


# MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Independent School Heads, District Test Administrators  
FROM: Daniel M. French, Ed.D., Secretary of Education   
SUBJECT: New Assessment Implementation for SY23  
DATE: October 5, 2022

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## Purpose

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) has finalized procurement of a vendor to develop and implement statewide summative assessments of English language arts (ELA), math and science. Beginning in 2022-23 school year, the state will implement new statewide assessments of ELA, Math, and Science, developed and implemented with Cognia. Please note that this memo pertains to the general assessments, not alternate assessments. This memo is intended to inform supervisory unions and supervisory districts (SU/SDs) of the upcoming transition and describe our collective next steps.

## Overview of the Procurement Process

Federal law requires the AOE to administer a peer-reviewed assessment to students in the areas of ELA, math and science. As required by [State Bulletin 3.5 Procurement and Contracting Policies](#), the AOE issued a first request for proposals (RFP) in early 2021, however, had to fail the initial RFP due to the bidders not meeting the requirements. At the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, the AOE reissued a second RFP. Vendors submitted bid proposals, which were scored by a team of AOE staff, representing areas of assessment, data, reporting, and accountability. Based on collective scores, vendor demonstrations where SU/SD staff were invited to participate, and Best and Final Offers (BAFO), the review team recommended Cognia as the vendor to carry out the contracted work. This recommendation was approved by the State Board of Education and the AOE then moved forward accordingly with the contracting process.

The AOE acknowledges that the extended timeline for this procurement process has caused confusion and delay for SUs. We apologize for this and are committed to executing on this contract as expediently as possible with extensive support and training. This procurement process was complex. Due to the scope of the contract and the time needed for Independent Review of the contract, which is a requirement of the procurement process for substantial contracts, completion of the procurement process was delayed from Summer 2022 to Fall 2022. Because the procurement process is protected, the AOE has been prohibited from sharing any information related to the outcome of the RFP.

## Why Did the AOE Select Cognia?

The AOE selected Cognia for the following key reasons:

1. **Integration of diversity, equity and inclusion:** Cognia demonstrated and documented a superior approach to integrating principles of diversity, equity and inclusion into their organization, the assessment development process and implementation procedures. The assessment includes superior accessibility features and is highly adaptable due to the organization's use of enhanced technology.
2. **Comprehensiveness of Services:** Cognia provides a comprehensive suite of resources, including benchmark assessments, annual summative assessments, robust item banks, advanced accessibility features and accommodations, advanced item interoperability, a detailed implementation and training plan, as well as strong customer support services.
3. **Implementation interface:** Cognia provides an enhanced interface for test set up, delivery and performance. Educator, student and family engagement with the solution is intuitive and accessible.

## What Can We Expect for the 2022-23 School Year?

- Cognia's assessments will take the place of the previous assessments developed by Smarter Balanced and Cambium.
- As Vermont is no longer participating in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, educators will no longer have access to any of the Smarter Balanced tools that were previously available through Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Program (VTCAP) Portal. This includes Tools for Teachers and all the Smarter Balanced interim/benchmark assessments.
  - The AOE is in the process of providing a grant opportunity for schools to revise their assessment system in the area of benchmark assessments. Please monitor announcements from the AOE regarding this opportunity.
- The AOE and Cognia have developed a training and implementation plan that will support SU/SDs during the transition. A detailed overview of this plan will be shared, including timelines, in the coming weeks.
  - The vendor will begin training the AOE immediately. The field will be trained by the vendor and the AOE this fall so that District Test Administrators can train school staff. This aligns with how training has taken place in previous years.
- Cognia will perform a study using results from the first administration of the new assessment to show comparability of results between the new assessment and our former assessments, developed with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (ELA, math) and Cambium (science).
- New features available through Cognia will be introduced at the start of the 2022-2023 school year.
  - The test development, delivery platform and reporting system are managed by one vendor. This single solution will provide a seamless experience for users.
  - The procured contract does not include benchmark assessments. Formative content is available for educators to use.

- Families will interact with a new Parent Portal, which will allow for access to student results and assessment information.
- The following policies/procedures will not change because of the change in assessment vendors:
  - Participation requirements
  - Accountability
  - Reporting
  - Federally recognized exemptions
  - Communication from the AOE (e.g., monthly newsletters and Assessment Town Halls)
  - Appointment of a District Test Administrator by the Superintendent
  - Annual training requirements
  - Assurances of proper and secure test administration

### **What Do I Need to Do Before the Current Contract with Cambium Ends?**

- SUs will need to export data from the [Cambium Reporting System](#) for all assessments and administrations (including both general and alternate assessments). [Instructions](#) are available to help SUs with this process. This must be done by Oct. 21, 2022.
- Access to all Cambium platforms and products for general state assessments of ELA, Math, and Science will end effective Oct. 31, 2022.

### **Who Do I Contact if I Have Questions?**

The AOE will hold traditional Town Hall events for SU/SDs following the release of the training and implementation plan. In the meantime, if SU/SDs have questions regarding the procurement process or the upcoming transition, those questions can be sent to the central statewide assessment inbox ([AOE.StatewideAssessment@vermont.gov](mailto:AOE.StatewideAssessment@vermont.gov)). Emails will be responded to within two business days.