

Addressing Assessment Literacy Standards in Michigan and the Nation

Michigan Assessment Consortium

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Introduction – Student assessment has become increasingly important to educators, students and their parents or guardians, and the public. Large-scale and classroom assessment programs are proliferating, and becoming more important to students and educators. Yet, those most affected by these student assessment efforts—students, parents/guardians, teachers, school administrators, and local and state policymakers—are not prepared to understand these assessments (their strengths and shortcomings), how such assessments are developed and for what purposes, how to select the most suitable and sound approaches to assessment, how to administer these assessments appropriately, and how to use and report the results from these assessments.

Because of these issues, in 2012 the Michigan Assessment Consortium (MAC) began the creation of “Assessment Literacy Standards” for individuals affected by student assessments. Assessment literacy standards for teachers, administrators and policymakers will serve as the foundation from which the field comes to understand what being assessment literate means and the role and purpose of comprehensive, balanced, high quality assessment systems. The ultimate goal of the MAC is to have the assessment literacy standards used to inform policy development and decisions regarding assessment practices, teacher preparation programs, teacher and administrator certification, educator professional learning programs, educator evaluation, and school accreditation, to name just several spheres of influence.

During the past three years, the Michigan Assessment Consortium has created a draft set of assessment literacy standards for students, teachers, building administrators, district administrators, and local and statewide policy makers. This work drew on previously developed assessment standards developed by a variety of national organizations, national assessment experts, and Michigan professional organizations and individuals.

The purpose of this paper is to seek resources necessary for the MAC to plan for the creation of a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to improving the assessment literacy of students, teachers, building administrators, district administrators, and local and statewide policy makers. We realize that no one effort, no matter how large or how effective, will improve assessment literacy of all parties. Instead, we anticipate that improving assessment literacy will require several different efforts that are coordinated and implemented simultaneously. Therefore, the short-term goal (for 2015-16) is to obtain the resources necessary to plan and prepare a larger, more comprehensive proposal for external funding that will be necessary to develop the overall approach to improved assessment literacy.

Goals and Objectives for 2015-16 – The first goal of this effort is create a comprehensive set of approaches to improved assessment literacy for each of the audiences (students, teachers, building administrators, district administrators, and local and statewide policy makers). This is envisioned as a matrix showing audiences by approaches. The approaches should be varied enough to address the needed dispositions, knowledge and skills of each groups.

The second overall goal of this effort is to plan how each major approach can be specified in greater detail, existing resources selected or new ones developed, field tested, and then implemented. Some of these may be relatively straight forward (e.g., information on assessment for elementary students to be provided by classroom teachers), while other plans will be much more complex and varied (e.g., planning a multi-semester course of study on assessment for prospective or in-service classroom teachers). In the latter case, this might result in the creation of an overall instructional plan, syllabi of one or more courses, plans for how such courses could be developed, who might teach them, and how such courses could be provided in both in-person, live-over-the-Internet, and asynchronously.

The third goal of this effort is to create an overall proposal for external funding for the creation of each of the assessment literacy improvement plans. The purpose for developing this proposal is to seek the funding needed to create and implement the resources needed to improve assessment literacy. The ultimate goal of this effort is to create a more assessment literate population able to better use student assessments to improve student learning and achievement.

These overall goals result in several specific objectives for this project for the coming year. These include:

1. Select or develop a set of assessment literacy improvement approaches for the various individuals and groups (students, their parents or guardians, teachers, school administrators, and policymakers at the local and state levels).
2. Working with various educational organizations in Michigan and nationally, create a set of plans for the developing strategies and approaches to increase the assessment literacy of the targeted audiences and individuals.
3. Develop assessment literacy needs assessment measures to determine the levels of assessment literacy/illiteracy among key individuals and groups (students, parents/guardians, teachers, school administrators, and local and state policymakers).
4. Create assessment literacy awareness and promotional materials for use with the above-listed individuals and audiences in order to build awareness of and commitment to becoming assessment literate.
5. Develop a proposal for external funding of the activities in 1-4 above. Seek such external funding from a variety of sources.

Longer term, once planning is completed and funding is obtained (ideally, by fall 2016):

1. Undertake the development of the desired assessment literacy improvement strategies and materials.
2. Working with the various educational organizations, implement the assessment literacy strategies, using the materials that were created, in order to increase the assessment literacy of the above-listed audiences.
3. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of these strategies and the use of the materials to ascertain their effectiveness and make any needed changes in them.

Activities to Accomplish the Short-Term Objectives – The activities to accomplish these tasks are broken into several prongs or parts. Each of these is summarized below, followed by more detailed plans for the initial set of activities.

2015-16 Activities

Activity 1 – Develop an outline of the assessment literacy improvement approaches for the various individuals and groups – Once the Assessment Literacy Standards have been created, approved and published, the MAC will work to create a plan for increasing the assessment literacy of students, teachers, parents/guardians, school administrators, and local and state policymakers. The goal will be to determine the learning experience, materials, and strategies that will be used to go beyond awareness of the need for assessment literacy to actually building competency by providing it to these individuals in a variety of ways – public education campaigns, courses, written materials and so forth. In Year 1, the following steps will be used:

- MDE should establish an internal MDE learning group to participate in the project. This team will serve to learn along with the external group and will serve to coordinate activities within MDE as well as with the field to promote improved assessment literacy.
- The MAC will convene a small group comprised of a few representatives of major educational organizations and key universities that have assisted in the creation of the Assessment Literacy Standards to serve as an Assessment Literacy Planning Team (ALPT).
- This ALPT will meet quarterly with staff from MDE and the MAC to help put together the outline of the planning process for improving assessment literacy – for students, parents, and policymakers, as well as pre-service and in-service educators (teachers and school administrators).
- Ask major education professional groups to identify persons to serve on a Michigan assessment literacy advisory committee (MALAC). Key national assessment literacy experts may be asked to work on the ALPT as well.
- Develop a matrix of approaches by audience. These might be broken down by time frame— short-, medium-, and long-term. This will serve as the framework for the work described below.
- Suggest an initial set of materials that might be selected or developed and used to “prime the pump” for the advisory group described in Activity 2 below. These might include:
 - Awareness materials (why assessment literacy is important and how to become more literate);
 - Materials to assess current levels of assessment literacy
 - Training strategies for various groups
 - Needs assessment survey materials for various groups (e.g., in-service educators) or institutions (e.g., institutions of higher education in Michigan).

Activity 2 – Develop assessment literacy needs assessment measures of students and educators, in order to determine the levels of assessment literacy/illiteracy among key individuals and groups (students, parents/guardians, teachers, school administrators, and local and state policymakers) – Several activities might be carried out in the 2015-16 school year. These include:

- Project staff will conduct a thorough review of the literature and contact national assessment experts to determine what, if any, measures of assessment literacy have been developed for use with students, teachers and administrators (pre-service and in-service), and policymakers.
- Project staff will create draft performance measures to determine, based on the Assessment Literacy Standards, whether these individuals’ possess the dispositions and knowledge about

assessment as suggested by the ALS, and are able to carry out the performances also suggested by the ALS.

- The ALPT and the MALAC will be asked to review and comment on the draft measures.
- Comments and reactions to the draft measures will be used by project staff to review and revise the measures, adding and deleting items as suggested.
- Project staff will finalize the draft measures and prepare them for field testing (for example, adding suggested administration directions).
- Locate suitable volunteer sites to try out the assessment literacy measures.
- Collect data on the draft measures from volunteers.
- Analyze the data from the assessment literacy measures.
- Use the assessment results to revise, revise, and improve the assessment literacy measures and to inform the rest of the project work.

Activity 3 – Inventory existing resources and materials used to increase the assessment literacy of students, teachers, administrators, and policymakers to determine which materials and professional learning strategies are available as well as any information about their effectiveness.

- Conduct Internet-based searches for effective assessment literacy development resources.
- Contact colleagues in the field of curriculum and assessment to search for any existing assessment literacy development resources.
- Inventory existing assessment literacy development resources, evaluating their efficiency and effectiveness (i.e., what works and what does not), since there is no sense in reinventing the wheel if good resources/materials already exist. This needs assessment should come first, since the results will drive the approaches, activities, and materials to be refined or developed.
- MAC staff will review the materials and professional learning used with them to determine their suitability as well as effectiveness in improving assessment literacy.
- Catalog these resources by assessment literacy standard(s) and audience(s).

Activity 4 - Working with various educational organizations in Michigan and nationally, create a set of plans for the developing any additional strategies and approaches to increase the assessment literacy of the groups and individuals needed – Several activities might be carried out in the 2015-16 school year. These include:

- Meet with the ALPT and the MALAC initially to discuss the parameters of an assessment literacy program and obtain their advice on approaches and materials for their organization as well as others. Each audience may need different approaches and materials although at least some of the approaches and materials might be used for multiple audiences.
- Once staff have drafted the more specific approaches matrix, the ALPT will review and comment on the plans
- After staff review the comments of the ALPT and revise the approach matrix, the MALAC will provide its final reactions to the approaches.
- Using the outline prepared in Activity 1, draft the list of needed assessment literacy awareness, training, and support materials to implement the assessment literacy standards.
- By the end of 2015-16, the plan will have been created, the training strategies identified, and the materials to be created will have been identified.

Activity 5 – Create assessment literacy awareness and promotional materials for use with the above-listed individuals in order to build awareness of and commitment to becoming assessment literate – Several activities might be carried out in the 2015-16 school year. These include:

- Based on the suggestions of the MALAC from Activity 3, project staff will draft assessment literacy awareness and promotional materials for use with students, teachers and administrators (pre-service and in-service), and policymakers.
- The ALPT and others will be asked to review and comment on the awareness materials.
- Project staff will use the comments to revise the awareness materials.

Activity 6 – Develop a proposal for external funding of the activities in 1-5 above. Seek such external funding from a variety of sources – Several activities might be carried out in the 2014-15 school year. These include:

- While all of the materials are being prepared for Activities 1-4, project staff will be preparing a proposal for external funding in order to actually implement the activities and plans.
- Members of the MALAC will be asked to serve as a “practitioner panel,” and asked to provide letters of support for the proposal, including a commitment to use the resources produced by the project.
- A panel of national experts, including some members of the ALPT, will also be asked to serve in the larger project as an “expert panel,” and also asked to provide letters of support for the proposal.
- Project staff will seek external funding from agencies and organizations within Michigan and nationally.
- Once funding is obtained, the development activities called for in Activities 1-5 will be carried out.