



THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

2024 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 the 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,
- ✓ Serving as conceptual leaders as well as assisting states in developing balanced systems of assessment that serve summative and formative purposes. For example, several Center professionals are authors of several chapters in the forthcoming National Academy of Education volume, *Reimagining Balanced Assessment Systems*.



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 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 the 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 other Center staff members. **Potential** intern projects for 2024 may include the following¹:

1. Understanding the Potential Instructional Use Cases of Through-Year Assessments

“Through-year” assessment systems are growing in popularity among U.S. states. A through-year assessment program is administered in multiple sessions during a school year (e.g., fall, winter, and spring). This system support the production of an annual summative proficiency determination, and it is almost always designed to support one additional goal. Typically, this additional goal is related to providing data that can be used to help teachers improve instruction and student learning. Unfortunately, this instructional improvement goal has generally been unexamined. The intern working on this project will review the literature on instructional utility and then design interview protocols to gain an understanding of how teachers and leaders perceive and use the information. The intern will then apply the interview protocol to teachers and school leaders in one of our partner states implementing a through-year assessment system. This project should provide insights into the instructional utility of one through-year assessment program and will hopefully offer recommendations for how the state can improve the instructional usefulness of the assessment results.

2. Tracing the History of Innovation in Assessment

The history of educational assessment is replete with innovation. Item-response theory, computer-based and computer-adaptive testing, Common Core consortium assessment, and alternate assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are just some of the major shifts we've seen in assessment over the past decades. We are witnessing increasing calls for innovation in the current assessment policy environment. However, we are concerned that these calls are not accompanied by a clear definition of the problem/issue that the innovation is intended to address. Nor do most of the calls for innovation specify the processes and mechanisms by which the innovative assessment program will lead to the desired outcomes. The intern working on this project will start with a historical and conceptual analysis of innovations in assessment over the past 40 years or so. Using this historical and conceptual framework, the intern will then undertake a policy analysis of current calls for assessment

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.

innovation to shed light on how to better specify current innovative programs and proposals in the current policy environment.

3. Exploring the Nature and Impact of Enrollment Declines in Public Schools

Unsurprisingly, during the pandemic-related disruptions in 2020, enrollment in public schools dropped. While many students returned in 2021, enrollment in most states declined again in 2022 and 2023. In the first phase of this project, we seek to better understand the magnitude of these declines and the extent to which the characteristics of the public school population may have changed in recent years. For example, is the demographic composition of the population in 2023 similar to that of the previous four years? Are differences generally consistent or uneven across grade levels or regions? Informed by these findings, in the second phase we want to better understand if and how enrollment declines influence the interpretation of longitudinal academic performance. For example, analyses using academic growth measures or based on statistical adjustments (e.g., propensity score matching) may provide alternate views of performance trends compared to results based on the population. We expect that the intern working on this project will take advantage of publicly available data from state education websites to support the first phase. For the second phase, the intern will likely have access to anonymized student level data to inform their investigation.

4. Understanding State Priorities for School Accountability under ESSA

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires each state to develop a school accountability system that meets federal requirements. There are a range of viewpoints regarding whether these requirements are too rigid. Some argue that ESSA is sufficiently flexible to allow states to develop systems that reflect their priorities and values. Others contend that meaningful reform will only be possible if the law is changed (or if certain parts are waived) to make way for truly innovative alternatives. We seek to better understand the accountability priorities of education leaders, particularly those from state education agencies. What would states do if ESSA was not a barrier? To address these questions, the intern working on this project will design and implement a survey and conduct interviews to elicit feedback from state education leaders and other influential policy makers. The results of this project will provide insights for policy makers to inform the reauthorization of ESSA in future years.

Application Information

General Qualifications

The intern must have completed at least two years of doctoral coursework 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 a 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 2024; 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 recommendation (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 recommendation) to:
Sandi Chaplin at schaplin@nciea.org and received by February 16, 2024.**

Applicants selected for interviews will be notified by March 1, 2024, regarding their candidacy. To learn more about the Center, please visit www.nciea.org.