews. These results are from the convenience sample of Arkansas students and families and may not capture the full perspective of all families, particularly those who are underserved.

Align state assessments with what is most important for students to learn given their current level of learning and balance it with information that will inform how prepared they are for the future. Identify educational needs, gaps, and areas of strengths and weaknesses.

- Align with Arkansas standards and material taught throughout the year.
 - Testing the current curriculum and learning objectives.
-
- Use the results to develop future lesson plans, curriculum, and support for parents to help their learner(s).
- Include information about how their learner(s) compares or ranks relative to others and how prepared they are for success on the ACT.
- Questions that are accurate of ability and easily understood by student; no trick questions/answers
- Provide individualized support to students in areas of their greatest need as a learner in a timely manner to improve the next set of results for the learner.

Attend to the environment for state assessment to provide the learner with the best opportunity to share what they learned and share results in a way that meets the needs of students and families so they can respond to them in a productive manner.

- Review and consider revising, where possible, the testing environment and system of assessments, to create a more supportive environment.
 - Where possible allow for smaller groups or individual testing, quiet areas, calm environment, and more frequent breaks.
 - Students and families asked for untimed tests to help their learner show what they know and to reduce stress in completing them.
- Help students and families understand how state assessments are designed to test learning of important state standards and how the information can help them identify their learner(s) strengths and areas for growth.
- Families and students indicated the need for tests that are more point in time and tied directly to recent standards taught.
- Consider shorter, more frequent testing instead of once a year.
- Discuss assessment results with families and learners in a way that allows learners and families to be part of the process of identifying areas of strength, areas for learning growth, and goal setting in response to the results.
- Families and students expressed the desire to include other assessment options at the high school level that help learners plan for the future and consider their options. If these options are currently available, then schools and districts may need to make this information clearer to families and students.