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Utah Selects New Statewide School Testing Provider

Questar Assessment named through bid process to administer grades 3-8 assessment

The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) will begin negotiations with Questar Assessment Inc. for a five-year, computer-adaptive testing contract that will begin being used in schools in the 2018-19 school year.

Questar was one of four companies to participate in a required request for proposal (RFP) process over the past year. USBE notified the Minneapolis-based company Friday of its award, which will be executed in the coming months after the Board approves contract terms.

“As a selection committee, we vetted the companies through a fair and unbiased process. Much thought and discussion went into this decision, and I believe this is in the best interests of both students and taxpayers in Utah,” said Board Member Terryl Warner, who represents District 1 and served on the RFP selection committee.

Based on the RFP, the \$29,920,624 contract will include testing for grades 3-8 in English language arts and mathematics, grades 4-8 in science, and writing tests for grades 5 and 8 through the 2023-24 school year. An optional five-year renewal option will also be included in the contract. Funding for the assessment comes annually via a legislative line item.

Also included in the RFP and future contract is a provision that all test questions used in the current statewide assessment, Student Assessment of Growth and Excellence (SAGE), stay in Utah and be used

in the new assessment under Questar. USBE also has the opportunity to work with Questar to develop additional test questions.

The original five-year contract for SAGE, administered by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), was awarded in 2013 following legislative direction to adopt a computer-adaptive system.

In fall 2016, the Board began the RFP process to select a new assessment provider as the current contract with AIR is set to expire at the end of the 2017-18 school year. Under state guidelines, that process has included multiple phases, including technical proposals, live presentations, and cost submissions.

Questar Assessment Inc. is a K-12 assessment provider that acts as a wholly-owned, independently-operated subsidiary of Educational Testing Service. It has been involved in the development and administration of K-8 large-scale summative assessment programs since 2000. Questar's services are offered in some capacity in 34 states.

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