Helping Districts Design Balanced Assessment Systems

Presenters
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Discussant:
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Abstract
Before completing an assessment audit, before making decisions about assessment options, educators district-wide need a foundation of assessment literacy, starting with the purposes for and types of assessment. Only after they become assessment literate can district staff develop a framework or foundation for a quality, comprehensive balanced assessment system. The District Assessment System Design Toolkit (DASD Toolkit) and associated process, developed by the Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment (NCIEA), were designed to build assessment literacy using primers and discussions that address:

1) purposes for assessment
2) how different approaches to assessment can address those purposes, and
3) the need to offer different information and take different approaches to assessment for various types of contributors to the education system.

In a proof of concept pilot, the DASD Toolkit was used by facilitators to guide district and school teams through a principled process that did the following:

- Achieved a shared understanding of assessment terms
- Catalogued existing assessments and evaluated their place (if any) in the new system
- Prioritized intended purposes and uses of assessment in the system
- Developed or modified a system design to serve the prioritized, intended purposes
- Developed a plan to implement, monitor, and intentionally evolve the system over time

Presentation Summary
Developing a balanced assessment system means meeting the needs of all the users of assessment information sufficiently. A coherent assessment system requires intentional development and maintenance if it is to complement and enhance instruction; support student learning; and meet educator, administrator, policymaker and parent/community needs to certify learning. Table 1 (page 3) shows the primary issues and how these were addressed in the development of the Toolkit.
The Michigan Assessment Consortium (MAC) organized a proof-of-concept pilot designed to refine the DASD Toolkit and identify the process and support required to facilitate its use.

District work was coordinated by a District Team Lead who also served as point person for the pilot. Two educational service agencies (ESAs)—Wayne RESEA and Oakland Schools—supplied the expertise of assessment consultants Ellen Vorenkamp, Steven Snead, and Jonathan Flukes who facilitated discussion during three 4-hour workshops. ESD consultants also facilitated homework completion and supported development of district assessment system action plans. NCIEA contributed the Toolkit with the accompanying agendas for workshops that functioned as the vehicle to engage district teams in the opportunity to:

- develop shared understanding of assessment terms
- engage in exercises to elicit district values and aspirations (assessment specific)
- conduct an audit of current practice
- initiate development of district plans that serve to align resources and practice with the purposes and uses of the types of assessment the district identified as valuing most.

Joseph Martineau of the NCIEA developed the Toolkit and provided much of the guided instruction for its use during workshop sessions. The MAC is providing project evaluation (in process), with Ed Roeber serving as principal evaluator. Evaluators will suggest refinements to the Toolkit and the facilitated process using District Lead and ESA Facilitator interviews, along with survey results; observation data; and analysis of pilot documents and processes.

**Selected results to date**

Participating LEAs elected to invest in this effort for various and unique reasons, and the results of their work reflect that.

**Bloomfield Hills Schools**

“Our participation in the District Assessment System Design (DASD) Toolkit will help us to advance our priorities by looking at our assessment system and analyzing the role it plays in the learning cycle.” –Wendy Osterman, BHS Assessment Director

**Priority focus after participation:** Development of common assessments and investment in professional learning to become more skillful in use of formative assessment.

**Dearborn Public Schools**

Dan Patterson, DPS Assessment Director, referenced their participation as a means to meet a stated goal in their district strategic plan “...to create a well-aligned assessment system that provides important data on teaching and learning with as little impact on instructional time as possible...”

**Priority focus after participation:** System-wide support for staff to become more skillful in their formative assessment practice.

**Resources for further exploration**

**National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment:** nciea.org

**Michigan Assessment Consortium:** michiganassessmentconsortium.org
DASD Pilot participants include:

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<th>Participant</th>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Martineau</td>
<td>Dearborn Public Schools</td>
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<td>Kathy Dewsbury-White</td>
<td>Novi Community Schools</td>
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<td>Ed Roeber</td>
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