Overview of Selected State Assessment Systems

January 2009

Prepared for the Wisconsin Next Generation Assessment Task Force

American Institutes for Research
Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning
Regional Education Laboratory Midwest
Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center

1120 East Diehl Road, Suite 200
Naperville, IL 60563-1486
800-356-2735 • 630-649-6500
www.learningpt.org/greatlakeswest/

The Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center provides technical assistance to the state education agencies in Illinois and Wisconsin. This assistance is tailored to each state's individual needs and addresses the priorities of the U.S. Department of Education.

This work was originally produced in whole or in part by the Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center with funds from the U.S. Department of Education under cooperative agreement number S283B050012. The content does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Education, nor does mention or visual representation of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the federal government.

Great Lakes West is one of the 16 regional comprehensive centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education, and its work is administered by Learning Point Associates.

3363_01/00

Contents

Introduction

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) seeks to look beyond local and regional perspectives to survey the national landscape of assessment reform. DPI has identified four topic areas of interest under the broad heading of assessment—formative assessment, benchmark assessment, standards based assessments, and online and computer-based assessment.

For the purposes of shared understanding during this work we have established definitions of several of these terms. These working definitions are based on conversations with Wisconsin DPI and the balanced assessment system framework developed by DPI (appendix B). Formative assessments can be defined as those that are student centered; provide immediate feedback to teachers, administrators, families, and students; and consist of daily or ongoing evaluations of student performance. Benchmark assessments are those that are classroom or school centered, provide multiple data points across time, and are made up of periodic diagnostic and progress assessments. Summative assessments are school, district, and state focused. They provide an annual snapshot of student performance and consist of large-scale standardized assessments. These assessment strategies build progressively on one another and together can provide the state with accurate data on student achievement.

Based on this framework, DPI sought answers to questions in four areas: formative assessment, benchmark assessment, content-standards and high school assessment, and online assessment. Although formative and benchmark assessment represent points along the continuum developed by DPI, content and high school assessment could fall anywhere on the continuum. Online assessment represents a delivery mode that could be used for any of the assessment types. Wisconsin seeks information on employing these methods as part of a comprehensive assessment program. Although the variability among districts in implementing these practices may pose a challenge to implementing initiatives in these areas, clear guidance from a State Education Agency will help all districts and schools use assessments appropriately and effectively.

The interviews conducted by Great Lakes West for this paper respond to the request for information by answering DPI's questions about the assessment practices of innovative states in each of the four topic areas. Information gathered from the interviews was compiled by Great Lakes West and is presented here by assessment type and state. By learning what other states are doing to address assessment needs and requirements, DPI can make decisions about effective assessment practices and how to progress in Wisconsin.

Methodology

Procedure

Because of the nature of the DPI request and the operational working structure of the federal Comprehensive Center system, Great Lakes West collaborated with partners at the national Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center (AACC) and REL Midwest. The center system's method of operation allows the centers to benefit from all the partners' extensive background and expertise in assessment and knowledge of emerging trends.

Through conversations with Wisconsin DPI, Great Lakes West designed interview protocols around content-standards-based assessments, interim and benchmark assessments, formative assessments, and online and computer-based assessments. These protocols were developed in an iterative process, reviewed by Great Lakes West's partners and revised at each stage based on team input. DPI conducted a review of the protocols, and revisions were made based on the feedback. Final protocols were approved by DPI and used in conducting the interviews. The protocols are included in Appendixes C–F.

Stanley Rabinowitz, director of AACC identified 13 states with innovative assessment practices. On December 1, 2008, Great Lakes West and its partners e-mailed letters inviting participation to assessment directors from the 13 states. The letters explained that the states had been selected based on their current practices and progress in one of the identified assessment categories, and asked that the director or a designee agree to be interviewed in order to share their assessment practices and lessons learned. Reasonable efforts to contact states who did not respond to the initial letter were made over several weeks, until January 9. These attempts included follow-up e-mails and phone calls.

Great Lakes West and REL Midwest conducted interviews with representatives from states responding favorably to the request for participation by phone during December 2008 and January 2009. Interviews took approximately 30 minutes each to complete and were recorded and transcribed for quality puposes. States were interviewed using the protocols developed for the topic areas under which they are listed in the final sample (see p. 3) with one exception. Enough information was gathered from Kansas during interviews on formative and content-standards-based assessments to provide an accurate overview of its online initiatives, so Great Lakes West determined that a section on Kansas's online practice could be included in this paper without requiring a separate interview.

The final report was completed using the information gathered from these interviews and the professional expertise of Great Lakes West and its collaborators. The AACC contributed the section introductions to each topic area to provide context based on national expertise.

Participants

Initial sample

The AACC director identified 13 states (Kansas is listed twice) with innovative practices in the four topic areas:

- **Content-Standards-Based Assessment:** Colorado, Kansas, Washington, and West Virginia
- **Interim and Benchmark Assessment:** Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, and Louisiana
- **Formative and Classroom Assessment:** New York, South Carolina, Vermont, and Wyoming
- **Online or Computer-Based Assessment:** Massachusetts and Utah

Because of a conflict of interest, Massachusetts was not able to participate. Requests for interviews with assessment directors in West Virginia, Utah, and New York went unanswered. During interviews, it was discovered that some states identified for innovation in one area had promising initiatives in another focus area. Iowa and Kansas identified their initiatives in formative assessment as stronger than those in benchmark assessment. Interviews with the director of assessment for Kansas revealed that this state has a strong online assessment initiative. Based on the willingness of selected states to participate, as well as information about their initiatives gleaned from interviews, Great Lakes West used the resulting sample of nine states (Kansas is listed three times) to complete this report.

Final Sample

- **Content-Standards-Based Assessment:** Colorado, Kansas, and Washington
- **Interim and Benchmark Assessment:** Georgia and Louisiana
- **Formative and Classroom Assessment:** Iowa, Kansas, South Carolina, Vermont, and Wyoming
- **Online or Computer-Based Assessment:** Kansas

Content-Standards-Based Assessments

Introduction

The standards and assessment requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act are not especially well suited to the secondary level. Unlike in earlier grades, the course-taking pattern of students is much more differentiated at this level. Thus, coming up with a grade-specific set of content standards and a uniform assessment plan is difficult to design and implement.

For content standards, many states are facing the following additional challenges: reducing the number of standards to ensure sufficient depth of understanding; restructuring their standards to ensure sufficient college- and/or work-ready rigor for all; integrating 21st century skills that focus on application of knowledge, greater use of technology, and greater demonstrations of communication and teamwork (among others); closing the achievement gap with many at-risk student populations (e.g., English language learners [ELLs], students with disabilities, students of color, students of poverty) lagging behind while rigor is being increased to even higher levels.

There is general consensus that most states have too many content standards per grade and content area, resulting in teachers being unable to adequately teach all required content over the course of a school year. The challenge to teach all content also limits the ability to teach deeper understanding of content; this is especially problematic at the high school level because many jobs and success in college require applications of knowledge that are dependent on deep cognitive complexity and understanding.

Increasingly, states are confronting the concern that many students exit high school unprepared for the demands of postsecondary education and the workforce. Adopting postsecondary (e.g., college readiness and/or work readiness) standards and aligning them to high school content standards is occurring in states across the nation. At this time, there is no consensus on which set of standards truly reflect these expectations or whether states should have one set of standards for all high school graduates or different standards/levels to reflect various postsecondary pathways (workforce, military, community college, four-year college, etc.).

States are looking to increase the rigor of their high school content standards and make learning more relevant to students. Many are using 21st century skills as a tool for both ends. The biggest challenges states face in moving in this direction include the following:

- Which set of standards to adopt or adapt
- Whether to embed these skills into each content area (e.g., reading, mathematics) or overlay them across content areas
- How to change instruction at the classroom level to integrate these standards with the content-specific knowledge and skills
- How to assess these standards within traditional state assessment programs

Many students are currently not meeting proficiency levels, especially those from high-risk student populations. Such groups have higher failure rates on state assessments and higher overall dropout rates. NCLB and other federal and state initiatives have done a better job of identifying the challenge schools face in instructing these students than developing comprehensive, sustainable strategies to minimize these significant achievement differences. As states ambitiously move to increase the rigor of their standards—whether within the content areas themselves or through integration and articulation of 21st century and college-readiness

standards—they must also develop and implement systemwide reforms designed to support the learning of all students.

States face a range of challenges with their secondary assessment programs. The most significant ones include basic skills tests that cut across the full set of standards versus end-of-course tests; how to assess application of knowledge, teamwork, and more with current state testing models (primarily multiple choice and some constructed response); deciding which test(s) to use for adequate yearly progress (AYP) as students take the same test at different grades levels and many take different tests.

In the early years of NCLB and before, most states administered a standards-based, basic skills test to assess student achievement of the secondary content standards. This approach has three basic problems. First, assessment is separated from instruction—students are taught the content over several years across different classes but are often tested much later for some content. Next, grade placement is problematic. Grade 10 assessment allows maximal remediation time for those not meeting the proficiency standard but occurs before many students receive full instructional benefits. Grade 11 placement leaves little time for meaningful remediation given the need to make up for many years of low achievement. Finally, many of these basic skills exams have little or no stakes for students (unless they double as graduation exit tests). Motivating high school students under these circumstances is very problematic.

As a result, many states are developing end-of-course examination programs. Such exams are linked directly to instruction (content and temporal) and can be used for course grades (increasing student motivation). This approach, however, is not without challenges. Students take courses at different times (sometimes in middle or high school), creating problems assigning accountability scores uniformly. States need to decide how many courses should have an exam linked to them. Cost and enrollment figures can help with that decision. Finally, states need to decide whether scoring is local or centralized. This issue has significant security, cost, and ownership issues.

As states expand their secondary content standards and expectations for all students to include more performance-based applications, the pressure for existing assessment programs to measure these behaviors grows. Without this evolution, many teachers will not make the necessary adjustments in classroom practices ("what gets tested gets taught"). However, expanding assessment programs in these directions creates significant logistical, cost, training, and security challenges. States may want to consider a more balanced approach where the responsibility for the various components of the statewide assessment system are strategically shared at the state and local levels. The state may focus on the more traditional measures of academic achievement while providing tools and training for schools to measure the application of this knowledge and integration with essential skills and college-readiness standards.

NCLB requires an AYP determination to be made for each secondary school based on comparable information for all students. As long as states use the census basic skills test approach, this requirement can be satisfied relatively easily (though not necessarily ideally). However, states that use multiple end-of-course exams must decide either which one best satisfies the requirement that assessments cover the full breadth of the state's content standards

(unlikely with a single end-of-course exam) or they must use multiple end-of-course exams, each of which will certainly not be taken by all students in the same cohort. Additional complexity exists for those states with multiple assessment components at the secondary level. Some include basic skills tests, high school graduation exams, and end-of-course exams simultaneously. Determining the best stakes for each and which to use for AYP purposes can be quite a challenge.

Colorado

Background Information

Colorado is a local-control state; most decisions regarding curriculum, instruction, assessment, and graduation requirements are determined at the local education agency level.

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) works along with the Colorado State Board of Education to support the local education agencies. The primary function of the state board is to adopt and support the state standards. The state board ensures the assessments in place address the Colorado standards where federal and state policy mandate. Since 1997, the state has assessed students in the areas of reading/writing and mathematics in Grades 9 and 10, science in Grade 10, and the ACT is used in Grade 11. Assessments are not topical or course specific but rather based on criteria determined by content standards (similar to assessments such as the ACT).

The Colorado assessment program is designed and developed by educators within the state. Teachers are invited annually to assist with the development of assessments and evaluate the alignment of assessments to the benchmarks.

Summary

Colorado is currently discussing how to address standards that reflect 21st century skills and college and workplace readiness. Recent legislation (Senate Bill 08-212) requires the state board to revise standards for Grades 9–12 to more closely reflect expectations of 21st century skills. The discussion has been fostered by local superintendents, local school boards, and the CDE. The state board will adopt a new assessment system to meet the requirements of the new legislation by 2010. Colorado does not call for passage of any examinations as a requirement for graduation. Local school districts make those graduation requirement determinations.

Colorado is not currently participating in any formal high school restructuring projects, networks, or partnerships. However, the state does have frequent conversations with the American Diploma Project (ADP) and other restructuring agencies, but there are no formal partnerships.

Kansas

Background Information

Kansas has seen positive achievement trends since 2001 in both reading and mathematics at all grade levels. In addition, the state has done well on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in recent years. The state sees the assessment system as having contributed to this improvement in achievement. All of the state's assessments are available online (Kansas is moving to a system administered entirely online), and it also includes formative components. The state's assessment system is administered by the Center for Education Testing and Evaluation at the University of Kansas.

Kansas partners with the Northwest Evaluation Association (Measures of Academic Progress [MAPS]) and Renaissance Learning (Accelerated Reader and STAR Reading and Math). The state also widely considers the opinions and viewpoints of those outside the agency in the development of assessment materials.

Summary

The assessment currently in use is based on a system of state standards, benchmarks, and common indicators (objectives). The number of tested indicators has been limited, and the number of items for each indicator has been increased to provide clarity on what is being tested and what a student knows and does not know for each indicator. In February of 2008, the Kansas State Board of Education adopted an initiative to integrate 21st century skills into academic content standards and the standard and skills identified by the National Career Technical Education Foundation (NCTEF) States' Career Clusters Initiative (SCCI). The standards and skills identified in SCCI by NCTEF are to be implemented by June of 2009. The complete integration of the content-area standards and tech-ed skills with 21st century skills is to be completed in 2010. Kansas has adopted an award-winning policy to guide the work in this area, working with the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (policy available online at http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/route21/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=149&ItemID=239).

Kansas does not have a uniform system of end-of-course exams, nor does the state require an exam for graduation. The state approaches high school assessment as an "opportunity to learn." The students are tested after they have had an opportunity to learn the material rather than as a member of a grade-level cohort. For all NCLB subjects, students have until the end of Grade 11 to take the assessments. Students may take each assessment twice during their high school career. The scores are "banked" over time and matched to individual students. Scores are not counted toward AYP until the end of Grade 11, when they are aggregated with the student's cohort group. (This extended window for testing has been approved by the U.S. Department of Education.) Students who are not successful in reaching the relevant benchmark standards are provided opportunities for remediation in order to enhance their chances of success on the next attempt.

This system has worked to improve student achievement. However, an issue remaining to be resolved is what to do with the scores of transient students who do not have an original or second score by the end of Grade 11. For non-NCLB areas such as U.S. history and government, this is extended to the end of Grade 12.

Washington

Background Information

In Washington, local school boards are responsible for the selection and acquisition of curriculum, which is required to align with the state content standards. There is a State Board of Education, with half of the members appointed by the governor and half of the members elected by local school boards. The state board has responsibility for state high school graduation requirements and local school district accountability plans.

Overall, achievement trends have shown positive movement from multiple indicators. More students are achieving "proficient" and "above" status on state testing, college entrance exam scores have increased, and the number of students successfully passing advanced placement exams has increased. The achievement gap has narrowed somewhat, but not to the same degree that other indicators have been improving. Washington is one of only a few states that have been fully approved by the U.S. Department of Education for the entire assessment program, including science and special education.

Washington has partnered with the National Technical Advisory Committee since the mid-1990s. Another strategic partner is Riverside Publishing Company, which performed the scoring portion of the assessment and historically has assisted in the development of protocols and practices for assessment development.

Summary

The state of Washington began standards-based assessments in 1997. Students were assessed in reading, writing, math, and listening. Since that time, the program has gone through some revisions and policy mandates. At the present time, the state assesses students in reading, mathematics, and science. The state has recently completed a mathematics revision of the content standards and is building assessments that will be available in the spring of 2010. Science standards are under revision at this time, and a new science assessment will be in place for the spring of 2011.

Currently, there is a legislative mandate to develop end-of-course examinations in mathematics aligned to the newly adopted mathematics standards. These end-of-course assessments are targeted to be available in the spring of 2011. The University of Washington is developing the Mathematics Readiness Test, which will be utilized in Grades 11 and 12 by September 2009. The requirement for students to pass comprehensive reading and writing exams for graduation went into effect for students graduating in June 2008. According to recent graduation information, it does not appear that an inordinate number of students were failing to graduate as a result of failing the mandated assessments in 2008.

The state has several pilot sites that are participating in the ADP network to a limited extent. At the state level, participation in ADP has centered on the use of the Algebra II assessment. The state receives information from ADP and participates in Web-based activities and conference calls. Currently, the focus on state mandates has placed priority on assessment support to local

agencies. Therefore, full participation and partnerships in the ADP or other initiatives and partnerships may become a topic of conversation and priority at a later date.

Content-Standards-Based Assessment Summary

The states of Colorado and Kansas are strong local-control states. As a result, end-of-course exams and graduation exams, as well as graduation requirements, are determined at the local district level. Both states utilize state assessment exams as required by NCLB. In Kansas, this exam has been developed through a contract with the Center for Education Testing and Evaluation at the University of Kansas. In Colorado, the development of the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) is used to determine NCLB and AYP expectations at Grades 9 and 10, and the ACT is used as the state's summative test in Grade 11.

In the state of Washington, effective with the class of 2008, comprehensive reading and writing exams are required for graduation. Students also must pass a comprehensive mathematics exam or continue to earn credits in mathematics throughout their high school careers. End-of-course exams will be required in mathematics for three years of high school mathematics content beginning in the spring of 2011. These end-of-course exams are being developed by the University of Washington. A common cut score will be required for students who wish to attend a two- or four-year college or university in the state of Washington. State-developed assessments are currently being used for the purposes of NCLB, although students who take the SAT or ACT are allowed to use that score in lieu of a score on the state assessments.

The states of Colorado and Kansas each have initiatives moving forward to integrate 21st century skills with content-area standards and the standards and skills emphasized in the national States' Career Clusters Initiative. The integration of these skills into the state standards will be completed in late 2009 in Colorado and in mid-2010 in Kansas. In each case, the outcome will impact the assessments currently in use. In the state of Washington, the standards for mathematics and science are currently under revision as part of the process requiring end-of-course exams. Colorado does not have a formal partner with any organization or vendor involved in high school restructuring projects. Kansas is a partner in the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. Washington has a limited partnership with the American Diploma Project centered on the assessment of second-year algebra.

Interim and Benchmark Assessments

Introduction

Annual state assessments are important accountability tools. Given the stakes involved for students, teachers, and schools, many administrators are looking for ways to track student progress toward meeting these annual benchmarks. Interim assessments have emerged as a common tool to ensure that teachers are focusing instruction on the state-assessed standards and as a means to identify students at risk of not meeting proficiency targets.

Testing is not teaching. Interim assessments can help identify students who may not be making adequate progress throughout the school year. However, unless teachers are able to use the information from these assessments immediately at the individual student level, the assessments will have little real-time instructional value. Some researchers believe interim assessments are better suited for use as monitoring tools (to ensure teachers follow designated curriculum guidelines) or as program evaluation tools (to improve instruction for the next student cohort).

Looking forward versus looking backward. A major conflict teachers face when confronted with interim/benchmark assessment results is whether to spend extra time reteaching content not yet mastered when the curriculum requires additional subject matter to be taught next. In many cases, this new material may not be directly dependent on previously mastered material. Balancing past and present needs (the state test includes all content standards) creates major challenges for teachers, especially if there is a range of achievement levels among the students in the classroom.

Georgia

Background Information

The state has implemented a new curriculum and is experiencing improved achievement across the board. Significant improvement has been observed in achievement within subgroups, particularly with ELLs and students with disabilities.

Georgia uses criterion-referenced tests in Grades 1–8 in reading, English language arts, and math. Science and social studies are assessed in Grades 3–8, and writing is assessed at select grades. At the high school level, a graduation examination covers the four major content areas as well as writing. Students must pass this test to be eligible for a diploma. Georgia has recently added a new kindergarten inventory of developing skills, which was created in partnership with the University of Georgia.

Summary

Georgia has an online system that serves as a three-level repository of aligned test items. The first level provides practice tests to familiarize students and parents with the types of assessment items. The second level provides teachers with items that are aligned to the state curriculum and available for building classroom assessments. These can be used to create formative assessments or produce end-of-unit tests. Teachers can choose items that meet their needs or have the system build a test for them. The third level is for district use and provides benchmark assessments.

Georgia has built two types of benchmarks into the system. The purpose of both types of benchmark assessments is to provide feedback to improve instruction, which will ultimately improve student outcomes. The first set of benchmark assessments replicates the state-mandated tests and uses the same test specifications but with fewer items. The other benchmark assessment is called the "framework assessment" and aligns with curriculum frameworks while covering unit content throughout the school year. Georgia mandates that schools in need of improvement administer the framework assessments. Both types of benchmark assessments are built by the

state for districts and schools to use. Results reveal there is an even split between the formative and benchmark use of the system; approximately half of the districts in the state use the benchmark assessments. These assessments are aligned with state content standards but play no role in Georgia's accountability system.

The benchmark and framework assessments can be administered online or by using the paper-and-pencil format. Teachers may generate assessments that are based on the level of the test takers. However, the system does not provide computer-adaptive testing. The tests are useful for diagnostic assessment. The system generates a great variety of reports, including item analysis and reports of performance at the standard and skill level.

Training and support have been provided to districts and schools. As a result, these assessments are widely used. In recent years, schools and teachers have administered as many as five million tests online and an unknown number of paper-and-pencil tests (these are not tracked).

Louisiana

Background Information

Louisiana has seen overall achievement in mathematics trend upward substantially; reading achievement has also improved, though to a lesser degree. The state had to significantly change its assessment policies after enactment of NCLB but did not redo all tests and continues to use some of the criterion-referenced tests that were in place. Within a few years, if the budget continues to permit, the state plans to revise its entire assessment system.

Louisiana has developed a Web tool that teachers can use to create interim and benchmark assessments on demand and from which they can receive timely feedback about student performance.

Summary

Louisiana does not require interim or benchmark assessments. The state does, however, have a multipurpose Web tool, the Enhanced Assessment of Grade-Level Expectations (EAGLE), that can be used for benchmark assessments. EAGLE is an online item bank aligned with state standards, which teachers can draw from when creating assessments.

The state developed EAGLE in response to feedback from teachers that data from regular accountability test reporting was of minimal use to plan for instruction because it was released after the end of the school year. EAGLE is able to provide results in time for teachers to incorporate the data into their instruction planning. Teachers can use EAGLE to make their own tests and download the results in their classrooms. EAGLE can be used as a benchmark or formative assessment because it is fully aligned to grade-level content standards. Even though the number of teachers who have used this tool is increasing, usage is not currently widespread.

EAGLE is free to districts; however, there are probably as many districts in Louisiana who are using commercial off-the-shelf benchmark assessments as those who use EAGLE. It is not clear

why this is the case. It is possible that the commercial vendors are more successful than the state in marketing their products.

Teachers log on to the site and select items they wish to use to create an assessment, and students take the assessment online. These assessments are not adapted to the level of the test taker but could be used by teachers for diagnostic purposes or to assess student progress. Currently, about two thirds of the subjects and grades are covered.

Louisiana has two staff members who provide training to local education agency and school-level staff. Training is voluntary, and a few thousand people have been trained in EAGLE. The training is hands on and fairly intensive, so the state has not reached as many staff as it would like. According to the state assessment director, for teachers who are willing to do that, EAGLE appears to be useful.

Interim and Benchmark Assessment Summary

Georgia develops benchmark assessments that align with the test specifications that are used for the end-of-year summative assessment. This benchmark assessment has fewer items than the summative assessment. Georgia also develops a second form of benchmark assessment, its framework assessments, for use by districts. The framework assessments are designed to measure portions of the curriculum for specific subjects and can be used as end-of-unit exams. In the situation when a school has been determined to be in "needs-improvement" status, the school is required to use benchmark assessments.

Louisiana's EAGLE system is an ongoing development effort. It addresses problems in the state's previous assessment system by providing teachers more timely feedback, creating a true benchmark assessment. The voluntary nature of this new assessment system means that not all districts have adopted it.

There are many similarities in the approach of Louisiana and Georgia in their implementation of benchmark assessments. Both states have created online item banks that are aligned with state standards. Each state's system permits classroom teachers to draw items from the pool for particular standards, which allows teachers to use the item bank on a daily basis for formative assessment or to use the items for benchmark assessments. Teacher use of the system for these purposes is voluntary. Perhaps because use is voluntary, neither state reports widespread use of the system.

Formative and Classroom Assessments

Introduction

Increasingly, states are turning to formative assessment as a tool to improve instruction and increase test performance. While NCLB is not explicit on the topic, the requirement for annual testing and increased levels of mastery has created pressures for effective, research-based, innovative instructional interventions, including formative assessments.

No Clear Definition of Formative Assessment

Many practitioners, researchers, and vendors use the term *formative assessment*, but there is no consensus or uniform definition as to what constitutes valid examples of the practice. The continuum of approaches confronting states range from practice tests to interim and benchmark assessments to formative assessment based on learning progressions to classroom-embedded, teacher-supported tasks to true diagnostic assessment.

Each practice can have a positive impact on instruction, achievement, and test performance—but some more limited than others. Practice testing should be used in only a limited fashion and not as a replacement for formal content instruction. Interim and benchmark assessments can monitor student progress but rarely provide valid, tailored instructional direction at the individual student level. They are better suited to class- or school-level analysis and to judging instructional fidelity. True formative or diagnostic assessments are the most complex to develop, implement, and evaluate for fidelity and effectiveness.

Many vendors are marketing so-called "formative assessment packages" with software "bells and whistles" but limited quality assessment items and with questionable technical quality. There is no shortage of commercially available products or locally developed tools available for school use or state dissemination. Many of these products include sophisticated test development, scoring, and reporting software with recommended next steps for follow-up at the class and even the student level. Unfortunately, the quality of the software often exceeds the quality of the test items on which the system is based. Consumers must carefully review and question how the items were developed, piloted, and validated when reviewing potential purchases. States may wish to evaluate and approve such products, conducting alignment studies and quality reviews. As necessary, states may develop additional items or create item clearinghouses, tapping into the expertise across the state.

True formative assessments are based on complex models of cognition and student learning. Although many states and schools are interested in supporting formative assessments, few have managed to implement research-based diagnostic models proven to support increased student learning. Formative (diagnostic) assessments should be based on specific cognitive models and be implemented at the classroom level on a regular basis. All formative assessment models require some degree of teacher training or professional development—the higher up the continuum, the greater the training need.

Iowa

Background Information

Iowa has about 70 years of historical data from its state assessment, the Iowa Tests. The state assessment unit has a small staff, but there are assessment personnel at each area education agency to provide help to districts. In addition to the Iowa Tests, each school district in Iowa is required by the state to have another assessment in place to ensure that all academic standards are addressed through assessment. This additional assessment is locally controlled; therefore, some districts are using commercial assessments, and others are using assessments developed locally with a vendor.

Summary

A more systemic approach to formative assessment in Iowa came with the development of a new core curriculum, mandated in May 2008. The state leadership team has been assisting school districts to develop implementation plans that cover everything needed to implement the Iowa core curriculum, including its formative assessments. While some teachers are already beginning to fully implement formative assessment practices in their classrooms, others lack the fundamental knowledge necessary to do so. Iowa is, therefore, trying this year and next to lay the groundwork that will help teachers understand and use formative assessments more effectively.

While local use of formative assessment is currently not widespread, Iowa's work on formative assessment is notable in that the initiative has broad local support and includes substantial professional development initiatives. Iowa views the use of classroom assessments as part of a statewide mandate. In order to more fully incorporate formative assessments into its statewide system, the Iowa Department of Education is beginning a statewide rollout of its formative assessment system. It is believed that this effort, however, will take five years or more to fully implement. In August 2008, Iowa began by building capacity at the state level and developing leadership teams at the regional and district levels. These staff will assist and support districts as they implement formative assessment practices. Iowa recognizes the importance of sustainability in this initiative, but details were not provided.

Iowa has been working at both the state and district levels with outside agencies such as the REL Midwest; the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST); and Educational Testing Service (ETS). Iowa is also a collaborator with Delaware on an Enhanced Assessment grant to work at the high school level on formative assessment.

Kansas

Background Information

The state of Kansas has seen positive achievement trends since 2001 in both reading and mathematics at all grade levels. In addition, the state has done well on the NAEP in recent years. Kansas sees its assessment system as having contributed to this improvement in achievement. All

of the state's assessments are available online (Kansas is moving to a system administered entirely online); it also includes formative components. The state's assessment system is administered by the Center for Education Testing and Evaluation at the University of Kansas.

Kansas partners with the Northwest Evaluation Association (Measures of Academic Progress [MAPS]) and Renaissance Learning (Accelerated Reader and STAR Reading and Math). The state also widely considers the opinions and viewpoints of those outside the agency in the development of assessment materials.

Summary

The Kansas online assessment system operates on the same platform as the summative assessment system and can be used by individual teachers for the purpose of formative assessment. As an alternative, the assessments can be downloaded for pencil-and-paper application. Online assessment provides immediate feedback, useful for students and teachers in planning for instruction. Items used for formative assessments come from a bank of items developed expressly for such use, and the items have been carefully reviewed for comparability with the summative assessment items as well as being tightly aligned to grade level and content standards. Such assessments are a valuable tool in monitoring the achievement gap among students.

Eighty-five percent of the students in the state have taken online assessments, including formative assessments, with over two million individual online assessments having been taken in 2007–08. This number does not include assessments that were downloaded for pencil-and-paper application. These assessments are used prior to instruction, during instruction, and following instruction.

Other than making the assessments available to districts, schools, and teachers, the state provides no financial support for the use of formative assessments in the state. Participation in formative assessments is voluntary. The state does, however, offer workshops and conferences on data systems and interpreting assessment reports for instruction. Video presentations are offered online, and help desk support is also available.

The immediacy of feedback, the availability of assessment information for instructional planning, and the close alignment of content with items on the summative tests provide ample incentives for the use of formative assessments. In fact, a concern is that such assessment tools are overused as if they are "worksheets" rather than assessments. It is hoped that continued professional development on the purpose and use of formative assessments will provide guidance on the appropriate use of the available assessment tools.

South Carolina

Background Information

The state assessment used for accountability purposes in South Carolina is the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT), administered in Grades 3–8. Since 1999, when South

Carolina began to implement the assessment, the state has seen an increase each year in the number of students passing or reaching performance level. The state also incorporates the use of end-of-course tests, which count for 20 percent of a student's grade in certain subjects, as well as a high school exit exam that students are required to pass in order to receive a high school diploma.

Summary

South Carolina uses a two-phase process to create a formative assessment adoption list for use by districts. In the first phase, notices are sent to test publishers asking them if they would like to submit their product for evaluation. Once the intents are received, each product is rated, based on state evaluation criteria. An experimental or quasi-experimental research study is required and is evaluated by a panel of measurement experts. Those products that meet the criteria are presented to the state board of education with a recommendation that they be added to the state adoption list. During the second phase, test items are aligned to the state's Academic Standards. All information is posted on the South Carolina State Department of Education website. All districts use at least one of these assessments, if not more.

With regards to assessments, the state of South Carolina provides the resources to districts with the use of an adoption list that has been evaluated and with supplemental funds for training to use the formative assessments. The state takes pride in providing customized materials to districts for assessment purposes. While state education agency employees do collaborate with university professors who provide assistance in evaluating research studies, the state does the majority of assessment work. The state encourages districts and provides some education initiatives as a means of support. With a new superintendent in place and a reorganization that has led to the creation two new departments, Innovation and Best Practices, South Carolina hopes to be able to better support districts.

Vermont

Background Information

Vermont uses a state-developed document titled *The Comprehensive Local Assessment System,* a self-assessment guide for schools that includes all formative, benchmark, and summative assessments. Vermont is part of the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) with New Hampshire and Rhode Island, which is a federally funded statewide assessment. NECAP is based on a common set of expectations for mathematics, reading, and writing, which has been agreed upon by the three states. This assessment program addresses the minimum of what NCLB requires. It is important to note that Vermont's statewide assessment has a constructed-response component in all content areas that require students to write.

The Standards and Assessment Team is responsible for monitoring and developing assessments at the local level, and the assessments can be made available to the field. These assessments are for grade expectations throughout the content areas, which can include statewide and nonstatewide assessments. The state has a NECAP team in place, as well as coordinators for

social studies, art, and world language. Built into its process and measured progress is the Item Review Committee, which reviews all items and reads all passages for bias and sensitivity issues.

Summary

In 2006, the VTDOE contracted with Educational Testing Service (ETS), which offers a program called Keeping Learning on Track (KLT). ETS organized many of the formative assessment techniques and grouped them under five strategies. In the first year of implementation, the state trained 25 people to become coaches within schools; this training also included people from the VTDOE. The first round of people were trained to become trainers in the KLT model. Principals were also trained in the model. In the summer of 2006, VTDOE held a summer institute, and nine schools brought teams to be trained in this formative assessment project. One of the requirements of this assessment is to have teacher learning communities (TLCs) that are built into the process. These TLCs meet monthly and go over an action plan and different formative assessment techniques. Vermont sees these meetings as vital to its success.

According to the state, the KLT program is more about improving teachers' effective use of formative assessments, which is embedded in the program, than it is an assessment tool. School districts pay for materials, but the state provides the funding for the training by ETS.

Vermont has a supportive system in place because it works closely with New Hampshire and Rhode Island in implementing their statewide assessments. As part of the NECAP team, the state does not have to worry about funding these statewide assessments. This arrangement has lifted the burden of developing its own assessments from the state and has given it the opportunity to contract with ETS to look at formative assessment techniques and develop trainers and coaches who provide support to the local districts. This relationship with ETS has made the state's efforts successful and self-sustaining. Therefore, Vermont has been able to develop a system that works for its schools, and the state is very actively involved in making that system better.

Wyoming

Background Information

The Wyoming Department of Education (DOE) provides statewide assessments to the districts. Schools also develop local assessments to complete the body of evidence, which may include more than the statewide assessments. These local assessments can be summative as determined by the local district. Districts develop their own local processes to determine whether or not students meet the standards for graduation. In the body of evidence system, content specialists work with the assessment team as well. Other than the statewide assessment, which is related to NCLB, local districts determine assessment practice. At the state level, a peer review and reporting system is in place to ensure districts are utilizing assessments.

Summary

Wyoming has formed an assessment consortium—an organized group of districts from across the state—that is interested in furthering effective formative assessment practices. This consortium

was created to help school districts meet the state's body of evidence assessment system requirements for student graduation. The consortium uses an outside vendor, Technology and Innovation in Education (TIE), whose role is to assist in improving student achievement through developing formative assessments within the classroom. TIE also provides training on these assessments for teachers, administrators, and curriculum coordinators from the districts. Participation in these institutes is voluntary, and the state estimates that over 60 percent of the districts are involved or have been involved at some point with institutes provided through TIE.

Some of the burden falls on the local districts to determine if they want to provide their own local assessments. Wyoming is unique in its approach because local districts are given the freedom to develop their own system of assessments, and the state has a reporting system in place to make sure that the districts are performing these assessments. Overall, Wyoming has a system in place that provides support to local districts and gives the districts freedom in developing their own processes in meeting standards.

Formative and Classroom Assessment Summary

Wyoming, South Carolina, Vermont, and Iowa have different approaches to formative assessments, and the states' departments of education vary in their level of involvement and support. Wyoming is a strong local-control state, and its formative assessments are developed and organized by an assessment consortium. The work on formative assessments in Wyoming is done by the consortium, not the department of education. South Carolina provides formative assessment support by supplying an adoption list. The state gathers evaluated formative assessments and includes them in an adoption list that districts can use. Vermont has a contract with ETS and has adopted ETS's Keeping Learning on Track (KLT) program for its formative assessments. Iowa adopted a new core curriculum in 2008. It views formative classroom assessments as part of the statewide mandate, and the Iowa Department of Education is beginning a statewide rollout of formative assessment.

These four states also vary in the degree to which their departments of education partner with other organizations. The Vermont Department of Education has partnered with ETS and uses the KLT program for its formative assessment; thus, this is a very strong partnership, as most of the work around formative assessments in the state is done by ETS. On the other end of the spectrum, the Wyoming Department of Education does not contract with anyone externally. The work is done through the consortium, and the consortium partners with external organizations. Furthermore, concerning partnering with other organizations, South Carolina and Iowa can be categorized—on the same spectrum—as between Vermont and Wyoming. South Carolina sends notices to test publishers and asks them to submit their product(s) for evaluation, but there is no partnership. Iowa has been working with REL Midwest, CRESST, and ETS at the state and district levels for support and development of formative assessments.

The four states also vary in the degree to which they provide professional development and technical assistance for the formative assessments. In Vermont, the professional development is conducted by ETS. The Wyoming Department of Education provides professional development and technical assistance by hiring external contractors to guide districts on how to update and implement the assessment and to show proof that the districts are following through with what

was originally outlined and defined in the districts' bodies of evidence. South Carolina provides funding to districts for professional development for formative assessments. The funding covers the cost of materials or any professional development they may need, and the amount of money that a district receives depends on the amount of money available. Iowa includes formative assessment practices in every statewide initiative, and professional development is offered as part of any of Iowa's statewide initiatives; therefore, the professional development includes formative assessment. Staff members receive professional development on formative assessment from many angles and sources.

Online and Computer-Based Assessments

Introduction

States need to systematically and comprehensively plan for the transition to full statewide computer administration of assessments, focusing on how to prepare students properly (from both instructional and test-preparation perspectives), how item types and formats will evolve to take full advantage of the technology (phased in over time), and how the state will support development and implementation (professional development for teachers and cost of items).

The largest hurdle to realizing the promise of computer-based assessment is access (cost, hardware, equity). Not all students and schools have equal access to technology, for either instruction or assessment purposes. Nor are all teachers equally comfortable incorporating technology into their practice. Exacerbating the problem are the vast differences in students' access to computers in their homes. To the extent these disparities exist across socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial lines, performance differences on computer-based assessments will increase relative to the current achievement gap. States must determine how to provide equal (or at least sufficient) access to technology for both instruction and assessment.

Computer-Administered Testing Versus Computer-Adaptive Testing (CAT)

In their plans, states need to distinguish between moving to an online administration of their testing program and adapting a full CAT model. Both have important advantages and disadvantages, but these are not identical. The most significant differences between the two are cost, standards coverage, and NCLB compliance.

CAT models tend to be significantly more expensive than comparably sized computer-administered assessments for several reasons, including the sophistication of the adaptive engine required to support CAT and the much larger number of items needed to achieve the full CAT advantage.

Non-CAT computer-administered assessments are as likely to achieve high levels of alignment to content standards as their paper-based counterparts. CAT models must be designed specifically to do so or they will stop assessing a specific standard (or overassess it) when or until sufficient measurement accuracy is achieved. In fact, requiring CAT models to fully sample

across the entire test blueprint may lessen CAT's primary advantage—efficiency of assessment time—because items will be included that no longer add to the reliability of the measurement.

Because of these breadth and depth standards coverage issues, proposed state CAT models have been rejected unless two conditions (not advantageous to CAT) are met: full breadth and depth of content coverage and inclusion of only grade-level content in the final score for each student.

Traditional Versus Innovative Item Types

Most states, as they move from paper-based to computer-administered assessments, are using the same set of items or item types that composed the paper-only version of their assessments. This practice can be traced to the following reasons:

- The need to run dual (equivalent systems).
- Limited item bank combining existing and new items.
- Extensive cost of innovative items (e.g., simulations).
- Traditional instruction in many schools (especially in urban and rural areas) means students do not have adequate preparation on skills required to perform well on innovative item types.
- Failure to fully plan the transition.

The failure to move to "next-generation" items and tasks greatly shortchanges the advantages that can accrue from computer-based assessments.

Online Scoring of Writing and Other Content Areas

New breakthroughs in artificial intelligence and other models allow computer scoring of essays and other tasks in a fraction of the time and cost currently required. Some studies suggest computer-supported scoring models have met or exceeded the accuracy of human raters across a range of content areas. States should implement their own comparability studies to pave the way (both technically and politically) for computer scoring of essays and other tasks. Doing so will allow inclusion of a wide variety of item types (beyond multiple choice) in an efficient, cost-effective way.

Kansas

Background Information

Kansas has seen positive achievement trends since 2001 in both reading and mathematics at all grade levels. In addition, the state has done well on the NAEP in recent years. Kansas sees its assessment system as having contributed to this improvement in achievement. All of the state's assessments are available online (Kansas is moving to a system administered entirely online); it also includes formative components. The state's assessment system is administered by the Center for Education Testing and Evaluation at the University of Kansas.

Kansas partners with the Northwest Evaluation Association (Measures of Academic Progress [MAPS]) and Renaissance Learning (Accelerated Reader and STAR Reading and Math). The state also widely considers the opinions and viewpoints of those outside the agency in the development of assessment materials.

Summary

Kansas offers all local schools and districts online, computer-based assessment through the use of Web-based software over the Internet. Online assessments are available for formative, benchmark, and summative assessment purposes. The system has been in use in some form for the past 8–10 years.

Although participation in online assessment by districts and schools is currently voluntary, the state intends to move entirely to online assessment for formative, benchmark, and summative purposes. In doing so, the state hopes to provide a more balanced assessment system with closer alignment of formative, benchmark, and summative assessments in order to increase the instructional time and the information available from assessments for instructional planning and design. It is hoped that basic computer features such as videos, voiceovers, and calculators, which are readily available for online assessment, eventually can become commonplace. Currently, such features cannot be utilized because they are not available in a comparable way for pencil-and-paper assessments.

The items used in online assessment were carefully reviewed as part of a peer review process in order to ensure their comparability with pencil-and-paper assessments. Other than providing the assessment content and Web platform, no changes to the assessment program were necessary to offer online assessment.

New items for use online were developed through a contract with WestEd. These items were subject to a peer review process in order to ensure that they were comparable to those items in the same area on the pencil-and-paper tests.

Because online assessments are voluntary for local schools and districts, it is a local decision about if, and when, to participate. Students are allowed the opportunity to take formative assessments as often as the school or teacher determines it is instructionally appropriate to do so. This approach has resulted in some overuse of the assessments. It is anticipated that appropriate use of online assessment for instructional purposes will be enhanced with professional development.

Because the online assessments must be comparable to pencil-and-paper assessments, there are no accommodations for online assessment that are not otherwise available for students taking pencil-and-paper assessments. As with pencil-and-paper assessment, translation may be necessary for some assessments. For visually impaired students, the size of the computer screen may need to be adjusted. For some students with disabilities, the voice-activated reading of assessment items may be necessary.

The development of the platform for the online assessment was part of the contract with the University of Kansas. Local hardware issues are the responsibility of the district choosing to participate in online assessment. The online assessment system has not had capacity issues, even with those schools and districts whose online access is limited to dial-up connection. Most schools and districts in this situation simply download the assessments and then use them as pencil-and-paper format.
The development of a bank of test items specifically for formative use and the potential for the use of these items to influence instruction was a contributing factor in the design of the current online testing system.

Most students perform as well, if not better, with online assessment, in part because online assessment provides immediate feedback for students and teachers, and it aids in the instructional planning process. The current online assessment system is very user friendly for both adults and students. Any issues have been from adults who have been "leery" of the technology. The biggest advantage for online assessment is that it expands the assessment window from October 15 to April 15. This window spreads out the need for large numbers of computers at any one time and enables report data to be returned to the districts before the end of the school year. Principals know if their schools have made AYP before they leave for the summer.

Online and Computer-Based Assessment Summary

Transition to Online

Kansas intends to move entirely to online assessment for formative, benchmark, and summative purposes. As this transition takes place, the state hopes to provide a more balanced assessment system with closer alignment of formative, benchmark, and summative assessments in order to increase the information available from assessments for instructional planning and design.

In Kansas, new items for use online were developed through a contractor and were subject to a peer review process in order to ensure that they were comparable to those items in the same area on the pencil-and-paper tests. It is hoped that eventually basic computer features such as videos, voiceovers, and calculators, which are readily available for online assessment, can become commonplace. Currently, such features cannot be utilized because they are not available in a comparable way for pencil-and-paper assessments. Because the online assessments must be comparable to pencil-and-paper assessments, there are no accommodations for online assessment that are not otherwise available for students taking pencil-and-paper assessments. As with pencil-and-paper assessment, translation may be necessary for some assessments. For visually impaired students the size of the computer screen may need to be adjusted. For some students with disabilities, the voice-activated reading of assessment items may be necessary.

Lessons Learned

In Kansas, students are allowed the opportunity to take formative assessments as often as the school or teacher determines it is instructionally appropriate to do so. This approach has resulted in some overuse of the assessments. It is anticipated that appropriate use of online assessment for instructional purposes will be enhanced with professional development.

Conclusion

The states discussed in this report not only are diverse along several parameters, but they also vary in their degree of local control. For example, Colorado allows districts to set graduation requirements, but Washington has stricter state-mandated requirements. Despite this diversity, some common trends emerge in each area.

Two themes emerge from the states interviewed for high school and contents-based assessments. First, work is this area varies with the degree of local control by the state. Those states with high local control—Colorado and Kansas, both of which have grade cohort sizes of 50,000 or less—leave many decisions to districts. Washington, however, with grade cohorts of approximately 77,000 students, has more centrally controlled high school assessment requirements. Second, 21st century skills initiatives are influencing content-area standards in two of the three states.

Georgia and Louisiana, despite differences in district makeup and cohort size, have taken similar approaches to benchmark assessments. Their online question banks are optional and have not yet reached majority use in either state. Their approach, however, appears promising as part of a statewide comprehensive assessment initiative, as both states are able to use the online tools for more than benchmark assessment.

The states interviewed for formative assessment have very divergent models. Iowa, South Carolina, Vermont, and Wyoming differ in their implementations, including the professional development they provide and their partnerships with external organizations. Although no strong trends emerge from these states, the diversity in their approaches may provide a broader array of methods that can be incorporated into a comprehensive assessment system based on Wisconsin's priorities.

Online assessment serves as a method to facilitate an integrated, comprehensive assessment system for some states. In addition to Georgia's and Louisiana's initiatives, the online assessment system in Kansas demonstrates the power of this delivery method in providing a single access point for an integrated assessment system. States face some challenges in implementing online assessments, but the lessons learned by these states can serve as guidance for states newly creating online assessments.

The information provided by the states interviewed for this report demonstrate not only that the decisions made and challenges faced in implementing a comprehensive assessment system depend somewhat on the features and goals of the state, but also that common tactics may underlie the initiatives of many states. This report is intended to provide the Wisconsin DPI with insight on these approaches to assessment. It is hoped that such information will prove valuable to DPI in its assessment initiatives.

References

Erpenbach, W (2008). *Statewide Educational Accountability under the NCLB Act: A Report on 2008 Amendments to State Plans*. Washington, D.C.: Council of Chief State School Officers. Retrieved January 23, 2009, from http://www.ccsso.org/publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=369

CCSSO (2008). *Interim Assessment Practices and Avenues for State Involvement*. Paper developed for the CCSSO TILSA SCASS Interim Assessment Subcommittee.

Heritage, M. (2008). *Data Use for Continuous Quality Improvement*. Web Site and Support Materials Developed for the Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center, http://datause.cse.ucla.edu/.

Kosty, D., McBride, J., Poggio, J., Wise, L., & Way, D. (2006). *What's next in online testing.* Presentation from the 36th Annual National Conference on Large-Scale Assessment, San Francisco, CA. Retrieved November 4, 2008, from http://www.ccsso.org/content/PDFs/Session38Way.pdf.

Rabinowitz, S. N. (2004). *The Integration of Secondary and Postsecondary Assessment Systems: Cautionary Concerns.* In Camara, W. (ed.): Choosing Students: Higher Education Admission Tools for the 21st Century, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Mahway, NJ.

Rabinowitz, S. N., with Brandt, T. (2001.) *Computer-Based Assessment: Can It Make Good on Its Promise?* WestEd, San Francisco, CA.

Rabinowitz, S. N., Roeber, E., Schroeder, C., & Sheinker, J. (2006). *Creating Aligned Standards and Assessment Systems.* Paper Developed for the CCSSO SCASS Comprehensive Assessment Systems for ESEA Title I (CAS). CCSSO, Washington, D.C.

Shepard, L.A. (2005). *Linking formative assessment to scaffolding*. Educational Leadership, 63(3), 66-70

Wiliam, D. (2007). *Changing classroom practice*. Educational Leadership, 64(4), 36-42.

Appendix A
State Contact Information

Colorado

Jo O'Brien
Assistant Commissioner, Office of Standards and Assessment
Colorado Department of Education
303-866-6600
O'brien_j@cde.state.co.us

Colorado Student Assessment System:
www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/csap/usa_index.html

Senate Bill 08-212:
www.leg.state.co.us/CLICS/CLICS2008A/csl.nsf/fsbillcont3/
E59947996C92A16F872573D3005F88ED?Open&file=212_enr.pdf

Georgia

Melissa Fincher
Director, Division of Assessment
Georgia Department of Education
404-651-9405
mfincher@doe.k12.ga.us

Testing:
www.gadoe.org/ci_testing.aspx

Online Assessment System:
www.georgiaoas.org/servlet/a2l

Standards:
www.georgiastandards.org/

Iowa

Colleen Anderson
Consultant, Bureau of Teaching and Learning Services
Iowa Department of Education
515-281-3249
colleen.anderson@iowa.gov

Iowa Testing Program:
www.education.uiowa.edu/itp/itbs/

Standards, Benchmarks, and Grade Level Indicators:
www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1350&Itemid=2287

Kansas

Dr. Tom Foster
Director, Assessment
Kansas State Department of Education
785-296-4639
tfoster@ksde.org

Assessment Division:
www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=420

Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation:
www.cete.us

Louisiana

Scott Norton
Director, Standards, Assessments, & Accountability
Louisiana Department of Education
225-342-3406
Scott.Norton@la.gov

Standards, Testing, and Accountability:
www.louisianaschools.net/lde/saa/2273.html

South Carolina

Susan Creighton
Education Associate
South Carolina Department of Education
803-734-8535
screight@ed.sc.gov

Vermont

Marty Gephart
State of Vermont Department of Education
802-828-1462
marty.gephart@state.vt.us

Washington

Dr. Joe Wilhoft
Assistant Superintendent, Assessment and Student Information
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
360-725-6334

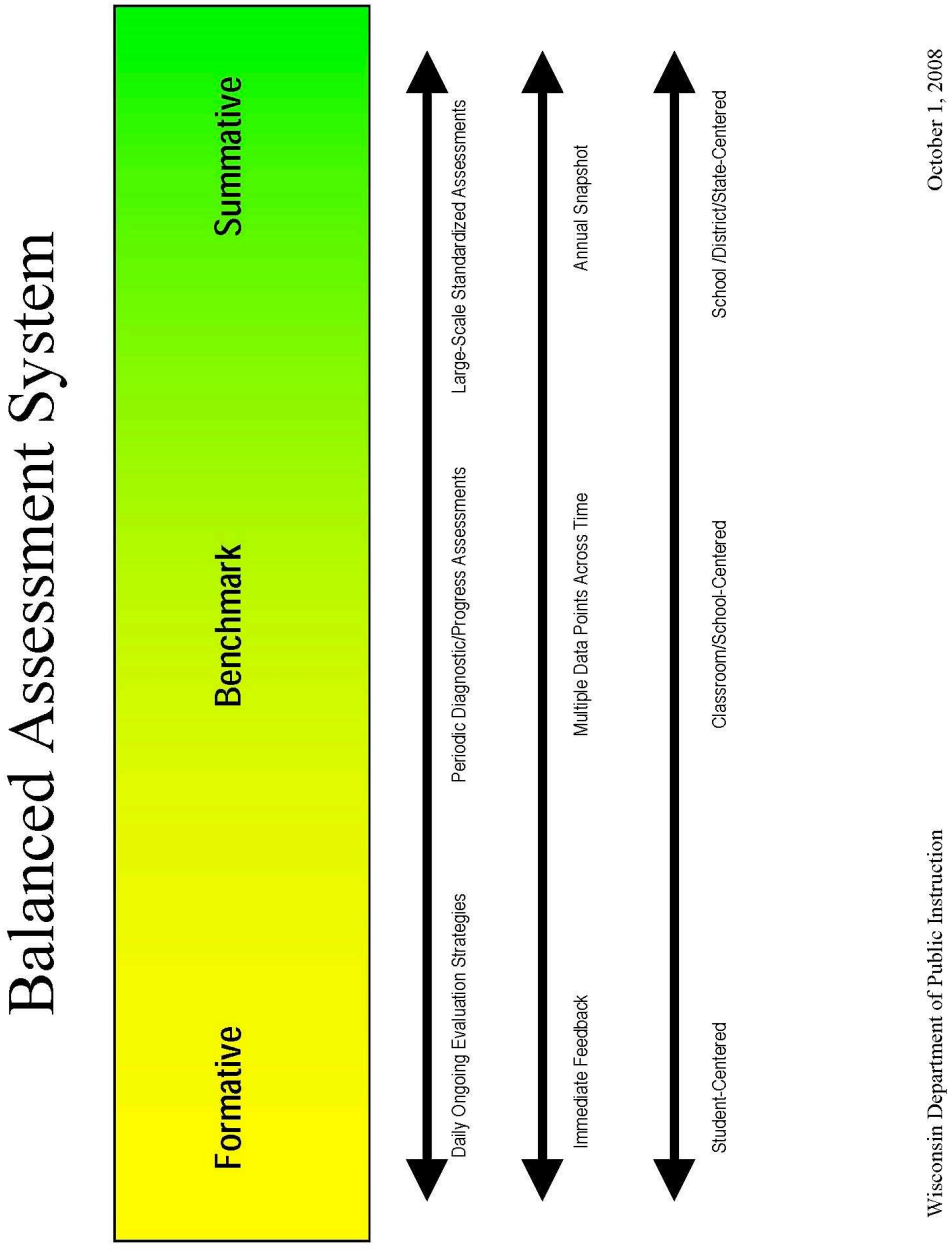
Joe.Willhoft@k12.wa.us

Organizational Structure:
www.k12.wa.us

Wyoming

Tom Collins
Wyoming Department of Education
307-777-3494
tcolli@educ.state.wy.us

Appendix B
Wisconsin Balanced Assessment System



BALANCED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM			
	FORMATIVE	BENCHMARK	SUMMATIVE
PURPOSE	Informs instruction *What learning comes next for this student?* *How am I monitoring my own learning?*	Diagnoses Student Level and/or Monitors Progress *How are students progressing?* *How well is this program working?*	Monitors National, State, District, School, or Classroom Progress *How are they progressing? How do they compare?*
TYPE	Ongoing formative strategies "in the moment"	Benchmark or diagnostic periodic/interim tests	Large-scale, standardized assessment
KEY FEATURE	Assessment *as* and *for* learning	Assessment *of* learning – on-grade or off-grade	Assessment *of* learning
FOCUS	• Students • Teachers	• Students • Teachers, Teaching Teams • Parents • Schools, Districts	• State • Federal • Higher-Education Institutions • Researchers • Students • Teachers • Parents • Schools • Districts
FREQUENCY	• Occurs within and between lessons	• Occurs within, between, and among instructional units	• Occurs annually or bi-annually
USE OF RESULTS	• Within the instructional activity, information is used to change or to adjust teaching • Student receives frequent and meaningful feedback on performance • Teacher engages student in the monitoring of student learning • Teacher decides if the student needs remediation or enrichment	• Grade-level or content-based professional learning communities use data to identify strengths and gaps in curriculum and instruction • Grade-level course curriculum may be changed, refined • Teachers may modify instruction for student groups based on their progress.	• School or district teams develop strategic, long-term evaluation of curriculum and programming based on trends over time • States monitor school and district progress • U.S. Department of Education monitors state performance
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	• Understanding how to gauge student progress toward a standard and how to scaffold instruction to reach that goal • Teacher reflection on what types of formative strategies are currently employed in the classroom • Implementation of new strategies • Opportunities to practice and to perfect usage	If teacher-developed, school-team-developed, or district-developed products: • Identification of learning outcomes based on state content standards • Development of assessment items & tests If using a commercial product: • Learn features of the instrument and how the content links to district curricula and state standards Using local products *or* commercial products: • Disaggregation & interpretation of data • Discussion of results • Sharing effective strategies across teams	• Understanding and interpretation of large-scale assessment trends over time • Data disaggregation and progress evaluation at the building level and at the grade level • Opportunities for revising district or school instructional practices and curricula
EXAMPLES	• Feedback • Questioning, interviewing, exit questioning • Observations • Discussions • Ungraded class work	Teacher, school-team, or district-developed: • Graded class work • Midterm and end-of-unit assessments • District assessments; e.g., 6-Trait® Commercial Products • MAP, SCANTRON®, ThinkLink™, etc. • Specific reading inventories	• End-of-Course Exams • WKCE • WAA-SwD • NAEP™ • ACT®/SAT® • AP® Exams

Appendix C
Content-Standards-Based Assessments Interview Protocol

Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center
Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center
REL Midwest
Survey of State Assessment Systems
December 2008

Content Standards/High School Assessment

Introduction: *This survey of various aspects of state assessment systems is a joint effort of the Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center, the Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center and the Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest. The information acquired from this survey will be used in a variety of settings to inform the assessment work of states as they develop and review their assessment and accountability systems.*

1. State_____
2. Person Contacted_____
3. Title of Contact_____
4. Date of Contact_____
5. Contacted by_____; Organization_____

Background Information:

A. Please provide some background about your state, i.e., grade level cohort size, school/district configurations, governing structure, funding sources for assessment, overall achievement trends, etc.
B. What is unique about your state, particularly as it has developed a state assessment system?
C. Please provide an overview of your state's assessment system. What is your state's overall approach to an assessment system? How has this approach changed since NCLB?
D. Who, if anyone, have you partnered with in the development of your state's assessment system? What has been the nature/structure of this partnership?
E. How does your agency provide staffing for assessment development and implementation? Is it a cross-divisional, integrated team or a separate assessment department? Do you actively solicit the opinions and viewpoints from those outside of the agency, including local district personnel and/or those from stakeholders including teachers, higher education and the business community?

F. Do you have any written materials or electronic information about your state's assessment system that you could send to us? Or, do you have a website that we could go to for more information? What is the address of the website?

Content Standards/High School Assessment

1. Are your state content standards undergoing any revisions to reflect 21st century skills, work place readiness or preparation for credit-bearing courses in higher education?

2. Are you participating in the American Diploma Project, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, or other high school restructuring project? If so, what has this meant for your state? How is assessment connected to these efforts?

3. What partnerships, if any, have you formed as a result of your involvement in these projects?

4. Does your state require passage of the exam(s) as a requirement for graduation?

If so,

5. Have you had (do you expect) to have significant numbers of student who have failed (will fail) to graduate due this requirement? What options, if any, have you (will you) provided these students?

6. What other challenges have you faced in implementing a high school graduation exam? How have you addressed these challenges?

7. Are you using a marketed test such as the ACT? What adjustments, if any, are you making for English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities?

8. Are you using end-of-course exams? If so, are they developed by the state or developed locally?

Appendix D
Formative Assessments Interview Protocol

Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center
Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center
REL Midwest
Survey of State Assessment Systems
December 2008

Formative/Classroom Assessment

Introduction: *This survey of various aspects of state assessment systems is a joint effort of the Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center, the Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center and the Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest. The information acquired from this survey will be used in a variety of settings to inform the assessment work of states as they develop and review their assessment and accountability systems.*

1. State_____
2. Person Contacted_____
3. Title of Contact_____
4. Date of Contact_____
5. Contacted by_____; Organization_____

Background Information:

A. Please provide some background about your state, i.e., grade level cohort size, school/district configurations, governing structure, funding sources for assessment, overall achievement trends, etc.
B. What is unique about your state, particularly as it has developed a state assessment system?
C. Please provide an overview of your state's assessment system. What is your state's overall approach to an assessment system? How has this approach changed since NCLB?
D. Who, if anyone, have you partnered with in the development of your state's assessment system? What has been the nature/structure of this partnership?
E. How does your agency provide staffing for assessment development and implementation? Is it a cross-divisional, integrated team or a separate assessment department? Do you actively solicit the opinions and viewpoints from those outside of the agency, including local district personnel and/or those from stakeholders including teachers, higher education and the business community?

F. Do you have any written materials or electronic information about your state's assessment system that you could send to us? Or, do you have a website that we could go to for more information? What is the address of the website?

Formative/Classroom Assessment

1. Describe what is happening in your state with regard to formative/classroom assessment.

2. What partnerships, if any, have you formed for the support/development of formative/classroom assessments?

3. How widespread is local use of formative assessment in your state?

4. What financial support, if any, does your state provide to local districts for the development of formative/classroom assessments?

5. What professional development/technical assistance do you offer to local districts regarding the development and use of formative/classroom assessments?

6. What other forms of support does your state offer to local districts as incentive to develop/use formative/classroom assessment?

Appendix E
Interim/Benchmark Assessments Interview Protocol

Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center
Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center
REL Midwest
Survey of State Assessment Systems
December 2008

Interim/Benchmark Assessments

Introduction: *This survey of various aspects of state assessment systems is a joint effort of the Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center, the Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center and the Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest. The information acquired from this survey will be used in a variety of settings to inform the assessment work of states as they develop and review their assessment and accountability systems.*

1. State_____
2. Person Contacted_____
3. Title of Contact_____
4. Date of Contact_____
5. Contacted by_____; Organization_____

Background Information:

A. Please provide some background about your state, i.e., grade level cohort size, school/district configurations, governing structure, funding sources for assessment, overall achievement trends, etc.
B. What is unique about your state, particularly as it has developed a state assessment system?
C. Please provide an overview of your state's assessment system. What is your state's overall approach to an assessment system? How has this approach changed since NCLB?
D. Who, if anyone, have you partnered with in the development of your state's assessment system? What has been the nature/structure of this partnership?
E. How does your agency provide staffing for assessment development and implementation? Is it a cross-divisional, integrated team or a separate assessment department? Do you actively solicit the opinions and viewpoints from those outside of the agency, including local district personnel and/or those from stakeholders including teachers, higher education and the business community?
F. Do you have any written materials or electronic information about your state's assessment system that you could send to us? Or, do you have a website that we could go to for more information? What is the address of the website?

Interim/Benchmark assessment

1. Does your state require local districts to conduct interim/benchmark assessments?

If so....

2. What is the purpose of interim/benchmark assessments in your state? What role do such assessments play in your state's accountability system?

3. What is the source of such assessments: Locally developed? State developed? Customized? Commercial shelf? Other?

4. To what extent are these assessments aligned to state content standards?

5. What is the format of these assessments? Pencil/paper? Online? Performance? Other?

6. Are the assessments adapted to the level of the test taker? Do they have a diagnostic as well as progress component?

7. How have the interim/benchmark assessments been developed?

8. How have the development costs been covered?

9. What professional development/technical assistance do you offer to local districts regarding the development and use of interim/benchmark assessments?

If not....

10. Has your state considered developing benchmark assessments?

11. Do you provide districts the option to use a benchmark assessment that the state has purchased/made available?

12. Are you providing any guidance or support to districts about the use and development of benchmark assessments? For example, do you provide item banks of sample assessments that local districts could draw from?

13. What professional development/technical assistance do you offer to local districts regarding the development and use of interim/benchmark assessments?

14. Do you have plans to develop and/or require a benchmark assessment?

Appendix F
Online/Computer-Based Assessments Interview Protocol

Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center
Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center
REL Midwest
Survey of State Assessment Systems
December 2008

Online/Computer-Based Assessment

Introduction: *This survey of various aspects of state assessment systems is a joint effort of the Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center, the Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center and the Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest. The information acquired from this survey will be used in a variety of settings to inform the assessment work of states as they develop and review their assessment and accountability systems.*

1. State_____
2. Person Contacted_____
3. Title of Contact_____
4. Date of Contact_____
5. Contacted by_____; Organization_____

Background Information:

A. Please provide some background about your state, i.e., grade level cohort size, school/district configurations, governing structure, funding sources for assessment, overall achievement trends, etc.
B. What is unique about your state, particularly as it has developed a state assessment system?
C. Please provide an overview of your state's assessment system. What is your state's overall approach to an assessment system? How has this approach changed since NCLB?
D. Who, if anyone, have you partnered with in the development of your state's assessment system? What has been the nature/structure of this partnership?
E. How does your agency provide staffing for assessment development and implementation? Is it a cross-divisional, integrated team or a separate assessment department? Do you actively solicit the opinions and viewpoints from those outside of the agency, including local district personnel and/or those from stakeholders including teachers, higher education and the business community?

F. Do you have any written materials or electronic information about your state's assessment system that you could send to us? Or, do you have a website that we could go to for more information? What is the address of the website?

Online/Computer-based Assessment

1. We understand that your state utilizes a state supported online, computer-based assessment? Is that correct? (If not, you should end the interview at this point.)

2. What changes to your assessment program, if any, were necessary in order to permit assessments to be offered online?

3. What are the purposes of online, computer-based assessment in your state: Benchmark assessment? Summative assessment? Accountability? Graduation requirements? Student evaluation?

4. How long has this system been available?

5. How was this assessment system developed? Were pencil/paper items put online or were alternative, possibly more interactive, items developed?

6. What was the development and implementation schedule for the online assessment system? Did you phase in some districts and/or grades over time?

7. How have the development costs been covered?

8. How often are students allowed to take the online assessment?

9. How do you accommodate the needs of English Language Learners and students with disabilities with online assessment?

10. What, if any, infrastructure or hardware issues have resulted as a result of the implementation of online assessment in your state? How were such issues addressed?

11. If the solution to the issues required additional resources, who provided these resources?

12. Did you require districts certify that they were online-ready? What percent of districts had the capacity to administer tests online?

13. Were there other state technology initiatives outside of assessment (e.g. instruction) that supported the development of online testing?

14. What have been the strengths of your online assessment system?

15. What have been the challenges/weaknesses of your online assessment system? (What would you change about your system?)

16. How does the content/format of your online assessment system compare with the content of the usual written assessments used in your state?