

National Council for Measurement in Education (NCME)
Position Statement on Student Participation in State Assessment

In spring 2015, and again in spring 2016, significant numbers of students did not take part in state assessments, bringing participation rates in some states and districts well below the 95% level required by federal education law.

NCME strongly supports student participation in state assessments because these indicators are aligned with state content standards, are the only comparable indicators of that achievement at the school-building level, and are the only comparable achievement indicators disaggregated by demographic group. As a consequence, given appropriate validation, state assessments can help policy makers, educators, parents, and other members of the public not only understand how effectively a state's education system is functioning, but how successful each school is at educating the specific student groups attending it. That understanding allows those concerned with the quality and equity of education to plan and advocate for needed resources at both the system and the local levels. When students do not participate in state assessment, or do not take the assessment seriously, the accuracy of results, and our ability to improve education for all, is severely undermined.

NCME's position on participation is consistent with the positions taken by other civic and professional organizations, including the [National PTA](#), the [National Association of Secondary School Principals](#), and the [Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights](#), which includes NAACP, National Urban League, National Council of La Raza, League of United Latin American Citizens, Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, National Disability Rights Network, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, Association of University Centers on Disabilities, TASH, Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, and the American Association of University Women.

Participating in state assessment requires valuable student and educator time, as well as money. NCME believes that these investments are best justified when assessments are *worth preparing for* because, by design, they faithfully reflect the breadth, depth, and diversity of knowledge representation associated with content standards. This faithful reflection of content standards makes good instruction the best preparation. NCME also believes that state assessments should, ideally, be designed so that they are perceived by educators to be *worth taking* because they provide engaging experiences from which students might learn something valuable. Finally, NCME believes that tests should provide, and be perceived as providing, information *worth using*. That is, along with other indicators, tests should be a valued and valid source of evidence for educators in making improvements to the system, at the school, and in the classroom.

NCME urges parents, educators, policy makers, and citizens to encourage student participation in existing assessments so that the quality of assessment information, and our ability to use it to improve education for all, is preserved. Further, the organization urges these groups to advocate for the creation and utilization of better assessments like those described, as well as for uses of assessments that promote good teaching and learning practice.

By the NCME Board of Directors, February 2, 2017

About NCME

The National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) is a professional organization for individuals involved in assessment, evaluation, testing, and other aspects of educational measurement. Members are involved in the construction and use of standardized tests; new forms of assessment, including performance-based assessment; program design; and program evaluation.

NCME members include university faculty; test developers; state and federal testing and research directors; professional evaluators; testing specialists in business, industry, education, community programs, and other professions; licensure, certification, and credentialing professionals; graduate students from educational, psychological, and other measurement programs; and others involved in testing issues and practices.

Service to communities and ensuring that assessment is fair and equitable for all students are essential elements of NCME's mission and purposes.