



Cognia Responds to US K12 Testing Disruptions in the Wake of COVID-19 with Support from TAO

CASE STUDY

How Educators are Successfully Adapting their Assessment Campaigns in an Unpredictable Education Landscape

ABSTRACT

In 2020, as COVID-19 has upended traditional education across the world, many US K12 education leaders are finding themselves navigating uncharted territory as they're planning for the "new normal" in learning and assessment. With new and changing government requirements dictated almost daily at the district, state and federal levels, and a lack of

conformity between how districts are handling student testing during this time, a number of questions and challenges arise. Find out how Cognia™ and the TAO team are working together to support states across the US in the wake of testing disruption due to COVID-19 and how they are developing contingency plans for moving forward in this uncertain time.

BACKGROUND

Cognia™ is a global nonprofit that offers accreditation and certification, assessment, professional learning, and improvement services for schools. The result of the merger of AdvancED and Measured Progress, Cognia™ was formed to bridge the gap between school evaluation and student assessment. As the largest education improvement organization in the world, Cognia™ is an undeniable force for enhancing schools, engaging students and driving better outcomes for all.

The Relationship Begins: Finding an Online Assessment System to Support Alternate Assessments

In 2015, Cognia™ received a state contract requiring an online testing system that could support scaffolding functionality for Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) standardized testing. The MSAA is a comprehensive assessment system designed to

promote higher academic outcomes for students with significant cognitive disabilities as they prepare for the future.

The necessary scaffolding functionality within the assessment system would remove incorrect answer choices from responses, allowing for second attempts at a question for students with cognitive disabilities.

BACKGROUND CONT.

When Cognition™ began their search for a flexible platform that could support learners of all abilities, TAO emerged as the best solution for a number of reasons:

- TAO was the only online assessment solution that could support the unique scaffolding functionality required for this specific assessment for students with varying abilities.
- TAO is built on open standards to evolve to accommodate different assessment styles.
- TAO is open source - Cognition™ would be able to extend and customize TAO's open source platform code with enhanced functionality to meet their exact needs.

CHALLENGE

Responding to Testing Disruptions in the Wake of COVID-19

With little guidance from the federal government in the midst of COVID, many US states have responded differently in their plans for education and assessment after the global shutdowns and testing cancellations.

While the US federal government has waived testing requirements for 2020, states can still choose to report their data. However, many states with incomplete testing data have chosen not to do so.

This has created a widespread challenge of how to handle planning for the future as well as the validity of this year's assessments, a conversation state leaders are carrying on.

- Covid has changed the playing field for an entire cohort of students, leading some states to adapt their testing procedures to include at home or loss of learning tests.
- The interpretation of summative assessment results may change States and districts will be seeking additional interim and formative data.
- How can states mitigate loss when their testing campaign windows are disrupted?
- How do you develop a contingency plan for the "new normal" in learning and assessment?

SOLUTION

Developing a Flexible Plan of Action

Working with TAO, Cognition has taken a number of measures to mitigate loss and provide the best opportunities for students to show what they've learned in 2020. After discussing the many challenges states would be facing, TAO and Cognition strategized a contingency plan to support the states' testing and data requirements including reactive and proactive solutions for helping students and teachers.

- Team leaders from TAO and Cognition had daily strategy meetings to discuss the ever changing education landscape and how to plan for the future.
- TAO was able to extend the testing windows for Cognition to allow for a quicker turn-around of testing data.
- The TAO team readjusted their product roadmap to support alignment with the solutions needed in the wake of COVID, like remote proctoring.
- Per state requirements, Cognition was able to temporarily shut down the TAO platform. During this time, **resources that would have been dedicated to TAO campaign support were reinvested into platform feature development for their next campaign, including TAO's remote proctoring solution.**
- Since the platform is open source, promoting work on the TAO remote proctoring solution benefits TAO users across the board.
- TAO and Cognition negotiated pricing terms, where many other institutions had challenges negotiating with their vendors.
- Cognition was able to quickly reopen the TAO platform for testing after strategizing and developing a contingency plan to make sure the states they serve would be covered from all angles under any circumstance.

The TAO product roadmap was adjusted to support features needed for remote learning, like online proctoring.

SOLUTION CONT.

Finding flexible and adaptable solutions have been key for district and state education leaders navigating the online learning landscape during COVID-19. Cognia has been able to react and make accommodations at a moments notice based on states' changing needs by working closely with TAO's Client Success team.

Loss of Learning Assessments

Some states are administering "loss of learning" tests to measure the knowledge and skills that were lost since the disruption of formal instruction. The goal of this testing also helps educators benchmark students where they are at and understand how to support those who have fallen behind when education shifted outside of the classroom.

To make meaning of the data collected for 2020 and 2021, states will likely need to look at scores across multiple cohorts and compare to those same cohorts from 2018-2019 academic year.

RESULTS

For education leaders across the country, online education and assessment is a new normal that requires flexibility in planning and resources.

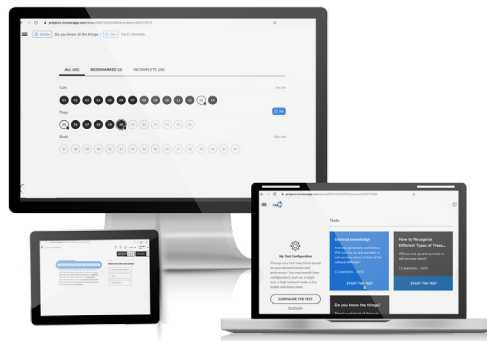
Because the timelines surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic are so unpredictable, a trusted technology partner like TAO allows Cognia to focus on continuing to provide solutions to educators and learners that help states collect and make use of meaningful data.

Reallocating support resources into development for their TAO platform also allows Cognia to be better prepared for their next campaign, as they plan to see an uptick in students registering for fall testing in 2020.

Now, they are prepared to handle the testing influx for fall, and can better evaluate how to plan for their future assessments under unprecedented circumstances.

CONCLUSION

COVID-19 has left education leaders with many questions for 2020 and 2021 assessment. Because of this, planning around testing has had to remain flexible to account for unpredictable timelines. Cognia was able to mitigate loss and quickly plan to support state and district education leaders by working and strategizing with a trusted technology partner like TAO. Now, even with assessment requirements changing almost daily, they are confident that they can trust in a partner that will work with them, remain flexible, and prepare them for success in responding to future unprecedented disruptions to traditional testing.



ABOUT COGNIA

Cognia™ is a global nonprofit that has the knowledge to help schools improve. Cognia offers accreditation and certification, assessment, professional learning, and improvement services. The result of the merger of AdvancED and Measured Progress, Cognia was formed to bridge the gap between school evaluation and student assessment. We are the largest education improvement organization in the world and an undeniable force for enhancing schools, engaging students and driving better outcomes for all. In 2020, the entities that came together to form Cognia mark 125 years of service to education.

Find out more at cognia.org.



ABOUT TAO

TAO, from Open Assessment Technologies, is the leading digital assessment solution for education and career advancement. Modular, customizable and interoperable by design, TAO empowers you to break free from the confines of proprietary silos, eliminate expensive licensing fees, take full control of your testing resources.

Find out more at www.taotesting.com



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM TAO



PRODUCT

ACCELERATING INNOVATION IN DIGITAL ASSESSMENT

Three TAO editions, one powerful platform. Download our product sheet to learn more about TAO's digital assessment platform solutions for assessment authoring, delivery, rostering and reporting and find the product tier that's right for your organization.

CASE STUDIES

- **Transitioning an Item Bank from Paper to Digital with The Finnish Matriculation Examination Board (MEB)**
- **TAO Addresses the Unique Assessment Needs of Students with Cognitive Disabilities**
- **Beyond Multiple Choice: UMass Enriches Adult Proficiency Tests with Engaging Interactions Types Using TAO**
- **The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministry of Education (EDK) Uses TAO to Ensure Consistent Nationwide Learning Standards**
- **New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Adds Technology and Multimedia to Language Proficiency Exams**
- **The Comenius Program in Europe Uses TAO to Deliver Self-Assessment Surveys to At-Risk Youth**
- **Elsevier Incorporates TAO with Ease, Gauging Career Readiness in Healthcare Fields**
- **Leveraging Portable Custom Interactions to Foster the Link Between Teaching and learning**



WHITE PAPERS

- **Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS): Opening the Possibilities for Deeper Learning and Assessment**
- **Redefining Digital Assessment**
- **The Importance of IMS Certification and QTI Compliance**
- **The Practical Guide to Successful Large-Scale Online Assessment**
- **Three Tangible Ideas for Engaging Assessment Content**



eBOOKS

- **The Practical Guide to Digital Assessment**