

HB14-1202 Standards and Assessments Task Force

Notes from Public Hearing, Loveland, CO, October 28, 2014

Submitted by John Creighton

Tone: It would be difficult to overstate the discontent participants expressed about state assessments.

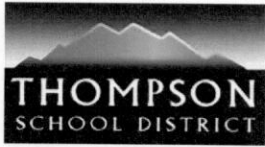
Quality State Assessment System

- Clear purpose – the purpose of the state assessments are...
- Account for differences between students and schools – e.g. online students (especially those with siblings) not able to attend school in person on multiple dates
- Account for differences in pedagogy – e.g. Montessori and Waldorf
- Limit school disruption – less time each year; fewer resources to implement
 - School disruption is not just an issue of time; current testing regime
 - Interrupts continuity and integrity of instruction
 - Diverts non-teaching personnel from instruction support to test support
 - Diverts interventionists from providing one-on-one; small group instruction
 - Diverts specialists from their classrooms to proctor exams
 - Diverts student attention from more meaningful work – e.g. college applications
 - Diverts students from core instruction to learn “keyboarding” and test taking skills – often at far too young of an age
 - Disrupts the culture of the school – “assessments are all we talk about”
- Accounts for student priorities – e.g. college applications; AP and ACT exams
- Roll up ongoing data collected at the district level
- Provide timely results
- Would be meaningful to students and parents
- Would respect educational best practices – e.g. period of time between assessments
- Would allow students to be “normal” during tests – don’t sit after tests
- Would recognize the resources schools have available
- Would allow schools to choose the test most appropriate for their school
- Would be transparent – everyone would know exactly how data is being used

Other General Comments

- Far more data (formative) exists than in the past; state test data used to be all we had; state data no longer as relevant because we have local data
- Teachers are already thinking about whether a student will “give them the scores they need”
- Teachers are overwhelmed – not sure if they’re doing the “right” thing
- “You have to teach to the test to do well”
- “Are the tests distorting content? How much autonomy do we really have?”
- “Are we narrowing the knowledge base?”
- “We have a generation of kids who are stressed out”; “We don’t want to be like Korea”
- Implementation is poor – “we received accommodation manuals after tests were given”
- “Students are intentionally doing poorly”
- State has mandated too many initiatives all at the same time
- “Every time the state changes tests it reeks havoc on our school”; We have to spend money to acquire the “latest and greatest” assessments

1. PARCC Assessments, as currently implemented, will decrease diversity of educational choice.
 - a. Many models work when done with fidelity--Montessori, for example, is research based and has been proven successful for over 100 years. When we can do it with fidelity, it works.
 - b. PARCC's testing approach is vastly different than instructional approaches like Montessori, which is proven, but experiential. The testing environment is 180 degrees different than the learning environment, which means students can't really "show what they know".
 - c. Either school must conform to teach to the test, or risk not being "high achieving". Students may know concepts, but testing formats don't allow them demonstrate their knowledge.
 - i. Montessori is not technology heavy, especially in early years--this is by design
 - ii. Montessori students often don't abstracted concepts on timing of PARCC
 - iii. Many Montessori student don't recognize the vocabulary or task requests, which are confusing at best.
2. Best practice is differentiated instruction, but PARCC assessments are "one size its all". We test 3rd and 11th graders the same way, which doesn't make sense. Different models need different assessments and different ages need developmentally appropriate assessments.
3. Assessment time is not instructional time. We can't do our good work when we are constantly administering tests. Testing window interfere with some of our most important culminating work. Test are too long, too many, and not well developed or implemented.
4. Assessments have been completely corrupted as they have become "high stakes" and attached to SB 191--the focus has gone away from measure what kids are learning in an attempt to measure educator effectiveness.



October 26, 2014

Letter to HB14-1202 Standards and Assessment Task Force

There are a number of reasons to assess students on a regular basis. Some reasons for assessment include, measuring achievement and determining growth. Assessments should be both formative and summative. As the State of Colorado moves to new assessments, there is a necessity to caution against over assessing.

The purpose of state summative assessment is to view trends in systems of education and to determine if they are effectively producing achievement and growth among students. Over time, summative state assessments have come to mean more to schools and districts. Assessments are used to support the writing of and monitoring of UIP goals, the Colorado School Performance Framework and Educator Effectiveness. Along with the above high stakes systems, assessments are also used to look at standard and question trends and to compare individual student achievement across peers in the district, state and nation at a moment in time. These are incredible expectations for a series of assessments that take a singular snapshot of a student.

The increase in assessment windows and time on testing has started to encroach on the instructional time provided to students. Students now engage in testing in November (12th CMAS), January (ACCESS), March (CMAS 3rd-11th ELA & Math PBA), April (CMAS SS & Science and COACT), May (CMAS 3rd - 11th ELA & Math EOY). This does not include other assessments that are expected, if not mandated including, but not limited to IB, AP and ACT Aspire.

The over-abundance of summative testing is causing a community outcry that there is "too much testing". It feels as if students are always living in a secure testing environment. Parents, community and teachers do not understand the necessity for the constant flurry of summative assessment.

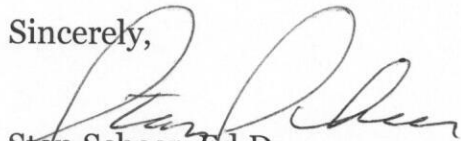
Good instruction begins with great formative assessment. Instructors know where students are achieving through daily, just in time assessment in their classroom and through the use of interim benchmarks, not by using a singular summative assessment in every subject area, every year.

In order to balance the increase in summative assessments the teacher/districts must consider eliminating or minimizing district interim assessments and classroom formative assessments. This is counter to what truly benefits student achievement. The assessments that should be used are the district interim and formative classroom assessments.

These assessments drive instruction and meet student needs on grade level standards throughout the school year. Local data to progress monitor learning and provide individualized student goals towards achievement and growth must be used. A summative assessment is then administered at the end of the year with immediate, specific feedback, so it can be used to determine success in our formative learning cycle.

We urge you to consider this as you continue to move through your work as a task force. It is imperative that we do what is best for our students across the state. All things are best in proportion and currently the time and number of assessments is consuming our students versus instruction, learning, achievement and growth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stan Scheer', written over the printed name.

Stan Scheer, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools
Thompson School District

HB14-1202 Standards and Assessments Task Force
Notes from Public Hearing, Loveland, CO, October 28, 2014
Submitted by John Creighton

- “Taking the tests is convoluted and complicated. Teachers had to be trained. Students had to be trained. It’s crazy.”
- Social studies: Group did not agree. Some felt it is good addition; others felt it dictated curriculum too much.