

Overview of Current Assessment Practices

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NRC Workshop on Best Practices in State
Assessment

December 10, 2009

Overview of Presentation

- Few tests, many uses...
- We treasure what we measure.
- It's not just the test.

Assessment Uses

Uses	Student	Teacher	School
Diagnosis	Instructional decs; placement; allocation of educational services	Professional development and support	Resource allocation; technical assistance
Inform teaching/ learning		Focus, align, redirect content, instructional strategies	Focus on, align curriculum to skills/content; school improvement planning
Evaluation	Certification of individual achievement	Teacher preparation programs; teacher pay	Program evaluation
Public Reporting	Transcripts		Parent or community action
External Accountability	Promotion; high school graduation	Renewal; tenure; pay	Sanctions and rewards

Implications of Multiple Uses of Tests

- Assessments for instructional purposes
 - Be aligned with content and performance standards that incorporate a model of learning.
 - Have diverse formats
 - Provide teachers with continuous and actionable information on students.
 - Reliability is not as critical as flexibility and relevance.

Implications of Multiple Uses of Tests

- Assessments for accountability
 - Assumes need for incentives and sanctions to stimulate action.
 - Assessments must be aligned with content and performance standards.
 - Requires standardization of content, administration and scoring.
 - Tests must be valid, reliable and fair.

Implications of Multiple Uses of Tests

- Common requirements for tests used for instruction and accountability
 - Standards that reflect a model of learning/ learning progressions.
 - Tests that are aligned to these standards and model of learning.
 - Tests that include valid measures of student learning.
 - Tests that include valid measures of student growth.

Strengths of Current System

- Focuses attention on standards
- Focuses attention on student learning
- Teachers report they:
 - Align curriculum and instruction with standards and assessments
 - Search for more effective teaching strategies
 - Identify topics for reteaching
 - Identify and serve students who need supplemental help

Strengths of Current System

- Increased use of assessment data for instructional planning.
- Focuses attention on traditionally underserved populations of students.
- More district assistance to low- or lower-performing schools.

Weaknesses of Current System

- Greater use of multiple choice items in state test formats.
- More focus on tested-content than on standards (particularly in low-performing schools).
- Narrowing of curriculum to tested subjects, content and pedagogy.
- More test preparation.

Weaknesses of Current System

- More attention to “bubble kids.”
- Few changes in teachers’ daily instructional practice.
- Limited alignment between state assessments and standards.
- Insufficient rigor of state assessments.

Interim Assessments

- Widespread adoption by districts
- Intended to give teachers and schools more frequent data on student performance
- Can be used to inform instruction or to predict student performance on state assessments.
- Little research on their use or impact.

Interim Assessments

- In surveys, teachers reported that they used interim test results to:
 - Monitor student progress
 - Identify skill gaps for students; and
 - Modify their curriculum and instruction.

Interim Assessments

- An exploratory study of actual teacher use found teachers took similar actions.
 - However, how well teachers used the results of interim (and even formative) assessments in their classrooms reflected their capacity to assess and teach for mathematical understanding.
 - Teachers who assessed for conceptual understanding did so across multiple test formats and appeared to be more apt to enact instructional change strategies.

Supports for Assessment Use

- District and school support of data use
 - Expectations for instructional use
 - A culture of data use
 - A “user friendly” Information Management System that focuses teachers’ attention on content as well as items
 - Time to re-teach content and skills to students
 - Instructional supports for struggling students and professional supports for teachers in data analysis.

Supports for Assessment Use

- Build teacher capacity to interpret and act on data
 - Go beyond using “point and click” to locate and organize data.
 - Focus on interpreting data (e.g., diagnosing student error) and on connecting this evidence to specific instructional approaches and strategies.
 - Focus on teacher content knowledge, developing teachers’ instructional repertoires, and capacity to assess for students’ learning.

Conclusion

- What do we want to test?
- For what purpose(s)?
- What kinds of information do we want to generate and for whom?
- What is the role of a state test in a comprehensive assessment system?
- What supports will educators need?