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Developing Assessment Learning Literacy for Students and Their Families, Educators, and Policymakers

Presenters

Margaret Heritage, WestEd

Marianne Perie, Center for Assessment and Accountability Research and Design (CAARD),
University of Kansas

Kathy Dewsbury-White, Michigan Assessment Consortium

James W. Pellegrino, University of Illinois at Chicago

Jim Gullen, Michigan Assessment Consortium

Discussant

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Executive Summary

The Assessment Learning Network (ALN) is a professional learning community consisting of representatives from Michigan's professional educational associations, the Michigan Department of Education, and the Michigan Assessment Consortium. The goal of the ALN is to increase the assessment literacy of every professional educator in Michigan by engaging ALN members in two partnering activities:

- 1) Collaborative learning events for ALN members and guests
- 2) Information sharing after the events with each organizations' colleagues and members at large.

To meet these goals, communication tools and resources are developed by MAC staff for use by ALN members. Resources include keynote presentation videos, sharable "Learning Moment" video clips, two-page Learning Point documents that explain single assessment concepts in non-technical language, and other resources relevant to the work of the ALN. Meetings are structured to allow members time to process new learning themselves and collaborate to plan how they might best take their learning back to their organizations. Four ALN meetings were offered during the 2017-18 school year—the program's second year—in an updated format that allowed non-members to attend the featured presentations and facilitated conversations. Typically, about 40 people would attend each meeting.

Some ALN resources can be accessed by non-members at <http://aln.michiganassessmentconsortium.org>.

ALN Presentation Descriptions

On October 10, 2017, **James Pellegrino** presented to the ALN the **knowledge-in-use perspective on science proficiency** that is a centerpiece of the National Research Council's (NRC) Framework for K-12 Science Education (NRC, 2012), embodied in the new U.S. national standards (NGSS Lead

States, 2013) and emphasized in the NRC report on developing assessments to measure science proficiency (Pellegrino, Wilson, Koenig, & Beatty, 2014). In this presentation, we described a systematic and scalable approach for designing assessment items that measure student proficiency with new science learning goals that blend disciplinary core ideas and crosscutting concepts with practices. In doing so, we also considered how this approach relates to the process of building coherent systems of science assessment that operate across levels from the classroom to district and state monitoring levels, including some of the options for building such a system from the “bottom up.”

On December 15, 2017, **Marianne Perie** shared that today’s educators and parents often contend that there is too much testing. Yet policymakers worry that without measurement, parents will not know what their student has learned. Over the past two decades, the amount of assessment in schools has increased dramatically. However, contrary to popular belief, summative assessments do not take up most of the time spent on testing. Dr. Perie cited a 2016 survey that reported less than 2% of instructional time was used for summative assessment. On the flip side, the formative assessment process is used daily as part and parcel of the instructional cycle. When a teacher probes for understanding, she is assessing formatively. As one teacher said, “formative assessment is just good teaching.” In between these two is the catch-all: **interim assessment**, which can serve diagnostic or predictive purposes, or provide a measure of growth within a school year. To be used well, however, educators need to understand when and how to use them and what to do with the results. Dr. Perie contends that Interim assessments can be useful, but they can also waste a lot of instructional time confirming what a teacher already knows.

On March 2, 2018, **Jim Gullen** presented on the topic of **measuring student growth**, a topic that is receiving increased attention in public education. The measurement of changes in student achievement present several challenges compared to measuring other sorts of student growth such as height or weight. As a result, a variety of methodologies have been developed to measure and communicate student growth. Each of these models can provide useful information, but only if they are well understood by all who use them. Dr. Gullen presented aspects of the measurement of student growth that must be understood regardless of the growth model employed. Various growth models currently in use were presented and explained, as well as characteristics of each model that potentially impact how and when they should be used.

On May 8, 2018, the final ALN meeting of the year featured **Margaret Heritage**, whose presentation addressed how we might **support all Michigan teachers in using formative assessment**. Effective formative assessment practice requires teachers to have a range of knowledge and skills so that they can orchestrate an extraordinary number of complex judgments during a lesson to continuously advance students’ learning. Drawing from the Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers (FAST) State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) definition of formative assessment (FAST SCASS, 2017), Dr. Heritage described the assessment knowledge and skills, the disciplinary knowledge, and the habits of practice that enable teachers to successfully implement formative assessment in their classrooms. A key challenge for teachers and those who support them ensuring that teachers have these requisite knowledge, skills, and habits of practice, so that they can take advantage of what we know can have powerful and beneficial effects on all students’ learning. In this regard, Dr. Heritage also discussed the implications for in-service and pre-service educators and the organizations that represent them, and she offered some specific recommendations for teachers’ professional learning.