



THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

2023 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 three (3) 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 fourteen professional staff members have advanced degrees 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 (currently more than 40 states or entities) and with several national research and advocacy organizations such as the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Aspen Institute, 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 evaluate the impact of the pandemic on student learning and implications for ongoing support
- ✓ Working with states to develop student longitudinal growth systems for school accountability, and evaluating 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,
- ✓ 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 2023 may include the following¹:

1. Evaluating Exit Criteria for School Accountability Systems

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to develop school accountability systems that specify how schools enter and exit support categories. States have considerable latitude to develop criteria that “ensure continued progress to improve student academic achievement and school success” (ESSA section 1111(d)(3)). Getting it right is important. The criteria should be sufficiently rigorous to minimize prematurely exiting schools that need continued support. But it's also costly if the criteria are too stringent and diminish effective support to the schools most in need. The project will start with a review of school accountability systems to inventory the range of approaches that states use to establish exit criteria. Then, the project will focus on investigating the impact of various exit criteria decisions. For example, which sources of evidence account for the most variance in overall performance? What is the impact of various decision rules on classification accuracy? The project may involve examining actual state accountability data sets or generating data as part of the study. The overall goal of this project is to develop guidance to help practitioners develop and evaluate exit criteria that support the intended system priorities.

2. Understanding the Potential Value and Use-Cases of State “Benchmark” Assessments

One of the Center's state clients provides optional interim and benchmark assessments for use by district and school personnel. These non-summative assessments are procured along with the state summative assessment, so they have a similar look and feel as the state assessment. The state does not determine the frequency and choice of benchmark assessments that are given in the classroom but intends for these assessments to support instruction. This multi-part study will first involve analyzing benchmark usage data at the school level to see if there is a relationship between the degree of benchmark use at a school and their state assessment scores. Based on these analyses, the intern will interview teachers (virtually) along the use continuum of benchmarks to learn how they are using the assessments and making sense of the results.

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.



The intern will use the information gained through the quantitative and qualitative analyses and consider offering recommendations for redesigning the score reports and providing resources to improve educators' assessment literacy regarding the benchmark assessments.

3. What do we know about the academic impact of the pandemic for students with significant cognitive disabilities?

Many researchers have examined the academic impact of the pandemic for students who take the general assessment but less is known about the impact for students with significant cognitive disabilities (SCD) who take an alternate assessment. This purpose of this project is to explore patterns of participation and performance on state alternate assessments in 2019, 2021, and 2022 to elicit insights about the academic impact of the pandemic. To the extent practicable, findings may help address the magnitude of the impact overall for SCD compared to students in the general population and the extent to which the impact varied for different contexts or conditions. Ultimately, the goal is to leverage insights from this study to guide future support initiatives.

Application Information

General 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** onsite at the Center's office in Dover, New Hampshire. The internship will start in early June 2023; the specific date will be determined by the intern and the mentor.



Support

The Center will provide a stipend of **\$8000** as well as a **\$2000** 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).

From among the applicants, approximately six to eight are identified for a telephone interview. Those interviewed by phone may be asked to submit one recent 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 13, 2023.**

Applicants selected for interviews will be notified by February 28, 2023 regarding their candidacy. To learn more about the Center, please visit www.nciea.org.