**Questions & Answer Session**

**Office Hours**

**February 12, 2021**

**Question: If waivers are possible, will Maine DOE apply? How will it be determined which waivers are submitted?**

Answer: The prior administration under Secretary DeVos had previously made it clear to states that no assessment waivers would be granted this year. At this time, we are unsure if that will change under the new administration. However if it is possible to apply for a waiver from assessment, accountability, or participation, the federal government is very clear that state education agencies must first solicit public comment. Last year in Fall 2020, public comment was sought very early and the feedback indicated that waivers for both assessment and accountability were supported by the field. If we can utilize the public comment from Fall 2020, we can submit that as evidence. If not, we will plan submit our waiver as soon as possible, and add public comment once the period has closed.

This year Maine did apply for a waiver from reporting for both the main and alternate science assessments, as both are field tests.

**Question: Will the assessment window open on March 1st, or is this dependent on the contract? Will PD be offered prior to the assessment window opening, or will this possibly take place tangentially?**

Answer: For the assessment that shall not be named, it’s a multi- faceted approach. Some districts are already using this assessment. Therefore, there will be no interruption to these districts’ windows. For any new districts onboarding the assessment, once the contract is executed the vendor stands ready to support you as quickly as possible, and Andy Wallace will also be on call and supporting. There have also been conversations about possible peer mentoring from districts that have used this tool in the past that may be able to help districts new to the assessment answer questions quickly and efficiently. The implementation and professional learning stand ready to go, and Maine Doe’s intent is to make sure that schools districts are comfortable and confident in the assessment before they are asked to administer.

**Question: Do we know assessment window?**

Answer: The assessment window is March 1st – June 15th, 2021. Conversations happening in real time include feedback from the field that while typically districts due not like to assess in June, this year two additional weeks would be helpful.

The assessment window for ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is January 11th – April 16th, 2021.

The alternate assessments window [MSAA and MSAA Science] is March 15th – May 14th, 2021.

**Question: How much time do you intend to give between the announcement of the assessment technology and the administration window opening? Will we have time for set up/practice?**

Answer: The intent is to be a staggered implementation. Once the school/district are in a place where you can assess students, you are asked to proceed. We want to make sure that all staff administering this assessment are comfortable and confident and have received the necessary professional development support that they require.

**Question: We have over 400 remote learners in our district. Should we be setting up times for these students to be tested, or should I be planning to submit 400 special considerations?**

Answer: If learners are fully remote, for reasons related to health/safety/medical concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic, the school can apply for a special consideration. For students simply opting not to come to school, the Department asks that the district/school proceed with a good faith effort to assess when safely possible to do so.

If you have a high preponderance of students who are fully remote, and you cannot get them into the building to assess during the entirety of the assessment window, please reach out to that assessment coordinator directly.

**Question: Which assessments can be administered remotely?**

Answer: Almost all MEA assessments required an in-person administration. This includes the science, MSAA and MSAA Science, and that ACCESS for ELLs assessments. The only assessment with the opportunity for remote administration is the soon-to-be-announced main assessment in ELA & math.

**Question: What do I do if my principal does not have access to NEO, for the special consideration module?**

Answer: Please reach out to a member of the assessment team for support with this request.

**Question: Will it be possible to assess different students at different times within the grade level?**

Answer: Test security considerations can be a lot lighter with adaptive assessments, and districts/schools will enjoy that flexibility this year given current challenges to space, staffing, and cohort learning.

**Question: Will the assessment that has not been named be available via the Internet on a home-device as opposed to a school device?**

Answer: This is something the Department is checking into. The vendor does appear to have some options related to this. The Department is recommending a school device and not a personal device for purposes of assessment. With further questions, please reach out to assessment coordinator Nancy Godfrey: [Nancy.godfrey@maine.gov](mailto:Nancy.godfrey@maine.gov).

**Question: In terms of accountability, how will growth be measured this year with a new assessment?**

Answer: For states with no interruption to their contracts, many are already talking about how to account for the gap in the year of data. Maine does not have that luxury as we are changing our assessment this year and the two assessments cannot be aligned. One is criterion- referenced and the other is norm- referenced, therefore growth cannot be measured between the two. Current feedback in the national educational community is that the federal government may be leaning more towards a waiver from accountability than from assessment, indicating that the assessment this year is vital as an additional data point to support students. It is one data point, and thus there has been speculation that assessments will not be waived but accountability will possibly be revised for this year. Maine DOE continues to monitor this and will keep districts informed of any developments.