

Introduction

The performance of the schools in Michigan has gained increased attention during the past years. As a result of both the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act of 2001, and more recently, U.S. Secretary of Education Duncan's Race to the Top program, and now the flexibility offered by Secretary Duncan from key NCLB requirements, states are required to measure the performance of its schools, and especially to identify high priority schools and others that are low performing. The goal of this identification is for states to provide extra assistance to these schools so as to encourage them to improve student achievement.

One of the key NCLB requirements is accountability for student performance. Sanctions are applied to schools that don't make "adequate yearly progress" that include school reconstitution, closure or dismissal of the school staff. Thus, the "stakes" associated with state testing progress are significantly higher than just a few years ago.

Now, a number of states have adopted policies or adopted legislation that calls for the use of assessment information in the evaluation of teachers and building administrators. This is part of a broader effort to reform state tenure laws and state educator certification. This has increased the stakes for student assessment for educators.

The challenge of this increased consequence for student assessment for educators is that relatively few educators have learned about the types of assessments that they could use to improve student performance, or that are being used to hold their school and them accountable. Thus, opportunities for improvement of student achievement are lost, and tie the certification and licensing of educators to these improvements.

What is needed is to help those with a stake in our schools - students, parents, teachers, administrators, and policymakers - to learn about assessment. A campaign of assessment literacy is needed for these individuals, for a variety of reasons. For example, students need to understand the results of assessment and how they can become more engaged in their own learning. Parents need to understand how well their child is doing in school, what they can do to encourage their child's achievement, as well as whether their child is attending an effective school. Teachers need to know whether the instruction they have provides was effective and how to help students learn more. Administrators need to know how to lead data-driven school improvement processes.

Policymakers need to understand the advantages and challenges of different assessment designs so that programs that they develop or enact are useful and lead to constructive educational improvements. It is hoped that a program of assessment literacy can address these and other issues for individuals who work to improve schools.

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Assessment Literacy Effort

The goal of this multi-faceted program is to help a variety of individuals with an interest in education in Michigan to become assessment literate. Such literacy is essential in this era where important decisions are being made about students, educators, and educational systems based on the data collected from students. Understanding the appropriate roles that student assessment can play to determine levels of student achievement and educational accomplishment is critical. Understanding what such assessment can (and cannot) accomplish is important in assuring that decisions made based on such information is used in the most positive manner possible.

The Assessment Literacy for Michigan Education (ALME) program is designed to address assessment literacy at several levels:

- Students, Parents and the Public
- Classroom Teachers
- School Administrators
- Policymakers

This approach is needed to assure that assessment policies are enacted to assure the appropriate development and use of quality assessments, that those who implement such policies are fully prepared to do so in a constructive manner, and that those who are affected by such assessments understand their role in assuring that the assessments that affect them are used to help students achieve at higher levels.

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Key Assessment Literacy Standards

There are several goals for the ALME program for each group identified above. These are as follows:

Classroom Teachers - There are several things that teachers need to know about assessment. These include:

- Common Core State Standards and State Content Standards
- Using Learning Progressions for Instruction and Assessment
- Balanced Assessment Systems
- Purposes of Assessing Students
- Types of Assessments
 - Summative Assessments
 - Interim Benchmark Assessment
 - Formative-Assessment Practices
- Matching Types of Assessments to Purposes
- Learning to Use Formative Assessment Practices in the Classroom
- Selecting or Developing Assessments
- Development of Specific Types of Assessment - Selected Response; Constructed Response; Performance; Observation; Interview; Portfolio
- Uses of Assessment Information at the Student and School Levels
- Cautions in the Use of Assessment Information
- Reporting of Assessment Results to Students and Parents
- Existing State and National Assessment Programs

“There are several things that students, parents, and the public needs to know about assessment.”

- New, Upcoming Programs - PARCC/SBAC; DLM/NCSC; WIDA

School Administrators - There are several things that school administrators need to know about assessment. These include:

- Common Core State Standards and State Content Standards
- Using Learning Progressions for Instruction and Assessment - Building Comprehensive Curricula and Instructional Systems
- Balanced Assessment Systems
- Purposes of Assessing Students
- Types of Assessments
 - Summative Assessments
 - Interim Benchmark Assessment
 - Formative-Assessment Practices
- Matching Types of Assessments to Purposes
- Selecting or Developing Assessments - Use of the Needed Resources
- Uses of Assessment information at the School and District Levels
- Cautions in the Use of Assessment Information
- Reporting of Assessment Results to Students, Parents, School Board, and the Public (via the media)
- Existing State and National Assessment Programs
- New, Upcoming Programs - PARCC/SBAC; DLM/NCSC; WIDA

Policymakers - There are several things that policymakers need to know about assessment. These include

- Common Core State Standards and State Content Standards
- Using Learning Progressions for Instruction and Assessment - Building Comprehensive Curricula and Instructional Systems
- Balanced Assessment Systems
- Purposes of Assessing Students
- Types of Assessments
 - Summative Assessments
 - Interim Benchmark Assessment
 - Formative-Assessment Practices
- Matching Types of Assessments to Purposes
- Providing the Needed Resources to Select or Develop Assessments
- Uses of Assessment Information at the School and System Levels
- Cautions in the Use of Assessment Information
- Understanding the Reports of Assessment Results
- Existing State and National Assessment Programs
- New, Upcoming Programs - PARCC/SBAC; DLM/NCSC; WIDA

Students, Parents, and the Public - There are several things that students, parents, and the public needs to know about assessment. These include:

- Purposes of Assessing Students
- Types of Assessments
- Uses of Student and School Assessment Information
- Cautions in the Use of Assessment Information
- Reporting of Assessment Results at the Student and School Levels
- Existing State and National Assessment Programs