



# What's going on with 9th and 10th grade testing in Utah?

The Utah State Board of Education has pushed pause on switching from SAGE to ACT Aspire in 9th and 10th grades. This means that 9th and 10th grade students will continue to take SAGE (Student Assessment of Growth and Excellence) for one more year. The Board received new information starting early this summer that led to this decision. In light of the new information it has become necessary to evaluate the purposes of statewide assessment and reevaluate various options to meet those purposes. Choosing the best test for the right reasons is something that will influence students for a long time.

## THE DETAILS: 5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

### 1 Students in grades 9 and 10 will take SAGE assessments in 2018.

- ▶ The Board voted on August 4, 2017, to administer SAGE in English language arts, mathematics, and science to students in 9th and 10th grades in the 2017–18 school year.
- ▶ The Board has heard the concerns and frustrations from the field and understands this is not ideal but believes this is the route least disruptive to students.
- ▶ It should also be understood that students and teachers may have been subjected to three different tests in three years if the move to ACT Aspire was premature. (2017 SAGE, 2018 ACT Aspire, 2019 ?)

### 2 Utah law requires students in grades 9, 10, and 11 to take a statewide test.

- ▶ Utah Code 53A-1-611.5 directs schools to annually administer a statewide assessment to 9th and 10th graders.
  - Therefore, testing in 2017–18 is mandatory.
- ▶ 11th-graders will continue to take the ACT, as originally planned.

### 3 While the Board's initial intent was to move toward ACT Aspire for spring 2018, a variety of circumstances have forced it to reevaluate that decision.

- ▶ The Board's initial recommendation to move from SAGE to ACT Aspire was a good decision considering the information available in the fall of 2016.
- ▶ Board staff discovered in May that ACT Aspire offers the same test for both 9th and 10th grade, changing and limiting the way meaningful growth scores can be calculated.
  - It would be difficult for the same assessment to align substantively to the state-adopted 9th and 10th grade standards.
- ▶ This summer, Board attorneys identified potential legal issues that could come as a result of offering a sole-source contract to ACT.
  - Language in Utah Code 53A-1-611.5 does not meet the strict sole source procurement code required to proceed with an ACT sole source.
- ▶ Independent studies have produced evidence that other tests are equally or more "predictive" of a student's college readiness.
  - SAGE results in 9th and 10th grade will include student reports with predictive data that includes college readiness (predictive of potential ACT score).

*(Continued)*

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**4 Offering schools a choice of tests this year is not feasible.**

- ▶ Allowing multiple testing tracks for 9th and 10th grades will complicate statewide programs like School Turnaround, School Grading, comparability of schools, and the Digital Teaching and Learning initiative.
- ▶ There is not enough time for districts and schools to go through the independent contracting processes to use alternative tests like ACT Aspire.
- ▶ The state does not have enough time to create alternate test comparability scores for an undetermined amount of different assessments.
- ▶ Schools that select a test that is not used in 2019 will be forced to change course for, potentially, three years in a row.

**5 Pressing “pause” will allow for time to explore all options.**

- ▶ There are too many unknowns to feel confident that a decision made now won't need to change again in one year.
- ▶ This is an opportunity to look at all options and do the right—not the easiest—thing for students.
- ▶ This will allow the Board and possibly the Legislature to explore provisions that could be amended to address student apathy toward taking assessments.