



of Iowa

UEN Call to Action Feb 24, 2018 HF 2235 Iowa Assessments

Background: Historically, the Iowa State Board of Education has been tasked with choosing a state assessment. The test is required by state and federal law related to Iowa's core academic indicators in mathematics and reading in grades four, eight, and eleven, a set of core academic indicators in science in grades eight and eleven. Annually, the DE is required to report state data for each indicator in the condition of education report.

Changes in state standards, changes in federal law from No Child Left Behind to Every Student Succeeds Act, changes in citizen perceptions and politics of the Common Core and the Iowa Core Standards and changes in technology related to test creation and test taking are just some of the factors contributing to the whip saw of directions to the DE and the State Board of Education over several years. There has been a long history of policy and legislation related to our state test, with the following legislative changes:

2012: Education Reform Round 1: the bill required school districts to continue using the test that was previously administered in 2011 (known as the Iowa Tests) or a successor test administered by the same provider (Ia. Testing). The bill further required that any State Board of Education recommendation to change the test had to come back before the Legislature.

2013: Education Reform Round 2: HF 215 created an Assessment Task Force and provided criteria for members of the task force to consider in choosing an assessment. They were not limited to only those criteria and added the lens of which test would be best for students to guide their decision making. The Task Force overwhelmingly chose the SBAC assessments (21:1).

2016, SF 2323: in response to a tight state budget and lack of appropriation to pay for the SBAC assessment, this bill stated that, in spite of that previous requirement, beginning July 1, 2017, there would be a new test, first implementation in the Spring of 2018. The bill also required that the State Board of Education rules to implement the test must first be approved by the Dec. 2016 Rules Review Committee, but Gov. Branstad vetoed, stating in his [veto message](#):

“These items unduly delay Iowa's transition to a new statewide academic assessment system. The Iowa Department of Education can best serve students by moving forward immediately to prepare for the implementation of the new assessment system on July 1, 2017. School administrators and teachers are eager for a new assessment system that is closely aligned with Iowa's high state academic standards. By providing better information about students' academic progress, the new assessment system will improve instruction. A well-aligned assessment is a key step toward providing a globally competitive education.”

Despite Gov. Branstad's message, other factors have further contributed to delay.

2017, SF 240: this bill directed the State BOE and DE to issue a new RFP considering only seven criteria to choose the test provider. That RFP, including a team of educators to review proposals and procedural management by the Iowa Department of Administrative Services, resulted in a selection of American Institutes of Research, AIR, as the chosen provider for the

test. However, in the Fall of 2017, another vendor not awarded the contract, Pearson, appealed the award of the contract to AIR. The administrative law judge affirmed that the DE and DAS process of the RFP was above board. The decision on Feb. 14, 2018, states,

“To the extent that Pearson made additional arguments that have not been explicitly addressed in this decision, they are found to be without merit. The record in this case establishes that this process was sufficiently fair, open and objective. This procurement was also faithful to and compliant with SF 240 and other governing regulations. The Notice of Intent to Award RFP 1117282197 to American Institutes for Research is AFFIRMED. DAS shall take any steps necessary to implement this decision.”

That ALJ decision stands, unless Pearson further appeals to DAS within 15 days of the Feb. 14th decision.

In the House, Representatives approved HF 2235 on Feb. 20. It is now assigned to the Senate Education Committee, with a subcommittee of Sens. Chelgren, Dvorsky, Quirmbach, Rozenboom, and Sinclair. They are scheduled to meet Tues., Feb. 13, at 10:30 in Room 116. The UEN is registered in opposition to this bill.

Reasons for UEN opposition:

- **Education Professionals** should be trusted: Iowa educators and educational leaders have been involved in the evaluation of assessment proposals and chosen others, now twice, based on the criteria required in Iowa law and based on what tools will best inform instruction in Iowa classrooms.
- **Alignment is critical:** the technical proposal for AIR had stronger alignment scores than the other proposals. If the standards taught in classrooms do not align to the test, then the test does not confirm teaching or inform when teaching needs to improve. Iowa has already failed Peer review of our Iowa Tests based on lack of alignment. See the funding bullet below.
- **Accountability must be Valid:** the State Report Card depends heavily on the scores of the state test, with 2/3rds of the measures directly reflecting student scores on the test. Additionally, the state plan for complying with federal law determines which districts are identified in need of support based on the outcomes of state testing.
- **Funding at Risk:** the federal DOE has withheld Title I administrative funds from Idaho for failing to correct compliance issues identified in the Peer review of their state's plan. Iowa currently receives \$97 million in Title I funds which directly support the educational needs of low-income students in Iowa. Education professionals were concerned in the reading of the proposals that the Pearson/Iowa Testing product is not yet aligned.

Advocacy Actions:

- Contact your state senator, especially if on the [Education Committee](#), asking for a no vote on HF 2235. Also ask them to insure that if such a bill moves forward, there is a mandate that the future Iowa test align to Iowa Core Standards and be able to pass federal Peer Review. Find your Senator here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>
- You can also call the Senate Switchboard during the week, (515) 281.3371 and ask to speak to your Senator or leave a message for them to contact you.

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