



ETS Research Agenda: Big Educational Challenges

Education around the world faces many and significant challenges in the 21st century.

Achievement gaps among racial and ethnic groups persist, starting in preschool and lasting through secondary and postsecondary education. This ultimately leads to inequity in global workplace opportunities. English-language learners and students with disabilities still fight for access to educational opportunities that will meet their needs and help them achieve at levels comparable to other students.

Schools around the world struggle to attract, place and keep highly qualified educators, including teachers who are similar in demographics to the increasingly diverse student populations that they serve. In an ever more competitive global society, employers point to growing shortages of technically skilled people and gaps in the communication and social-emotional skills of applicants; such deficits are evidence of a huge loss of human potential. There is an urgent need to identify and select candidates who are technologically skilled, communicatively proficient, culturally aware and agile, and in possession of a range of other competencies.

As a mission-based, nonprofit educational research organization with a long and distinguished history of advancing the science of educational measurement, ETS is dedicated to providing products, services, research and thought leadership that help offer solutions to these challenges by improving teaching and learning, expanding opportunities for individual learners, and informing education policy and assessments.

In 2017, we refocused our research agenda around “big” challenges in education that are most pressing for all stakeholders in education: learners, parents, educators, faculty, administrators, employers and policymakers.



The nine big educational challenges we aim to address are to:



Increase Sustainable Access to a Diverse and High-quality Teaching Pool



Improve the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) Pathways



Raise U.S. Literacy Levels



Support U.S. English Learners' Development of Language Proficiency



Raise Global English-language Proficiency



Increase the Diversity and Quality of Admissions to Higher Education



Promote Assessment and Development of Critical Competencies in a Global Context



Increase Workplace Preparedness and Success



Support Underserved Learners and Those Who Teach Them

Our comprehensive research projects are designed to enhance the science and practice of educational assessment. Our work focuses on increasing our ability to create valid, reliable, fair and accessible assessments that provide information for all individuals and subgroups.

Our research is generating innovations in terms of:

What we assess — increasing our ability to measure the cognitive, social and emotional competencies of most importance for global, educational and workforce success

How we assess — leveraging emerging technologies to design assessments that resemble the complex problem-solving we encounter every day

How we score and report assessment results — using state-of-the-art statistical models that provide useful, meaningful and actionable information to improve learning and development and drive opportunities and access worldwide

In partnership with local, state and national/governmental education agencies, policymakers, the research community, and parents, teachers and students, ETS researchers, psychometricians and assessment experts are generating the knowledge and capabilities needed to tackle these persistent challenges so that all learners worldwide have an opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do.

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