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A New Path for Oregon: System of Assessment to Empower Meaningful Student Learning

Oregon Education Investment Board

Oregon Education Association

Oregon Department of Education

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Acknowledgments

Governor John Kitzhaber requested Dr. Nancy Golden, Chief Education Officer, Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) convene a group of teachers from the Oregon Education Association (OEA), to collaborate with the Governor's Office, the OEIB and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to propose an "ideal" system of assessment which makes sense for both students, families, and educators. This document is the result of the work of educators from across Oregon who dedicated countless hours learning together and sharing their expertise as classroom educators and school district advisors in proposing a different way to assess Oregon students. Their commitment to helping every student in their classrooms and schools learn, grow, and realize their full potential is reflected throughout this proposal. We are forever grateful to Dr. Rick Stiggins for the expertise, guidance and support throughout the development of this proposal. He helped each of us envision the possibilities of an assessment system that supports learning.

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Executive Summary

Good education inspires students' natural curiosity and supports their desire to learn. When utilized to its full potential, good assessment can do the same. This new proposed system of assessment will increase time for learning, emphasize the use of assessment in support *of* learning, and rely on the most authentic balance of assessments to encourage student success. When we believe all students can learn, and we create systems of support and provide appropriate tools to encourage their success, we will finally move toward the future that all Oregon students deserve.

A Time of Opportunities and Possibilities

Governor John Kitzhaber requested that Dr. Nancy Golden, Chief Education Officer, Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) convene a group of teachers from the Oregon Education Association (OEA), to collaborate with the Governor's Office, the OEIB and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to propose an "ideal" system of assessment which makes sense for both students, families, and educators. The process of developing such a vision began with a team of teachers articulating a set of values and beliefs that should underpin the uses of assessment. Those involved agreed, when used appropriately, assessment focused on learning informs the learning needs of individual students and helps them know at any given time (not just annually) how far they have come along the path to success. They also agreed there is a need to balance *assessment for learning* (i.e. formative assessment) and *assessment of learning* (i.e. summative assessment) to help students be successful.

While advocating for an increase of *assessment for learning* we understand that different decision makers (e.g. students, families, teachers, principals, superintendents, school board members, community members, policy makers, etc.) need different kinds of information about student learning in different forms at different times if they are to make their unique contributions to supporting student success. No single quality assessment can meet all needs, and thus this proposal looks at balancing the following assessment sources:

- Continuous evidence from classroom assessment to support student learning;
- Periodic evidence supplied by progress monitoring and interim benchmark assessments; and
- Results of annual assessments to verify what has been learned.

This balance acknowledges that using tests that happen once a year, while helpful in setting resource priorities, are of limited value to those who must make instructional decisions every three or four minutes - our students and our teachers.

The future effectiveness of assessment in Oregon schools and student learning will rely on

our ability to move from an assessment system historically devoted to summative applications using annual test scores to meet the needs of all the users to one that clearly defines the type of assessment and the appropriate use of the assessment for student engagement in learning. The key to the success of transitioning to this new system of assessment is to have all stakeholders develop, practice and continually foster assessment literacy. Assessment literacy is the ability to understand the assessment process in order to best meet the needs of students. It is also the method of gathering accurate and unbiased information about student learning and using the assessment cycle and its results effectively to improve student learning and success.

A New Vision of Excellence

In order to achieve balance and excellence in our system of assessment, those engaged in this reflective process propose a new vision that weaves assessment more deeply than ever before into the teaching and learning process. Used appropriately, assessment can be a powerful tool to help both educators and their students know where they are now in their learning progression and determine where students need to go next. With consistent ongoing educator support and engaged students, *assessment for student learning* can provide individualized support to meet the needs of each learner. Therefore, we recommend a new vision based on the following guiding principles:

- All assessments must arise from and promise to serve a clear purpose.
- They must be designed and developed to reflect developmentally and academically appropriate learning targets and be culturally responsive.
- Each assessment must accurately reflect student learning.
- Results must be effectively communicated to all intended users and their families.
- Our mission must be to use assessment to encourage students to keep striving for learning success.

Transition to the New Vision

Transitioning to a new system of assessment requires time and collective work among education stakeholders and communities across Oregon. We hope you find this proposal as a place to start thinking about the actions necessary to transition from an assessment system that relies too heavily on summative, standardized assessment to a new system in which assessment and learning work together for students' benefit, one in which all educators and stakeholders become assessment literate, and every Oregon student can reach his or her full potential. In the words of Jan Chappuis (2009).

> *"Assessment for learning is a gift we give our students. It is a mirror we hold up to show them how far they have come. It is a promise that we will use assessment, not to punish or reward, but to guide them on their learning journey."*

Introduction: A Time of Opportunities and Possibilities

"Used with skill, assessment can motivate the reluctant, revive the discouraged, and thereby increase, not simply measure, learning and achievement" (Chappuis, Stiggins, Chappuis & Arter, 2012).

Effective education inspires students' natural curiosity and supports their desire to learn. But effective education can only occur in the presence of sound assessment practice—and that in turn begins with the recognition that students are individuals with diverse needs.

Acknowledging that not all students fit into the same mold and may not follow the same path to learning success allows educators to accommodate learning differences and thus help every student fulfill his or her highest potential. Such differentiation requires attention to language differences, cultural diversity, learner rights inherent in Individualized Education Plans, or any other academic or social emotional support needed to foster student success. We must meet each student at his or her current level, understand where that student is excelling—or struggling—and identify what each student needs to take the next step. Such a tailored approach demands the skillful application of sound assessment practices at all levels and by all educators.

At this moment in time, Oregon has the opportunity to improve its assessment system by creating local and state practices that authentically support universal learning success. Empowered by state leadership, Oregon educators teamed up to propose a dynamic new way of assessing student performance, one that makes learning meaningful for both students and educators, shows how students' academic success can soar when assessment is an integral component of instruction, and provides a system of support for educators to facilitate this success.

The new Oregon model of assessment proposed herein will increase time for learning, emphasize the use of assessment to support that learning, empower students and teachers, increase assessment literacy among all educators—as well as families and the broader community—and make assessment more efficient by ensuring that assessment and instruction are aligned.

The goal of this proposal is to open the doors to the following possibilities:

- Move away from our historic over-emphasis on summative standardized assessment.
- Improve student learning through a richer instructionally focused system of assessment.
- Renew the focus on the classroom, where the majority of assessment affecting students' daily lives actually occurs.

- Operationalize an educational equity lens in the context of assessment literacy that fosters culturally responsive and sustaining teaching and learning
- Create a foundation of, and ongoing support for assessment literacy for all assessment users.

Values and Beliefs: Assessment as a Foundation for Student Learning

Any strong system of assessment must rest on a foundation of values regarding assessment itself and the role it can and should play in fostering learning, supporting users, and improving educational opportunities for students. The following values and beliefs provide the foundation for this proposal.

All students can learn and realize their full potential. The future of Oregon's assessment practices must embody the belief that all students can learn and achieve at high levels when assessments are used appropriately. College or career readiness requires that students become lifelong learners who can read, write, solve math problems and engage in critical thinking. However, a one-size-fits-all approach to assessing such skills serves no one because it provides only limited information about individual performance and progress. A successful system of assessment should not simply highlight problems or generalize about groups; nor should it ignore conditions that influence performance. Instead, a successful system of assessment recognizes the myriad strengths of various learners within their respective communities and within the collaborative nature of the classroom. In addition, such a system is culturally responsive and implemented by educators who are assessment literate. It can also serve multiple purposes, giving us information not only about students themselves, but also about the effectiveness of the schools and districts that serve those students. Such information, in turn, can help us create improvements that expand learning opportunities for all. All adult users (i.e. families, educators, policy makers and communities in general) of assessments share the responsibility to ensure students realize their full potential by understanding the clear and specific purpose of assessments and use the results appropriately.

Quality assessment requires an agreed upon definition and must utilize an equity lens. Assessment is the process of gathering evidence of student learning in order to inform instructional decisions. Those decisions can support or certify student learning depending on the context. A quality assessment is valid based on clear purpose (measuring what it's intended to measure), yields reliable results (measuring accurately time and time again), and is unbiased (measuring learning equally regardless of cultural background). Anything less is not acceptable for Oregon's students. Only quality assessments have the potential to support individual growth for all students. This means it provides a consistent and accurate representation of the learning target and serves the information needs of the intended users. Careful development and clarity of purpose minimizes the misuse and distortion of results due to factors unrelated to the achievement being measured.

Assessments must support or verify student learning. All assessments must address a pre-established need for information and provide evidence that is dependable, instructionally useable and accessible to intended users. Assessments serve two general

purposes: (1) they inform and enhance teaching and learning, or (2) they verify or certify the level of student learning. Both purposes are important but they are different. The first takes place during learning and second takes place after learning has occurred. Any assessment that does not serve one of these purposes should not be conducted. Further, users should have a clear purpose in mind before determining what sort of assessment to choose or administer.

Assessments must inform all important users. Students must be seen not merely as the subjects of assessment, but as important members of the assessment user network. Traditionally, assessment has been seen as something teachers and school leaders *do to students*. This is unfortunate because assessment has far more power to influence learning when educators help students understand where they are at any given time in their journey toward success. Knowing how far they have come and what steps remain can be highly motivating. It makes students aware of their progress and growth, and this awareness gives them confidence. It also shows them where they are headed, thus making them feel in control of their learning. And finally, it shows which goals are within immediate reach, making progress feel manageable, and giving students the motivation and encouragement they need to overcome challenges and continue their efforts.

Student success depends on decisions made by numerous individuals and groups, among them families, teachers, education support professionals, school and district administrators, school board members, community members, policy makers, and of course, the students themselves. It's important to recognize that these various decision makers need different kinds of evidence in different forms at different times if they are to make their unique contributions to student learning. No single assessment can meet all of their informational needs. Depending on the context, assessment users may require—

- Continuous, ongoing evidence from *classroom assessment*.
- Periodic evidence supplied by progress monitoring and *interim benchmark assessments.*
- Results of *annual assessments* to verify what has been learned over a given period.
- A method to critically engage when biases are evident within the assessments.

While day-to-day classroom assessment has the greatest impact on students' engagement in their own learning, assessment in many forms and at many levels will support decision making throughout a broader network.

Assessment results must inform instructional goal setting. All assessments must address clear instructional targets, show how close students have come to meeting their instructional goals, and help educators and students make sound decisions about next steps. Quality assessments must provide useable information on student performance that goes beyond mere summary test scores. Single scores are limited in their capacity to inform us about student performance, and to understand why, we have only to consider how tests are constructed. Traditionally, assessments have clustered many standards together into groups or domains; test scores that reflect performance across these domains make it impossible for students or teachers to know which specific targets within the domain were or were not mastered. This means these test scores don't help teachers know what comes next in the learning; they provide no instructionally actionable

information. On the other hand, assessments built to give information about specific achievement standards or proficiencies offer far greater instructional value because they show teachers (and students) where students are excelling and struggling, and hence where to focus their efforts. Whenever possible, assessments should tell us how each student did with respect to each standard tested.

Local district assessment systems must become the priority. Over the decades and even in current professional literature, accountability is defined in terms of state systems. This has created a narrowed focus on statewide assessments for public accountability. Yet, virtually all instructional decisions that affect teaching and learning are made at the local level by district instructional leaders, building leaders, classroom teachers and students. While some evidence that informs local decisions may come, in part, from assessments conducted outside the district (such as statewide tests), instructional responsibility resides with a community's educators. Local district assessment, therefore, must be the focus of any vision of excellence that hopes to improve student learning in Oregon.

Assessing and tracking student growth must be a priority. Traditionally, assessment has been seen as occurring *after* teaching as a way of measuring what students have learned. An alternative approach weaves assessment into teaching itself. The student and teacher work together to see where the student is along a continuum of success, and to determine what should come next. This initial assessment is followed by focused instruction, another check of achievement, more decisions about what to do next, more opportunities for learning, and so on in a cycle where instruction is always determined by assessment, and assessment has a real and *immediate* impact on instruction. Ongoing, continual assessment of student growth over time gives educators and students more frequent opportunities to adjust the course of learning to meet each student's needs. Research has revealed that such an approach yields profound achievement gains, with the largest gains *accruing for struggling learners* (Black & William, 1998a; Black & William, 1998b). By following this approach, Oregon has the opportunity to ensure growth *for all students*.

In summary, the future of Oregon education must be built on a balanced assessment system that is capable of supporting student learning *and* verifying it, depending on the context. Such a balanced assessment system must—

- Confirm the belief that all students can learn and achieve at high levels;
- Serve a pre-set purpose and accommodate the informational needs of all decision makers (rather than occurring annually and serving only a few);
- Provide evidence of mastery on individual achievement standards, not merely a summative score spanning broad domains;
- Satisfy accepted criteria of assessment quality (e.g., all assessments must be valid, reliable, and unbiased);
- Communicate results in timely and understandable ways to intended users;
- Help educators and families engage students in ongoing self-assessment, creating the confidence that only comes from helping to monitor and co-construct their own learning and seeing success within their reach;

- Reflect student growth over time as opposed to achievement status at a single point in time; and
- Achieve a balance in implementation that does not result in particular student groups receiving an inordinate amount of assessments.

Contrasting Our Assessment Needs with Current Reality

Comparing our current assessment practices and priorities with the proposed values and beliefs articulated above reveals significant discrepancies between where we are now and where we could be. In order to get where we want to be, we need to address the following problems:

Students are discouraged. When classroom and large-scale assessment play their traditional role as a means of ranking and sorting students, major segments of our student population—particularly those who finish low in the ranking order—lose momentum, confidence, and motivation. These students disengage with a system whose assessments don't value their cultural values and are often mislabeled as struggling learners. This can lead to dropping out of school or simply giving up and thus winding up unprepared for higher education or career training. Recently, we have come to understand that this result affects more than the students themselves; it is society that loses in the long run, and both outcomes are unacceptable. Sound assessment practices can help turn this loss around.

Unproductive use of resources. In recent years, virtually all our assessment resources for school improvement have been invested in annual high-stakes standardized tests. The commitment to fixing schools by demanding higher annual test scores started with districtwide testing in the 1960s, extended to statewide applications in the 1970s, then to national assessment in the 1980s, and ultimately to international assessment in the 1990s. With the federal policy of *No Child Left Behind* passed in the early 2000s, the urgency and frequency of testing have only increased. The United States has invested billions of dollars in this ever-more frenzied testing over the past few decades, based on the belief that increased testing would drive school improvement. Yet opportunity gaps persist, graduation rates remain troubling, and when it comes to test scores, the U.S. ranks in the middle of the international pack. It is imperative that our focus shifts to include new classroom assessment approaches, integrating assessment with instruction and making students partners in their own instructional process to ensure that, student outcomes improve.

Unmet information needs. Our current reliance on accountability testing, that requires everyone wait weeks or months for the delivery and distribution of annual scores, has left all decision makers (students, teachers, school and district administrators, families, community members, legislators, policy makers) without the information they need to support student learning. Standardized assessments happen once a year; students and educators in the classroom make decisions every three to four minutes. Further, intermittent test results fail to meet the informational needs of instructional leaders working outside the classroom to support and improve student learning. And, finally because the tests themselves contain bias, they cannot accurately reflect learning or growth for all student groups. These across-the-board results lack both the depth and frequency to make a serious difference.

Lack of opportunity to develop assessment literacy. With the over-emphasis on high-stakes, standardized assessments, effective assessments at the classroom level are often devalued. When that happens, there is less impetus to provide professional development that would enable educators to design quality assessments or use them in an effective and timely way. Given that teachers typically spend a third of their professional time engaged in assessment-related practice, the lack of opportunity for in-depth assessment training is troubling indeed (Stiggins & Conklin, 1992). Almost without exception, teachers lack the allotted time to access this learning even if it were available. To compound the problem, relevant assessment training is extremely limited in most pre-service teacher or administrator preparation programs. And, finally, assessment literacy doesn't consistently operationalize culturally responsive and sustained teaching and learning practices. Under the new vision, educators would have an opportunity to increase their assessment literacy while simultaneously taking back some ownership of assessment practice. Oregon needs to ensure that this vision includes both universal foundational training (e.g., in teacher and administrator preparation programs) and ongoing support of classroom assessment literacy for all decision makers and users of assessment information.

Proposed misuse of annual test scores in educator evaluation. Recently, federal and state policy makers have deemed it appropriate to factor growth in student achievement into the educator evaluation equation. Often, growth is defined by policy makers as year-to-year change in annual standardized test scores. This represents an indefensible use of these test results. The tests involved have not been validated for this purpose; that is, they have not been shown to be capable of detecting differences in the quality of instruction. The nature of the tests often keeps them from sampling individual teacher impact with sufficient precision. The tests cannot distinguish to whom the growth can be attributed as there are multiple educators (and other factors) who impact students in the subjects of reading and math. The year-long pre/posttest time span assures a confounding of instruction with factors that influence learning that are beyond educator control, thus rendering this basis for evaluation unfair. For all of these reasons, qualified psychometricians have almost universally rejected this source of evidence for the evaluation of individual teachers or school leaders.

There are better options for estimating student growth in this context that arise from classroom assessments. If educators and school administrators develop and enhance their assessment literacy, they can generate dependable evidence of their impact on student learning in sharp detail. The quality of educator evaluation can be enhanced and, as a crucial side benefit, student learning can be measurably improved.

In summary, as we learn to use assessments more productively and implement this new vision, current realities will be replaced with learning that is driven by student need. Reactive assessment is insufficient and outdated. Oregon students and teachers need assessments that are proactive, inclusive, and empowering. *Assessment for learning* is practical and functional. It can become an embedded part of everyday learning for students, teachers, and families, and when that happens, our system of assessment will inspire learning and promote student success. We do not need to do away with summative, standardized tests, which are currently the policy priority; but we do need to bring such testing into balance with culturally relevance formative and interim assessments that can drive student learning.

Oregon Assessment: A New Vision of Excellence

Used appropriately, *assessment for student learning* has the potential to propel instruction forward productively by considering the learning needs of individual students and helping them know at any given time (not just annually) how far they have come along the path to success. With consistent and ongoing teacher support, *assessment for student learning* provides individualized support that allows learners to progress in a way and at a speed that suits their abilities and learning styles.

To understand this approach, we must appreciate that fact that assessment is a personal experience. It can enhance or detract from student learning and achievement. That's because assessment results affect how students see themselves. Those who fail repeatedly lose faith in themselves and the system, and once they are convinced (largely by test scores) that success is beyond their reach, motivation and engagement declines. By contrast, consistently reaching for and attaining *achievable* goals (those "next steps" along the continuum) builds confidence and keeps students engaged in their own learning. Successful students not only gain faith in their own abilities, but gradually come to believe that they will continue to be successful in any or all future endeavors. They dare more, try more, persist more, and the results of that effort are not hard to infer.

Over the past half century, assessment has been seen primarily as a once-a-year, anxiety-driven, time-intensive, and high stakes accountability process. Schools are social institutions, so public accountability is important. But, particularly during the past two decades, Oregon and the nation have overemphasized statewide standardized assessment requirements to the systematic exclusion of assessment for learning. Policies have required ever more frequent testing and ever higher stakes—all under the assumption that this relentless focus on standardized testing will eventually improve schools. Yet, outcomes have largely remained unchanged. Standardized testing in and of itself has not been designed to inform instructional decisions that influence day-to-day learning. *Assessment for learning*, by contrast, is designed to influence precisely those kinds of decisions; such assessment has the potential to profoundly transform learning in Oregon classrooms.

Guiding Principles

The new vision requires a universal commitment to the use of quality assessments to promote meaningful learning, not merely to monitor it. However, In order to serve both purposes, certain principles of sound assessment practice must be met as the foundation of the new vision. Those principles are listed below and are addressed in-depth in this section. The principles are so crucial to the development of productive assessment in Oregon schools that all stakeholders (i.e. students, educators, families, policy makers, and communities in general) must be given the opportunity to understand and embrace them. In other words, all concerned with the quality of Oregon schools must become "assessment literate". Adherence to the following guiding principles is critical to a successful system of assessment.

1. All assessments must arise from and serve a clear and specific purpose.
2. They must be designed and developed to reflect developmentally and academically appropriate learning targets and be culturally responsive.

3. Each assessment must accurately reflect each student's master of the learning target(s) assessed.
4. Results must be effectively communicated in a way that provides clear meaning for the intended user(s).
5. All assessment users must attend to assessment practices that encourage students to keep striving for learning success.

When these principles are followed, at all levels and by all users, Oregon students will meet achievement standards and accurately use assessment results to help co-construct their own learning. These five guiding principles, can change Oregon's educational future.

Principle #1: All assessments must have a clear and specific purpose.

Effective assessment begins with a clear sense of why we are assessing in the first place. Who will use the assessment results and what will that user accomplish? Without a clear sense of purpose, it is impossible to develop an assessment that will serve users in productive ways. Since assessment is the process of gathering evidence to inform instructional decisions, a good place to begin is by answering three critical questions:

1) What decision needs to be made?
2) Who is making the decision?
3) What information do they need?

The answers will vary profoundly depending on the context within which the questions are posed. In schools, instructional decisions are made at three levels:

- *Classroom assessments:* On an ongoing basis during instruction
- *Benchmark interim assessments:* Periodically throughout the school year
- *Summative assessments:* Yearly assessments that have mostly been standardized

At each of these three levels, some assessments support learning. They are known as *formative assessments,* and are built to identify specific learner needs during the learning process. Other times, assessments serve to verify what has been learned and are termed *summative assessments.* Summative assessments judge what skills or knowledge students have acquired over a specified period of time, typically for accountability purposes. They can also measure how the larger system is performing and may offer clues for needed improvement. Some summative assessments are external. Both formative and summative assessments are important, but they are different.

To understand the true meaning of a *balanced* system of assessment, it is helpful to examine the wide range of important questions teachers and administrators ask—questions they can only answer with assessment results from diverse sources. As the following table, *A Summary of Assessment Users*, clearly shows, the demands we place on assessment differ profoundly across contexts.

A Summary of Assessment Users:
Why different users require distinct assessments at varying times

Level of Assessment Use	Formative Applications of Assessment (to support learning) for Each User	Summative Applications of Assessment (to judge adequacy of learning) for Each User
Using Classroom Assessment Results	**Teachers:** • Where are students now in their learning? • What comes next for their learning and therefore my instruction? **Students:** • Am I progressing up the scaffolding? • What is my hope of continuing to grow in this subject? • Where am I now? • What comes next for me? • What specific concerns need to be addressed? **Families:** • Where and how can I help my child?	**Teachers:** • What standards have each student mastered? • What grade has each student earned on her or his report card? **Students/Families:** • Am I/Is my child progressing in a satisfactory manner? • Is the content culturally congruent? **Principals:** • Is the teacher able to use assessments to provide evidence of student growth? • What support can I offer to this teacher? • Is there any change or support we need to implement on a school-wide basis?
Using Interim/Bench-mark Assessment Results	**Instructional Leaders and Educator Teams:** • Which standards do our students tend to struggle in mastering? • Which students seem to be struggling right now? • Where can we improve instruction immediately to increase student success? • What can we learn from peers?	**Instructional Leaders and Educator Teams:** • Is this adopted instructional program delivering learning as promised? Should we continue, refine, or end it? It is culturally responsive? • Do teachers need professional development to enhance their instructional knowledge or their educational equity knowledge? • Do we have the systems in place to support teachers and students to maximize learning?
Using Annual Results	**Instructional Leaders and Educator Teams:** • From year to year where do students show strengths and weaknesses? • How can we be more culturally responsive? • What supports can be offered to change the year to year trend? • How can we support students vertically? • What can we learn from other schools and districts?	**Instructional Leaders, Policy makers and the Community:** • Are our students meeting standards? • Are there certain segments of our student population who need more support? • Are there particular schools or school leaders who need more support? • Is the curriculum and delivery model meeting the needs of the students? • Are there system improvement needs and efforts that will improve student learning outcomes?

The future quality of education in Oregon schools relies on our ability to move from an assessment system overwhelmingly focused on summative testing and the gathering of annual data to one that relies on multiple forms of assessment and thereby serves the informational needs of *all* decision makers. We must set new priorities and allocate the resources needed to assure effective use of both formative and summative assessment at all three levels outlined in the chart above.

Principle #2: All assessments should reflect developmentally and academically appropriate learning targets and be culturally responsive.

The foundation of any assessment rests with the learning expectations or standards to be assessed. To ensure that Oregon's system of assessment is supportive of meaningful student learning, local expectations should be —

- Anchored to a broad range of standards addressing the skills needed to prepare students to be critical thinkers and to enable them to pursue a career and/or post-secondary education.
- Guided by a community vision of lifelong learning that promotes productive problem solving and encourages strong civic responsibility.
- Reflective of the current best thinking in each field of study.
- Clearly and unambiguously stated using language that promotes universal understanding.
- Written in student- and family-friendly language that invites students and their families to be active participants in the assessment network.
- Organized to show educational progress within and across grade levels, ensuring that everyone involved can know what a student has mastered, what learning will be required next, and how best to facilitate those next steps.
- Thoroughly mastered by teachers, who will thus be better prepared to help their students meet these same expectations.

Only when these seven requirements are met will quality assessment and instruction be within reach in every classroom.

Principle #3: All assessment results must accurately reflect each student's mastery of the learning targets assessed

All assessments (regardless of context) must meet accepted standards of quality so as to assure the dependability and usefulness of the results they yield. This means that each assessment must—

- Rely on an appropriate assessment method (e.g., multiple choice, short answer, essay, performance assessment) capable of measuring the learning target in question;
- Provide an appropriate sample of student performance: that is, enough evidence to allow a confident conclusion about the level of achievement attained;

- Rely on high-quality assessment items, exercises and tasks, and methods of scoring; and
- Minimize bias that can distort assessment results and provide misleading information about a student's learning success.

The troubling reality in Oregon (and across the nation) is that these standards of quality may not currently be met across many levels of our school systems, thanks to over-reliance on high stakes standardized testing and a lack of assessment literacy among all users. A renewed emphasis on assessment for learning within the classroom brings with it new responsibility for teachers and other local educators, making the need for universal assessment literacy urgent. If the current gap in assessment literacy is not addressed, the new vision of excellence in assessment proposed here will be unattainable.

Principle #4: All assessment results must be communicated in a way that provides clear meaning for the intended users.

We have established that the list of important users is extensive (e.g. students, teachers, school and district administrators, families and others), and that they need results from both formative and summative assessment at all levels (ongoing classroom, periodic benchmark, and annual). Because important decisions are made based on the results, those results must be delivered to users in an understandable format and timely manner. Strategies for accomplishing this vary, so the communicator must be prepared to select an option that best meets the needs of the intended user.
To help students close the gap between where they are now and where they need to be, feedback delivered from teachers on formative assessment results must—

- Focus on characteristics *of the work* rather than on attributes *of the student*.
- Describe the work in terms that show clearly how to do better next time.
- Be understood by the recipient.
- Be manageable in scope so that next steps do not feel overwhelming.
- Arrive when there is still time to adjust the work and learning, thereby improving performance

Programs around the world that rely on the consistent application of these guidelines have reported impressive achievement gains (Hattie & Timperly, 2007). The same will be true in Oregon if all educators are given the professional development they need to deliver feedback that meets these criteria.

Effective communication about the sum of student learning must:

- Clearly state the learning requirements/standards being judged in terms understandable to everyone involved from the beginning of the learning.

- Rely on dependable evidence from quality assessments to reflect levels of student success.
- Compile and summarize evidence over time, using appropriate and transparent procedures.
- Clearly communicate what standards the student has mastered.
- Be culturally congruent with the recipient

Professional development in assessment literacy would provide the opportunity for educators to learn about effective recordkeeping and communication processes in summative classroom assessment contexts.

Student's Assessment Bill of Rights

A Students' Bill of Assessment Rights

The rationale for reconsidering the student's place in the assessment process extends beyond the fact that their learning can benefit from their involvement. Ethical standards of fair and equal treatment of each and every student require adults to re-evaluate the student's place in the assessment process. Students can be seen as the holders of certain inalienable rights related to the collection and use of achievement information (Stiggins, 2014). Those rights are articulated below and they align with the five Guiding Principles spelled out above.

1. Students are entitled to know the purpose of each assessment in which they participate; that is, they have a right to know specifically how the results will be used.
2. Students are entitled to know and understand the learning target(s) to be reflected in the exercises and scoring methods that make up the assessment.
3. Students are entitled to understand how they will be assessed, and learn how to self-assess and track their progress toward mastery.
4. Students are entitled to dependable assessment of their learning using quality assessments.
5. Students are entitled to effective communication of their assessment results, whether to themselves, their families or others concerned with their academic success.
6. Students are entitled to equal access to learning opportunities, and to feel a sense of optimism about success being within their reach if they keep striving.

Students and their families should be made aware of these rights, and educators will play a vital role in empowering students and families. Students themselves may have difficulty asserting their assessment rights at least until high school and, even then, their ability and power to do so will be limited. In the service of maintaining a foundation of assessment literacy in Oregon schools, students should be reminded of their rights on a regular basis.

Principle #5: All assessment users must attend to assessment practices that encourage students to keep striving for success.

It is critical that Oregon narrows its systemic gaps so that students are in schools that value culturally responsive educational practices. When we do that, students believe that success is in their reach and continue to strive for even higher achievements. When we honor student and family voice, we can co-construct assessments that empower and keep students engaged in their own learning. We can accomplish this by making sure that throughout the time they are learning students always know and understand—

- What we want them to learn.
- Where they are now in relation to those expectations.
- What they need to do to close the gap between the two.

As students move through their various learning progressions, we must help them engage in self-assessment so they can monitor their growth and are in control of their own learning. Specific classroom *assessment for learning* strategies have been formulated by Chappuis (2013) and woven into readily available professional development for teachers. Those strategies engage all students, regardless of the pace of their learning, in ongoing self-assessment in ways that help them know:

- Where they are headed, that is the learning target they are trying to master.
- Where they are now in relation to those ultimate expectations.
- What they can do to narrow the gap between the two (Chappuis, 2013).

Two decades of international research have revealed significant achievement gains for students when teachers consistently apply principles of assessment for student learning, with the largest gains demonstrated for students who have struggled to achieve. (Black & William, 1998).

Positive Impacts of the New Vision

When the *Guiding Principles* and the *Students' Assessment Bill of Rights* are followed consistently, all assessment users will understand their various roles in fostering maximum learning for all students. Following are brief descriptions of these various roles.

Students. Instruction will begin with the open sharing of student-friendly versions of the learning target(s) that are the focus of teaching and learning. Students and educators will engage each other in the co-construction of these learning targets. Students will pursue those targets through ongoing learning progressions that are familiar to students, educators, and families. Quality formative assessment will ensure that at any given time, students know where they are headed, where they are now, and how to close the gap. As necessary, accommodations will be made to provide instructional support. Students

will understand their level of learning in relation to the progression of standards, have time to reflect on their progress, and set realistic goals. In this way, teachers will make sure each student feels in control of and responsible for his or her learning success. Confidence and optimism will dominate the classroom environment for both teachers and students. Students will be able to articulate their learning goal(s), the relevance of those goals to a broader educational outcome, and their proposed methods for demonstrating learning. Thanks to increased confidence and a sense of control, students will no longer fear failure; setbacks will be (and will seem to the student) minor, temporary, and reversible. Indeed, students will be inspired to take the kinds of risks required to advance learning, and will go further than many dreamed possible.

In addition, students will become part of the larger assessment network, actually *using assessment results* in their personal planning. They will feel confident that the information they receive from various assessments accurately reflects their learning, and that evidence collected over time reveals real growth. Their confidence will come from the quality of the assessments themselves as well as the manner in which their teacher communicates the results—in ways that support learning when *that* is the purpose, or as a summative evaluation of learning when *that* is the purpose.

Teacher Practices. Teachers will recognize how instructional decisions based on dependable assessment results promote both the success of their students and their own success as teachers. They will form effective partnerships with students to advance learning, confident that immediate feedback from dependable formative, culturally responsive assessment will allow them to adjust instruction in useful, appropriate ways. They will feel supported in development of their own assessment literacy, and will experience growing confidence in their assessment and communication practices, whether formative or summative. Their day will be structured in such a way that allows for the five guiding principles above to become a reality; there will be significant time within a work day to plan and conduct assessment, to thoughtfully analyze and share assessment results, offer feedback to students, and differentiate instruction as indicated. Teachers will have the ability to generate dependable, credible evidence regarding the impact of their instruction on students' growth. Finally, they will be able to achieve the kind of success with students that renew their passion for education.

Instructional Teams. Teachers, education support professionals and school and district administrators will have the assessment literacy needed to successfully design and implement truly balanced assessment systems—systems that meet the informational needs of all assessment users. They will be able to count on classroom, interim and annual assessments to be of high quality, all producing dependable evidence of student learning for all instructional decision making purposes. Administrators will know how to communicate assessment results effectively in their leadership contexts and will see student performance heading in a steady upward direction.

Families, Community Members, Local and State Policy Makers. All parents, families, community stakeholders and policy makers will have confidence that their children, grandchildren, and students in general are learning and succeeding in an environment that embraces culturally responsive assessment. They will understand when and how to offer quality instructional support when called upon to do so. Policy makers at all levels will have the opportunity to become more assessment literate, thereby increasing their capability to make the kinds of policy decisions that promote effective use of assessment as an integral part of learning.

Proposed Action Plan: Transition to the New Vision

The proposed action plan that follows recognizes the values and beliefs articulated in the preceding section. It also addresses the challenges inherent in transitioning from an assessment system focusing almost exclusively on summative assessment to a more balanced system. The plan suggests actions that support the informational needs of students, teachers, principals, other instructional decision makers and policy makers, while offering a balance of assessment *for learning* to inform the learning process together with periodic assessments *of learning* to measure student success.

Goal: *Increased focus on Assessment for Learning*

OLD/CURRENT SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENT

Classroom & Formative	Interim	Annual Summative

NEW SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Classroom & Formative	Interim	Annual Summative

(Adopted from Leather, 2013, as cited in Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, Pittenger, 2014)

Recommendations for Creating a Highly Effective Assessment System

The following recommendations identify factors to consider in transitioning to a new system of assessment for student learning. These recommendations were developed by educators from the Oregon Education Association (OEA), Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB), Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and school district advisors, who worked more than a year to research best practice in student assessment to develop a white paper titled, ***A New Path for Oregon: System of Assessment to Empower Meaningful Student Learning.*** These recommendations were reviewed by a variety of stakeholders and were revised based on collective feedback from assessment forum participants, individual educators, citizens and Oregon students.

PAVING THE PATHWAY: POLICY FOUNDATIONS

Recommendation #1 - ESEA Reauthorization: Actively engage in the reauthorization of the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to allow states flexibility to develop a system of assessment that accurately reflects student learning through greater emphasis on developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, valid, reliable and unbiased high quality classroom and interim (i.e. periodic) assessments. Each state will be accountable to provide annual disaggregated information for all student groups to hold the school, district, and state systems accountable for all students' learning and growing.

Recommendation #2- Student's Assessment Bill of Rights: Make the "*Student's Assessment Bill of Rights*" operational in schools and classrooms to ensure students and their families know and understand the purpose of assessments, the learning targets that make up the assessments and how the results will be used. Ensure that students and educators work collaborative on designing assessment targets and ensure students and their families understand how to self –assess, and to use assessment results to track progress and know what progress and success means.

CREATING CONDITIONS FOR SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENT TRANSITION AND SUCCESS

Recommendation #3 – Assessment Literacy: Develop, fund, and implement multi-year aligned and differentiated professional development programs for pre-service and in-service educators to develop and/or enhance educators' (teachers, school and district administrators and education support professionals), and other assessment users (students, families, local and state policy makers, community members, etc.) culturally responsive understanding of assessment. These efforts should lead to a more balanced system of assessment in school districts, be based on promising practices, and be culturally responsive. Educator-led effort should focus on high quality classroom, interim (i.e. periodic) and annual assessments, for both formative and summative uses that have a clear purpose, support state standards and well defined learning targets

Recommendation #4 – Assessment Audit: Create a taskforce including educators at all levels to conduct an audit of the type and number of assessments currently administered in Oregon schools including the additional testing given to students who are receiving Special Education services and emerging bilingual students receiving English Language Learner services. The report will include the amount of instructional hours currently devoted to preparing for and administering classroom, interim, and annual assessments for both formative and summative purposes, evidence of their impact on student learning, effect on students and progress monitoring. This report will include an examination of potential exposure to biased testing instruments and associated impacts. The report will also summarize the impact of testing on teaching and learning time for all groups of students, a cost analysis of resources used in the current assessment system, and be used for the purpose of informing the new path for Oregon's system of assessment.

Recommendation #5-Accomodation of Learning Needs: Examine all assessments for cultural, linguistic and developmental appropriateness to accommodate the learning needs of all students. A variety and appropriate level of assessment should be used to honor the diverse language and developmental learning needs of students in order to identify and assess the growth and achievement of each and every student.

Recommendation #6 – Assessment Resource Bank: Seek grants, state and federal funds to create and support resource banks of standards-based assessments for formative or summative use in classroom, interim or annual assessment context. These optional assessments should be developed and supplied by teachers, local school districts, state agencies or assessment publishers, but must include an evaluation of their quality (validity, reliability and free from bias). The use of these assessments will be optional for teachers, schools and districts, and could possibly be a comparable source of disaggregated data for all groups of students in districts with common assessment.

Recommendation #7 –Technology Use: Invest equitably in the technological infrastructure that supports access for overall teaching and learning to ensure all students are critical thinkers to help them pursue a career and post-secondary education. Invest in developmentally appropriate technology to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of assessment development, storage, administration, scoring, recordkeeping and reporting results for classroom, interim and annual assessments used both in formative and summative contexts. Transparency and confidentiality of the data must continue to be a priority.

CONSTRUCTING A NEW SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENT

Recommendation #8-Frequencey of Assessment: Research the feasibility of reducing the frequency of required annual statewide standardized summative assessments while ensuring the availability of accurate, yearly disaggregated information for all student groups by effectively utilizing valid, reliable and unbiased formative and interim (i.e. periodic) assessments.

Recommendation #9-Opt-in: Allow high school students to opt-in to the Math or ELA section(s) of the statewide standardized summative assessment earlier than 11th grade so

that they take the assessment as it coincides with their actual academic course load rather than the current system which may have students taking a test on content they have not studied for two or more years. Allow students to "bank" portions of the assessment and create an effective means to communicate the information to students and families.

Recommendation #10-Assessment of Essential Skills: Enhance and expand options to demonstrate essential skills. Determine if other measures of essential skills exist, promote them as options for students and allow students and families more control over ways to demonstrate essential skills and college, career and life readiness.

CREATING TIME TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #11-Suspending Use of Smarter Balanced: Suspend the use of Smarter Balanced Assessment results during 2015 for school ratings on report cards, but allow students to use their 2015 Smarter Balanced Assessment results to demonstrate essential skills for high school graduation. Allow time for comprehensive analysis of Smarter Balanced to determine the value in relation to student learning. Continue to suspend the use of Smarter Balanced Assessment results for educator evaluation during 2015-16 while developing a more balanced system of assessment.

Planning for the Needs of Stakeholders

Planning for, and implementing the transition into Oregon's new system of assessment requires long-term collaboration and partnership among education agencies, community based organizations and associations (e.g. COSA, ODE OEA, OEIB, OSBA, PTA, Chalkboard, Coalition of Communities of Color, Portland African American Leadership Forum, Latino Family Network, League of United Latin American Citizens, Confederated Tribes of Oregon, and other partners) to leverage and utilize resources that can make assessment for learning a reality. These organizations offer considerable expertise to help meet the needs of stakeholders during the transition. As these groups work together, certain needs must be met, and other stakeholders have needs as well. Following is a summary of those needs, by group.

Needs of Students

- Learning environments where individual student potential is realized
- Differentiated learning opportunities and sufficient learning time to accommodate diverse learning styles.
- Student friendly versions of learning targets and assessments that are understood.
- Culturally responsive teaching and learning practices
- Opportunity to learn the qualities of assessment performance and how to self-assess
- Celebrating progress and success in a culturally appropriate manner

Needs of Educators

- Increased professional learning time for teachers and principals to collaboratively develop and enhance their assessment literacy
- Professional learning time to develop or adopt assessments for student learning that align with learning targets
- Development and sustainability of a statewide bank of high quality classroom and interim assessments
- Professional learning time to understand the elements necessary to create culturally responsive assessments
- Funds to support effective use of quality classroom and interim assessments
- Changes to schedules and the school year that would allow educators the time they need to use data in planning and to communicate assessment results to students, families and other instructional partners

Needs of Families

- Opportunity to learn and enhance skills related to assessment literacy
- Opportunity to partner with educators to understand sound and unsound assessment practices

- Opportunity to be engaged and included in a manner that meets their cultural norms and allows for comfortable involvement in setting goals and determining next steps for their students' learning

Needs of Community Members and Local School Boards

- Increased understanding of assessment results, including the trends of data at program, school and district levels
- Increased understanding of the vital and integral role assessment plays in learning, as well as differences between assessment *of learning* and assessment *for learning*

Needs of Policy Makers and Legislators

- Increased understanding of assessment results, including the trends of data at program, school and district levels
- Increased understanding of what is required to ensure assessment literacy among educators, families and community members
- Increased understanding of what is needed to transition from a system focused on standardized summative assessment to a system focused on assessment *for learning*

Conclusion

As educators, we entered this profession with the desire to help all students learn, grow, and realize their full potential. As we highlight our foundational values and beliefs, we recognize the gap between a system of assessment *for learning* that can access every student's infinite potential and the system of assessment we presently have. It is time to build a bridge to our new vision. Let's leave behind the current system that relies too heavily on summative, standardized assessment as a basis for instructional decisions it was never designed to support, and build a new system in which assessment and learning work together for students' benefit, one in which all educators and stakeholders become assessment literate, and *every Oregon student* can reach his or her full potential. Let's join together to create this new system of assessment. In the words of Chappuis (2009).

"Assessment for learning is a gift we give our students. It is a mirror we hold up to show them how far they have come. It is a promise that we will use assessment, not to punish or reward, but to guide them on their learning journey".

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