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Achieve Insights is a monthly briefing of newsworthy items from across states related to ensuring that all students graduate from high school prepared for college, careers, and life.

Achieve recently released [*What Gets Tested Gets Taught: Cautions for Using College Admissions Tests in State Accountability Systems*](#). This brief looks across the current evidence available on the two primary college admissions tests in order to provide state leaders and policymakers with the information they must consider in selecting high school assessments. The primary issue at hand is the alignment of college admissions tests, the ACT and SAT, to states' college- and career-ready standards. These assessments will impact what is taught in high school classrooms. Three recent independent studies, using different but complementary approaches to examine alignment and other important issues, raise several challenges to using these college admissions tests to assess student achievement of state standards. Taken together, these studies point to significant challenges for states in using college admissions tests to measure student learning against state content standards or as a significant factor in state accountability systems. Achieve recommends that states should not use the ACT or SAT as the statewide accountability measures for ELA and mathematics, nor allow districts to administer the ACT or SAT in lieu of its statewide summative assessment.

These findings are important because a number of states are considering proposals to move to use college admissions tests, or provide flexibility for their use, in state accountability systems. Below are some recent examples.

Arizona State Board Gives Approval to Menu of Assessments Policies

The Arizona State Board of Education [gave their approval](#) to a law passed by the state's legislature in 2016 that would allow for districts to choose from a "menu of assessments" to administer in schools in lieu of the state's required assessment. While the state administers AzMERIT as its statewide assessments, beginning with the 2018-19 school year schools can administer tests in place of AzMERIT with that are approved by the Board of Education.

California bill seeks flexibility for the use of ACT or SAT instead of Smarter Balanced

[Assembly Bill 1951](#), introduced by Assemblyman Patrick O'Donnell, aims to give high schools the option to swap the Smarter Balanced 11th-grade English language arts and mathematics tests for either the SAT or the ACT. O'Donnell introduced similar legislation last year, but it was not voted out of the Assembly Appropriations Committee amid opposition from state government leadership. Similarly, California Department of Education [denied](#) Long Beach Unified's request in 2017 to administer SAT instead of Smarter Balanced, citing concerns with (among other issues) alignment to California's academic content standards.

Florida studies show a lack of alignment between the state's standards and SAT and ACT

Recently, the Florida Department of Education funded a set of studies to examine a range of issues related to using ACT or SAT instead of two Florida State Assessments (FSAs: specifically, the Algebra I and grade 10 ELA FSAs. [The studies found](#) that neither the ACT nor SAT was fully aligned to Florida Algebra 1 standards and would require at least some augmentation to be aligned. For ELA, the study found that the ACT would need major adjustments. The study found that the test would need 10 or more items revised or replaced to be considered fully aligned with the Florida grade 10 content standards. The SAT reading test would need five to seven additional items to be fully aligned. Achieve referenced this report in its recently released [report on college-readiness assessments](#).

North Dakota districts will administer ACT with approval from the U.S. Department of Education

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) has signaled they will [approve a waiver](#) requested by North Dakota to allow for the administration in spring 2018 of the ACT by districts that seek to replace the North Dakota State Assessment (NDSA) in reading/language arts and mathematics with the ACT. In total, [17 North Dakota districts](#) will take advantage of this new flexibility.

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

