



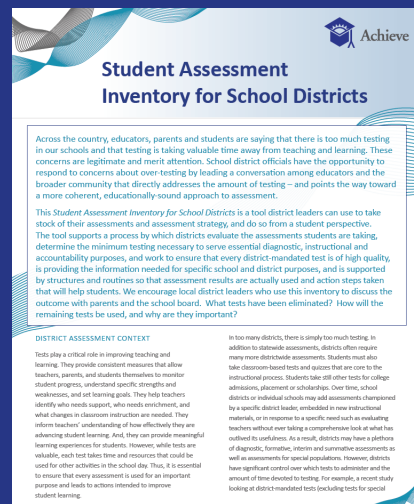
December 2016

Apply to join Achieve's New Assessment Inventory National Network

Achieve is launching a [Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts National Network](#), which will support up to 12 school districts across the country to use the [Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts](#) to take stock of their assessment system, streamline the number of assessments, and ensure all remaining assessments are of high quality and aligned to state learning standards.

Achieve will provide subgrants of between \$5,000 and \$7,000 to districts to complete the assessment inventory. In addition, district and school board leaders from those districts will attend a cross-district convening to learn from other districts that have used the assessment inventory and to finalize inventory planning, as well as receive ongoing support from Achieve staff. Districts interested in applying to join the National Network should read the [Call to Action](#) for details about the application process. Applications are due December 16, 2016.

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Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts

Across the country, educators, parents and students are saying that there is too much testing in our schools and that testing is taking valuable time away from teaching and learning. These concerns are legitimate and merit attention. School district officials have the opportunity to respond to concerns about over-testing by leading a conversation among educators and the broader community that directly addresses the amount of testing – and points the way toward a more coherent, educationally-sound approach to assessment.

This *Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts* is a tool district leaders can use to take stock of their assessments and assessment strategy, and do so from a student perspective. The tool supports a process by which districts evaluate the assessments students are taking, determine the minimum testing necessary to serve essential diagnostic, instructional and accountability purposes, and work to ensure that every district-mandated test is of high quality, is providing the information needed for specific school and district purposes, and is supported by structures and routines so that assessment results are actually used and action steps taken that will help students. We encourage local district leaders who use this inventory to discuss the outcome with parents and the school board. What tests have been eliminated? How will the remaining tests be used, and why are they important?

DISTRICT ASSESSMENT CONTEXT

Tests play a critical role in improving teaching and learning. They provide consistent measures that allow teachers, parents, and students themselves to monitor student progress, understand specific strengths and weaknesses, and set learning goals. They help teachers identify who needs support, who needs enrichment, and what changes in classroom instruction are needed. They inform teachers' understanding of how effectively they are advancing student learning. And, they can provide meaningful learning experiences for students. However, while tests are valuable, each test takes time and resources that could be used for other activities in the school day. Thus, it is essential to ensure that every assessment is used for an important purpose and leads to actions intended to improve student learning.

In too many districts, there is simply too much testing in addition to statewide assessments; districts often require many more districtwide assessments. Students must also take classroom-based tests and assess that are core to the instructional process. Students take still other tests for college admissions, placement or scholarships. Over time, school districts or individual schools may add assessments championed by a specific district leader, embedded in new instructional materials, or in response to a specific need such as evaluating teachers without ever taking a comprehensive look at what has unfolded in the classroom. As a result, districts may have a plethora of diagnostic, formative, interim and summative assessments as well as assessments for special populations. However, districts have significant control over which tests to administer and the amount of time devoted to testing. For example, a recent study looking at district-mandated tests (including tests for special



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Diplomas that Matter: Ensuring Equity of Opportunity for Students with Disabilities

A [new report](#) from Achieve and the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) report analyzes the diplomas available to students with disabilities in each state for the graduating class of 2015. Although an estimated 85 to 90 percent of students with disabilities can, with the proper instruction, supports, and accommodations, meet the same graduation standards as all other students, the national graduation rate for students with disabilities has risen from 56.9 percent in 2006 only to 66.3 percent in 2014. In addition to these low graduation rates, questions persist as to whether students with disabilities are being given access to a rigorous course of study that will prepare them for college and career. States do a disservice to students with disabilities when they are not given the opportunity to earn a regular diploma with adequate supports or when they are held to lower expectations.



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Show Me the Data: New Research from the Data Quality Campaign

The Data Quality Campaign (DQC) recently released the results of an effort to discover what information could be easily found on state report cards from all 50 states and DC, how it was displayed, and whether it was accessible and understandable to a broad public audience. From a simple internet search, DQC explored whether statewide information can be easily found by parents, educators, and members of the community - not whether information exists anywhere, buried under many pages of a website. Findings show that while all states create annual aggregate report cards for the public with important data about how their students statewide are doing, these reports are often difficult to find and understand. As a result, people can't find information they need, and there is considerable room for improvement



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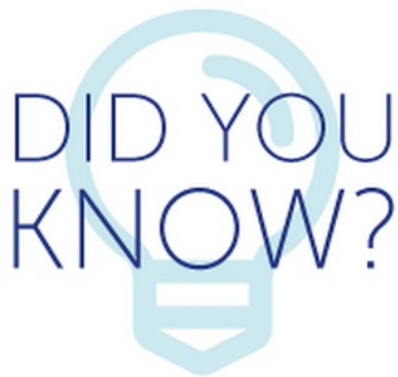
Milestones for College Success: The To&Through Project

Research tells us that a college degree is still the most effective path out of poverty - people who finish college tend to be healthier, wealthier, and happier. The To&Through Project from the University of Chicago provides educators, policymakers, and families with research, data, and resources on the milestones that matter most for college success so that, together, we can give every ninth grader who aspires to earn a college degree the opportunity and support to do so.



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According to Achieve's new report with the National Center on Educational Outcomes,

26 states

require students with disabilities to earn the state's regular high school diploma.

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*All students should graduate from high school
ready for college, careers, and citizenship.*

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