



The National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment

STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

January 8, 2024

CONTEXT

The Center for Assessment, a non-partisan, non-profit organization established in 1998, is committed to improving educational outcomes for students. We believe that assessment and accountability systems, implemented well, can play an essential role in fostering high levels of student outcomes.

The need for better student outcomes—and improvement of the education systems that support them—has never been more urgent. Persistent inequities in opportunity remind us of the importance of our efforts and the urgency with which we must pursue them.

The Center is proud of its partnerships with states, districts, and other organizations to design, implement, and evaluate policies and programs to support student learning. But the work is unfinished. We are committed to addressing current challenges and preparing for those ahead.

To serve effectively as a partner and problem-solver, we need to ensure that our strategic approaches are well-founded and enriched by a range of viewpoints. To that end, we engaged in a formal strategic planning process to define the activities and projects that are most central to our mission, establish key goals, and articulate the values and criteria that guide our choices about projects and initiatives we pursue over the next several years.

We completed the strategic planning process between May 2022 and January 2023. The process was informed by gathering the input of staff and board members, partners, vendors, and thought leaders in the field. A steering committee of three board members and four staff members supported and guided the process. An external consultant facilitated or supported all aspects of the project.

Below are the key outcomes from the Center's strategic planning initiative.

VISION, MISSION, VALUES, AND STRATEGIC GOALS

Our vision is the imagined, aspirational future we intend to create (with the contributions of many others), while our mission is the purpose of our organization and the way we achieve impact. Our values are the core beliefs that inspire and guide our choices about what work we choose to do and how we navigate that work. Finally, our strategic goals are the ways in which we strive to fulfill our mission and vision.

Vision:

We envision an equitable education system that provides meaningful opportunities for all students.

Mission:

We aim to improve student learning by partnering with education leaders to create and support high-quality assessment and accountability systems.

Values:

- **Equity:** Advancing systems that support all students
- **Integrity:** Working ethically and honestly
- **Collaboration:** Partnering through mutual responsibility
- **Evidence:** Grounding strategies in research
- **Impact:** Generating and sharing transformative results

Strategic Goals:

- The Center works with clients and colleagues to improve student outcomes by promoting assessment practices that support deeper learning of both academic and trans-academic skills to ensure that students have meaningful post-secondary opportunities.
- Center professionals help policymakers, leaders, and educators to design and deploy effective assessment and accountability practices.
- Center professionals partner with education leaders and other partners to design balanced assessment and accountability systems to better support student learning and school improvement.
- The Center aims to design assessment and accountability systems that help reduce gaps in opportunity and achievement, especially for traditionally marginalized and underserved students.

CORE STRATEGIC WORK

One of the aims of the strategic planning process was to increase clarity and transparency about what projects we take on, with whom, and in what ways. Through our efforts, we seek to positively influence student learning at scale, prioritizing initiatives that a) address critical assessment and accountability needs and challenges in the field, b) align with the Center's values, and c) leverage the Center's unique strengths.

Reaching for clarity produced what we call our pillars of work. These pillars describe the characteristics of projects that support our vision, mission, and values:

- We engage primarily with state education agencies to influence practice. Our heavy emphasis on state partnership is appropriate given the needs of the field, the Center's values, our strengths, and our purposely small size.
- We prioritize projects that enable Center staff members to create innovative solutions and build capacity with our clients.
- We aim to increase our influence on federal and state policy. To do so, we may collaborate with non-governmental or other organizations to fill gaps in our expertise or help expand our reach.
- We value working directly with districts on projects that allow the Center to develop innovative ideas and practices that districts or states can adopt widely or use as models for other states and districts.
- Projects that are routine—simply an application of established procedures—should be rare.