

Issue #3: Should states be required to develop assessments that enable measures of individual student growth?

Current Law and Background

Current law does not require states to develop assessments that can measure individual student growth from one year to the next. In fact, current Title I accountability requirements exclude measures of individual student growth from measures of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), though the Department of Education has allowed states to include them, under certain conditions and within specified parameters. The assessments being developed by both of the Common Core testing consortia will—if done as promised—measure individual student growth.

Options

Option 3A: Do not require states to develop assessments that enable measures of individual student growth.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows flexibility for states to develop accountability systems that best meet their own needs • Reduces the cost burden placed on states, since moving to a growth model requires costly, sophisticated data systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without the ability to measure student growth, risks having states misidentify some schools as low-performing even though their students are making big gains

Option 3B: Require states to develop assessments that enable measures of individual student growth as a condition of receipt of federal assessment-development dollars. (Administration’s proposal)

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows flexibility for states to create assessment systems that best meet their own needs, since they may opt out of this requirement if they don’t want the assessment-development dollars • Offsets the cost of developing the data systems by offering federal funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will perpetuate inaccurate rating systems if states opt out of this requirement

Option 3C: Require states to develop assessments that enable measures of individual student growth as a condition of receipt of Title I funding.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensures that states have the capacity to measure school progress and teacher effectiveness• Allows for more accurate school ratings, plus can allow states to build accountability systems that focus on the progress of students across the achievement spectrum—not just those near the “proficiency” line	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Represents a significant new federal mandate around assessments, since few if any states will forego Title I funding

The Reform Realism Position: Option 3C

In the spirit of “tight-loose” and transparency, we think it’s reasonable for the federal government to require, as condition of Title I funding, that states be able to measure student growth. Otherwise it will be impossible for states to offer an accurate assessment of their schools, including schools that have many low-achieving students but are making rapid gains over time. It’s essential that parents, educators, and the public know how schools are fostering—or failing to foster—student growth.

Require states to develop assessments that enable measures of individual student growth as a condition of receipt of Title I funding.