



THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

2019 Summer Internship Program in Educational Assessment and Accountability

The National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc. (the Center) is a small non-profit organization that occupies a unique and influential niche at the intersection of educational measurement and educational assessment policy. The Center is pleased to offer **up to four (4) summer internships** for advanced doctoral students in educational measurement and/or assessment/accountability policy who want the opportunity to work with the Center's professionals on projects with direct implications for state and national educational policy.

The Center for Assessment

The Center was formed in 1998 as a not-for-profit corporation with a mission to increase student learning through improved assessment and accountability practices. The Center is located in Dover, NH (10 miles from the seacoast town of Portsmouth, NH and about an hour north of Boston, MA). The Center's twelve professional staff members have earned doctorates in psychometrics, curriculum, or statistics and most have worked at high levels in state departments of education (e.g., assessment directors) or in testing companies. The combination of technical expertise and practical experience allows Center professionals to contribute effectively to cutting edge applications in educational measurement and policy.

The Center works directly with states (current contracts include more than 30 states or entities) and has working relationships with several national research and advocacy organizations such as the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Achieve, and KnowledgeWorks. Some sample current projects of the Center include:

- ✓ Serving as technical leaders in the design and implementation of Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA) projects with states pursuing this flexibility under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
- ✓ Helping states devise student longitudinal growth systems for school accountability, and analyze the factors affecting the validity and reliability of such systems
- ✓ Designing innovative, interactive assessment and accountability reporting systems designed to yield meaningful interpretations of student and school scores
- ✓ Working with multi-state assessment consortia on a variety of issues ranging from assessment design and development to structuring systems for assisting the consortia in receiving relevant and timely technical advice
- ✓ Assisting states in developing comprehensive and coherent systems of assessment that serve summative and formative purposes. For example, the Center has been a national leader in designing systems to support competency-based and personalized learning models.



The Summer Internship Program

Each intern will work on **one major project** throughout the summer (to be negotiated between the intern and the Center mentor) and may participate with Center staff on other ongoing projects. The intern will have the opportunity to attend meetings and interact with state assessment personnel. Interns will be expected to **produce a written report and a proposal for a research conference (e.g., NCME, AERA)**, as evidence of successful completion of their project. One of the Center's senior staff will serve as the intern's primary mentor, but the interns will interact regularly with many of the Center's staff. **Potential** intern projects for 2019 may include the following¹:

1. **Effective Practices for Subscore Reporting and Use:** The purpose of this project is to evaluate and classify the range of practices with respect to subscore reporting on large-scale state achievement tests. This information will help inform development of guidelines to describe and promote effective practices.
2. **Interim Assessment Research Synthesis:** The purpose of this internship is to conduct a research synthesis, and if possible a meta-analysis, of available research on interim assessments. Doing so will involve drawing on a theory of action framing to characterize how interim assessment results are used within these studies. This work will define the specific ways in which programs of interim assessments have been used and what, if any, uses have empirical support for their efficacy.
3. **Tools for Depicting and Analyzing Achievement Gaps:** Reducing achievement gaps has been a primary purpose of federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965, reauthorized as IASA, NCLB, and ESSA). Yet progress has been agonizingly limited by most accounts, with a few bright exceptions. This project has three main outcomes: 1) Summarize the most interesting and useful definitions of "achievement gap" and how to measure them—and show how the various conceptualizations are related to larger policy concerns and to each other; 2) Identify and/or devise a few powerful depictions and analyses of "(reducing) achievement gap" that would apply to states' current efforts; and 3) Support the development of an open-source toolkit (include open-source statistical code) that could be used by states and others interested in understanding, communicating to others, and acting to improve educational outcomes in terms of equity.
4. **Evaluating ESSA's Impact on Equity:** This project will involve a review of state accountability systems with a focus on the design features explicitly tied to equity. Ultimately, we hope to better understand what accountability features seem most important and effective to promote equity outcomes.
5. **Analysis of State ESSA Accountability Systems:** State ESSA accountability systems must identify schools for various levels of "support and improvement" referred to as Comprehensive

¹ More details about the Center for Assessment can be found at www.nciea.org. Please also navigate to the Internship page for additional details about potential projects.

Support and Improvement (CSI), Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI), and Alternate Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI). The rates of identification vary considerably among states: for example, ATSI range from fewer than 2% of all schools in one state to more than 30% in another. This project entails analyzing the “construct” and measurement reasons for the variations, and implications, especially reliability/precision and cross-state comparability of the determinations.

6. **Assessment Literacy for Policy Makers:** Much of the focus on assessment literacy has been on improving the knowledge and skills of educators to better design and use assessments to improve instruction for students. We have come to recognize that a lack of assessment literacy among state policy makers can lead to considerable instability, weak designs, and inappropriate uses of state assessments. Further, given the rapid turnover of state leaders, we need to create long-term structural supports for improving the assessment literacy of these state leaders. The intern selected for this project will build off of the Center’s conceptualization of assessment literacy to design tools and modules for improving policy maker’s understanding of key assessment topics and then test the efficacy of such tools with current state policy makers.
7. **Large-Scale Assessment Policy Analysis:** Given the powerful influence of state assessment laws and regulations on the design and implementation of large-scale assessment systems, it is surprising how little we, as a measurement community, know about these laws and regulations. It is difficult to propose policies to support improved large-scale assessments such as through the use of matrix-sampling designs without knowing the current policy and political contexts. Additionally, stability is central to any policy instrument such as a large-scale assessment or accountability program, and we have observed the negative consequences of instability in large-scale assessment policies. The intern selected for this project will analyze a sample of state assessment policies to understand the range of requirements encoded in statute or regulation. This landscape analysis will provide the foundation for generating policy frameworks that can be used as models for state leaders who want to improve the constraints and requirements associated with large-scale testing programs.

Application Information

Qualifications

The intern must have completed at least two years of doctoral course work in educational measurement, curriculum studies, statistics, research methods, or a related field. Interns with documented previous research experience are preferred. Further, interns must document their ability to work independently to complete a long-term project. We have found that successful interns possess **most** of the following skills and knowledge (the importance of the level of skills and knowledge in each of the areas described below is **dependent** on the specific project):

- ✓ Ability to work on a team under a rapid development model
- ✓ A deep understanding of educational assessment and its uses including policy and practice
- ✓ Content knowledge in a relevant discipline (e.g. science, mathematics, language arts)



- ✓ Depending on the project, working knowledge of statistical analysis through multivariate analyses as well as fluency with one or more statistical packages, e.g., SAS, SPSS, R
- ✓ A solid understanding of research design
- ✓ Psychometrics (both classical and IRT) with demonstrated understanding of the principles of reliability and validity
- ✓ An interest in applying technical skills and understanding major policy and practical issues
- ✓ Excellent written and competent spoken English skills

Logistics

The internship duration is 8 weeks and is **located at our offices in Dover, NH for the full 8 weeks, starting on June 10, 2019** unless other arrangements are made between the mentor and intern.

Support

The Center will provide a stipend of **\$6000** as well as a housing allowance and reasonable relocation expenses.

Application

To apply for the internship program, candidates should submit the following materials **electronically**:

- ✓ A letter of interest explaining why the candidate would be a good fit with the Center, what the candidate hopes to gain from the experience, and which project(s) the candidate's preferred project. Further, the letter should explain both what the candidate could contribute to the preferred project(s) and why the project(s) fits with the candidate's interests.
- ✓ Curriculum vita, and
- ✓ Two letters of recommendations (one must be from the candidate's academic advisor).

Of approximately 20-30 applicants, six to eight are identified for a telephone interview. Those interviewed by phone may be asked to submit one recent sole (preferred) or first-authored academic paper. Please do not submit the paper until it is requested.

Materials must be submitted electronically (including letters of recommendations) to: Sandi Chaplin at schaplin@nciea.org and received by February 8, 2019.

Applicants selected for interviews will be notified by March 1, 2019 regarding their candidacy.

To learn more about the Center, please visit www.nciea.org.