Louisiana Believes

Louisiana’s Innovative Assessment Pilot
Louisiana’s Theory of Action and Strategy

Louisiana believes in aligning and integrating what matters most.

• Adopted higher standards to increase accountability (Louisiana State Standards)
• **Created and scaled quality, text- and content-rich curriculum (ELA Guidebooks)**
• Built assessments with a focus on quality (LEAP 2025)
• Supported implementation of quality curriculum with aligned PD
• Reduced testing through development and implementation of comprehensive assessment system
ELA Guidebooks is an English language arts curriculum for whole-class instruction. Made by teachers for teachers, the guidebook units ensure all students can read, understand, and express their understanding of complex, grade-level texts, ensuring their readiness for college or a career.

Each text collection has a shared idea, such as the American Revolution, and contains authentic texts and novels commonly celebrated by teachers and students. Students engage with the texts and ideas repeatedly throughout a unit to build knowledge and tackle big ideas.
The Need for Innovative Assessments

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act provides Louisiana, and all states, with an opportunity to create and report on an improved K-12 education system that provides all students with equal access and opportunity to high-quality learning.

As a result, Louisiana has put forth an innovative state plan that sets expectations for all students that are as ambitious as expectations in any state in the country.

Part of the plan calls for changes to the way the our state measures and reports student learning, so that we can accurately measure student growth, despite socioeconomic, or geographic limitations.
Louisiana’s Innovative Assessment Pilot

Louisiana submitted a proposal for the pilot in April 2018 in response to a provision in ESSA by which select states are allowed to develop and pilot new high-quality assessment formats in lieu of the existing statewide achievement tests.

Louisiana’s proposal to pilot an innovative English assessment was the first to be approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

Louisiana now has five years to develop, pilot and expand the innovative assessment.
Reading tests traditionally use passages that include experiences and vocabulary that students may have never encountered, placing those who have fewer life experiences at a disadvantage and focusing educators on skill-building more than knowledge-building. However, students are better able to comprehend what they read when they possess knowledge of the subject.

- “Once kids can decode fluently, reading comprehension depends heavily on knowledge. By failing to provide a solid grounding in basic subjects we inadvertently hobble children's ability in reading comprehension.” [School Time Knowledge and Reading Comprehension](#)
- “Whether or not readers understand a text depends far more on how much background knowledge and vocabulary they have relating to the topic than on how much they’ve practiced comprehension skills.” [Why American Students Haven’t Gotten Better at Reading in 20 Years](#)
**Integration:** Several brief assessments including both ELA and social studies are administered throughout the year, rather than one end-of-year ELA exam and one end-of-year Social Studies exam, to measure students’ deep knowledge of books or passages that they have studied in class.

**Focus:** Teachers can focus instruction on background knowledge and making meaning of full texts.

**Equity:** All students have the opportunity to develop background knowledge together so that no student is at a disadvantage due to a lack of life experiences.

**Preserves local control:** School systems continue to decide which books are used during instruction and which assessments students take.
Louisiana partnered with national experts and school systems to build and pilot an innovative, joint English language arts (ELA) and social studies assessment.

During the 2018-2019 school year, Louisiana partnered with NWEA, Odell Education, Johns Hopkins University, The Center for Assessment, MZ Development, and Strategic Measurement and Evaluation to develop and pilot an innovative, joint English language arts (ELA) and social studies assessment.

During the 2018-2019 school year, pilot school systems include Ouachita, Lincoln, Assumption, and St. John the Baptist parishes, and Redesign Schools Louisiana.
Timing

During the 2018-2019 school year, there were two pilot windows
• February 2019: Students tested out items for two of the five unit assessments.
• May 2019: Students tested out items for the three remaining unit assessments, and the end-of-year essay.

During the 2019-2020 school year, there will be three operational windows:
• Window 1: End-of-Unit Assessment
• Window 2: End-of-Unit Assessment
• Window 3: End-of-Unit Assessment and End-of-Year Essay

Louisiana Believes
The LEAP 2025 Humanities Assessment focuses on

• reading and writing assessment that reflects and is sequenced with knowledge-rich classroom instruction

• measuring student ability to understand and to build knowledge from their reading, and express that knowledge and understanding in writing
A New Approach to Assessment Passages

**Current Approach**

*COLD* Read texts:
Random selection of grade-level texts purposely unrelated to anything students have studied.

**LEAP 2025 Humanities Assessment**

*HOT* Read Texts:
Unit texts studied in ELA class

*WARM* Read Texts:
Texts students have *not* read but are *topically-related* to the information and knowledge they have encountered in class
LEAP 2025 Humanities Assessment Components

Two Components:
• End-of-Unit Assessments
• End-of-Year (EOY) Essay

Students will take **three** end-of-unit assessments and the EOY Essay for one cumulative score.
### Overview of Pilot Assessment Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administration Sequence</th>
<th>Pilot Assessment Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>End-of-Unit Assessment (Choice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Winter</td>
<td>End-of-Unit Assessment (Choice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>End-of-Unit Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>End-of-Year Essay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grade 7 End-of-Unit Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION 1</th>
<th>SESSION 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Unit Anchor Text(s)**  
  (provided in classroom)  
  and  
**Unit-Related Text(s)**  
  (included in test form)  
**Selected-Response Items**  
  (Multiple-select /Two-Part /TEI)  
**Constructed-Response Item**  
**Students use knowledge**  
  built from unit texts and  
  unit-related text(s) from session 1  
**1 Essay Item**  

*Students take a total of THREE End-of-Unit Assessments*
Grade 7 End-of-Year (EOY) Assessment

The **End-of-year Essay** consists of a single essay question that requires students to use and extend the knowledge built through the texts they have read throughout the year in their English Language Arts class in order to address a global concept.

| ONE SESSION (No Texts) | 1 CROSS-UNITS ANALYSIS WRITING ESSAY |
For the End-of-Year Essay, you will answer ONE essay question. Read the essay question carefully. Then think about the many texts you have read and topics you have studied throughout the year in your English Language Arts class. Write a well-developed essay based on the knowledge you built from the texts and units of study.

Answer the following essay question based on the texts you have read in class this year. In your ELA class this year you have studied texts in which individuals have found themselves in seemingly hopeless situations. Write a well-constructed essay explaining how the following statement could apply to the individuals in those texts:

“We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope.”

– Martin Luther King

Support your analysis by referencing relevant ideas and information from the texts you have studied this year.
**Measurement Challenges**

**Reporting** and **Scaling**, are challenging in regular contexts, and even more so under the pilot.

The pilot gives us the leeway to reexamine and rework our prior approaches, particularly as it relates to these two areas.
It’s a balancing act, in part, because...

The innovative system must meet **assessment quality requirements** (i.e., must meet the same quality criteria laid out by **peer review**).

Must be **comparable** to the current state wide assessment (e.g., achievement classification on LEAP 2025 = achievement level classification on Pilot Assessment).

Note: Marion (2018) and Lyons (2018) summarize the demonstration authority requirements in terms of four major components: assessment quality, comparability, scaling statewide, and demographic similarity.
Two Key Areas

1. Score Reporting
   • Combined End-of-Unit & End-of-Year, Student-Level Teacher Report
   • Additional Student-Level reports for Students and Parents
   • Classroom-, School- & District-Level Reports Multiple Audiences

2. Scaling
   • English Language Arts Scale
   • Social Studies Scale

We will be sharing our current approach to tackling these challenges.
Area I: Reporting
Combined Student-Level Teacher Report

Our goal is to design reports that address each intersection of:

Level of Aggregation + Audience + Use

We are currently engaged in an iterative report design process (e.g., Zapata-Rivera, Zenisky, Slater), starting with teachers and district leads.

We have been focusing on the student-level score report for teachers, and working to define use cases key to these stakeholders for this report.
Within our design team we developed an initial reporting template for the student-level, teacher report, which is mean to be “report card like”.

Results are provided for each of the three Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) categories, with rows for the ALDs and columns for each end-of-unit assessment, as well as the end of year essay.

Cells for assessments that are not yet taken are left blank, with information added after each administration.
We have conducted an initial **open-ended focus group** to gather information on desired use cases with teachers and district leaders:

- As always, **timeliness** is key (one week seems to be the max).
- Use cases varied considerably, but a consistent theme was the desire to **identify specific areas of weaknesses** among student knowledge, skills and abilities to inform subsequent instruction.
- Strong desire for **standards-level reporting**, despite integrated standards.

We will be conducting “**focused**” **focus groups** and administering surveys on preliminary reporting designs based on this open-ended feedback.
The resulting report templates will be reviewed for alignment to current LEAP 2025 reporting practices by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE).

LDOE will also provide oversight for quality control and assurance, particularly around business rules.
Provide **multiple webinars** and on the ground support for reporting during the roll out of the:

- First end-of-unit score report, and
- Last (end-of-year) score report.

Continue to gather evidence from key stakeholders, including **students**, **parents**, **teachers** and **administrators**, particularly during the roll out of the first end-of-unit report.
Area II: Scaling
Creating a Unidimensional Scale & Achievement Levels

Our ultimate aim is to place the end-of-unit assessments and the end-of-year essay onto a unidimensional scale, and then

Create cut scores that correspond to those on the current LEAP 2025 ELA assessment.

There are multiple existence proofs that suggest these unit-based assessments can be successfully scaled together (e.g., several programs of interim assessment that follow similar designs, including those detailed by Dadey & Gong, 2017; Dadey, Tao, & Keng, 2018). In addition, the New Hampshire PACE project demonstrates that even without such scaling, comparable achievement level classifications can be made.
Some Common Potential Challenges

The current design could entail a number of potential challenges that are well within the realm of *current psychometric methods*:

- Local Dependence
- Lack of Invariance
- Instability, due to:
  - Writing items
  - Varying texts
  - Rater drift
“Linking”. We plan to place the LEAP 2025 Humanities assessments onto the LEAP 2025 ELA scale using pilot data in which students took both assessments, potentially via:

- Item response theory based methods, including fixed item parameter calibration or fixed theta calibration.
- Alternatively, we may use the equipercentile method.

After the first operational administration, we plan to compare the cut scores derived from this linking to those produced using data from operational year.

- This second pair of cut points will be produced following the methods outlined in Lyons & Marion (2016).
Some Less Common Potential Challenges

**Summative Score Creation.** In establishing the base scale, we are treating the data as if it had come from a **single assessment** (with checks invariance, dependence, etc.).

Following the same procedure, pooling the assessment data, to produce **student scores** essentially treats each end-of-unit assessment as having **roughly equal weight**, and thus of **equal value**.

→ The performance that matters is right after each unit (e.g., like cumulative grading).

A contrasting view is that **latter performance** should be **valued more** and thus weighted more.

→ Performance at the end of each unit matters, but the final performance matters more (e.g., like the grading of a project-based learning course).
To tackle the various options for summative score creation, we hope to:

• First model, or simulate, results under both approaches to **determine if there is a difference**.

• If there is a difference:
  – Use LEAP 2025 results to determine which approach is **closest to current practice**.
  – Gather additional **external evidence**, if possible, to provide **convergent** and **divergent** information.
  – **Engage with stakeholders** to determine their values and ultimately make decision about what approach should be adopted.

---

**Some Less Common Potential Challenges**
Value of This Innovative Approach

• Aligns assessment with research
  – Encourages teachers to build knowledge and teach skills
• Through-year assessment design
  – Closely aligns assessment to curriculum
  – Provides actionable information to teachers in a timely manner
• Pursues a more equitable assessment through new test design
  – Provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they know and can do regardless of prior background knowledge
  – Use of rich texts that are engaging for students
Internal Value of This Innovative Approach

- Innovation requires change and often times change is difficult
- Initial teacher feedback indicates this is a promising approach
- “This is a more authentic and effective way to assess students' knowledge of texts and topics. When students can take information from texts apart and put it back together in a way that deeply expresses their understanding of the world around them, we know that real learning is happening.” -- Emily Howell, Lincoln Parish
- “The assessment changes would provide an equitable experience when testing for the students in St. John the Baptist Parish. Students can apply knowledge of grade level content learned in classes on assessments. This will even the playing field for our students and we are enthused about the pilot.” -- Angela Davis, St. John the Baptist Parish
External Value of This Innovative Approach

- **Funding Sources**
  - Hewlett Foundation
  - Shusterman Foundation
  - Baton Rouge Area Foundation

- **Applicable to other assessment models**
  - Interim
  - Summative
  - Curriculum-Embedded

- **Potential in how assessment is viewed**
  - Ongoing
  - Seen as more relevant
Questions
Thank you

Jessica Baghian
Jessica.Baghian@la.gov

Judson Odell, Odell Education
judson@odelleducation.com

Nathan Dadey, Center for Assessment
ndadey@nciea.org

Chris Minnich, NWEA
chris.minnich@nwea.org