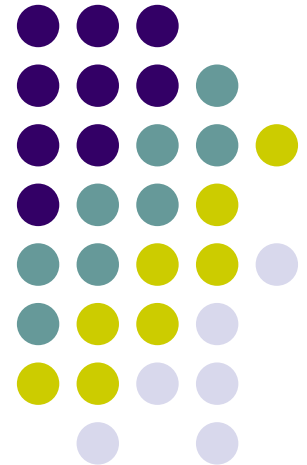


The Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) 1991-2002: Political Considerations

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Overview

- History and background
- Design and content areas
- Motivation and movers
- Adoption: obstacles and solutions
- Development: obstacles and solutions
- Implementation: obstacles and solutions
- How well did it work?



History and background

- School and system accountability reports using NRT data, ~1975 to ~1989
 - Lake Woebegone effect
- Project Basic, 1977 to ~2001
 - Minimum competency, high school graduation
 - Maryland Writing Test: 54.4% of 9th graders passed in 1983, 88.2% in 1990
- Governor's Commission on School Performance, 1987-1989

Governor's Commission



- The first time a call for reform came from outside of education
 - Also, Gov. Bush, Charlottesville 1989, goals for 2000 (Grasmick, 1997)
- All students can learn, should attend effective schools, should have access to rigorous content
- State content standards (MLOs), HOTs, not just MC, annual school report cards, school reconstitution
- Policy context
 - Governor William Donald Schaefer, 1987-1995
 - Schaefer was Mayor of Baltimore until 1987; Walter Sondheim chaired the commission; Robert Embry was President of the State Board
 - Governor appoints State Board, they appoint the superintendent
 - Nancy Grasmick state superintendent since September 1991



Design and content areas

- Reading, writing, language usage, mathematics, science, social studies
- Grades 3, 5, and 8
- Not exactly a break from Maryland tradition, but a big leap

Innovations



- All open ended, human scored (~8 responses x 6 content areas x 3 grades x 65,000 students = 9.36m score decisions+)
- Coherent assessment tasks
- Most tasks integrated content areas (e.g., 8 language measures from other content areas, “mega-tasks”)
- Content standards matrix sampled across three forms
- No individual scores reported
- Maryland Learning Outcomes focused on understanding and applications (cf. “Where’s the beef?”)
- Hands-on and group activities, lots of manipulatives
- IRT scaling using 2PPC model
- Standard settings using a pre-cursor to Bookmark and ID Matching



Motivation and movers

- Changes in 1980s (from Grasmick, 1997)
 - Students need to learn to be information consumers and users
 - Public expectations for student achievement and school performance increased
 - Education 20% of state budget (health 22%), 50% of local budgets; legislature needed “return on investment”
 - Increasing diversity and demands of special education
 - National politicization: other states, federal role

Adoption: obstacles and solutions



- Governor initiated and funded it; ran on education platform
- State Board supported it
- LEAs (only 24)
 - Long-standing Bloom Committee (influential LEA reps) supported it
 - Monthly meetings of local Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents for Instruction, Accountability Coordinators
 - Soon after, involvement of local special education leaders
 - Local Boards of Education probably were swept along or oblivious
 - Skepticism, wait and see (and maybe waiting for inevitable collapse)
- The usual opposition from Montgomery County
- Other LEAs capitalized, led the way (e.g., Frederick, Harford, Howard)
- Political influence and connections: Schaefer, Embry, Grasmick, state legislators
- Funding: new, influential governor (Schaefer)

Development: obstacles and solutions



- Conceptualizing tasks and items that targeted MLOs: understanding and applications, not recall
- Designing tasks that could be administered feasibly, scored reliably and efficiently, and scaled successfully
- Getting content staff on board (they were in the curriculum division) and up to speed (they were curriculum and training people)
- Time to conceive and implement: 11 months
- Reading, language, writing, and math in 1991; science and social studies in 1992

Implementation: obstacles and solutions



- Acceptance of MSPAP as the instructional driver in schools (not just a curriculum guide or no-teeth accountability measure)
- Teacher preparedness: instruction, administration
- Nine hours over five days
- Manipulatives
- “MSPAP Mishap” of 1992
- Standard settings for individual and school scores
- (School report cards and fear of reconstitution)



Implementation (cont.)

- Involvement of teachers in task development, scoring, standard setting, etc.—“best PD ever”
- Regular meetings and problem-solving with local superintendents, assistant superintendents for instruction, special ed leaders, testing directors
- Worked with state legislature because of push-back
- Responded to locals: boards, politicians, PTA, political action groups, movements
- Consistent message: the importance of school improvement for student achievement and success
- “Would you want your child to be able to do this?”



How well did MSPAP work?

- Psychometrically
- As a force for change
 - Curriculum and instruction
 - Expectations for student and school performance
- Politically

Psychometrically



- Numerous conference presentations and papers and published papers
- E.g., Yen and Ferrara (1997)



As a force for change

- Increases in expectations for student learning (Koretz, Mitchell, Barron, & Keith, 1996)
- Level of MSPAP influence related to school performance gains (Stone & Lane, 2003), in gains in reading and writing (Parke, Lane, & Stone, 2006), gains in mathematics (Lane, Parke, & Stone, 2002)
- Local use of test data to guide instructional planning (Michaels & Ferrara, 1999)

Politically



- Conservative and religious right objections to Maryland Learning Outcomes
 - E.g., “Call the state Testing Czar” ~1997
- “Mizpap Mishap” of 1992
- Growing public support indicated in various surveys (some independent)
- Independent evaluations of MSPAP
 - Abell Foundation, fall 2000: psychometric (favorable) and content reviews (unfavorable)
 - University of Maryland, 2001

Abell Foundation evaluations



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://www.abell.org/publications/detail.asp?ID=65>. The page title is "Publications/Research". The main content area is titled "THE ABELL FOUNDATION Publications/Research". A navigation menu on the left includes "Program Areas", "Grantmaking", "Abell Initiatives", "Publications/Research" (selected), "Publications Library", "The Abell Report Newsletter", "Annual Reports", "Links", "Sign E-mailing List", "Venture Investments", "About The Foundation", "News", and "FAQs". The main content area features a "Recent Publications" section with the title "Psychometric Review of the MSPAP". The text below the title reads: "October 1, 2000 - In 1989, the Governor's Commission on School Performance (Sondheim Commission) published a report on what Maryland should do to improve its public schools. One of the recommendations was the establishment of a statewide assessment. What followed from the recommendation was an annual statewide assessment, the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) covering six content areas and administered to students in grades 3, 5, and 8. Today, the MSPAP is a major component of the state's accountability program for schools." Below this text is a link: "[Download Full Publication](#)". The footer contains the text: "Copyright 2002-2009 The Abell Foundation. All Rights Reserved." The browser's taskbar shows several open applications: "Inbox - Microsoft Out...", "NRC Best Practices", "Microsoft PowerPoint...", "Adobe Acrobat Profe...", "Publications/Research...", and "Microsoft Word". The system tray shows the time as 10:03 PM on Sunday, 11/29/2009.

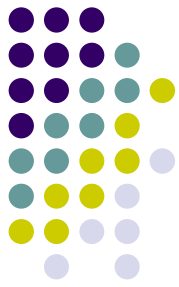
Why was MSPAP discontinued?

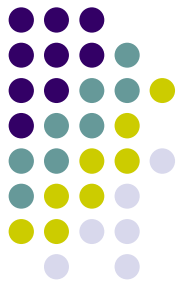


- Repudiation of Maryland Learning Outcomes by Robert Embry (former Board President), President of the Abell Foundation since 1987
- Resistance ~2000 from the new Montgomery County superintendent
- NCLB requirements for testing in all grades and fast turnaround of scores

Advice (as requested)

- Lessons learned
- Implementing future innovations





Lessons learned

- Involve stakeholders in meaningful ways from the beginning and throughout the process
- Respond to everyone, not defensively, with as much equanimity as possible
- It pays to be ambitious technically and regarding expectations for change—if you are rigorous, persistent, open, and communicate well
- Fund professional development generously, from the beginning and onward; don't put resources only into the testing program

Implementing future innovations



- The pendulum is swinging back—Common Core Standards, 21st Century Skills, EdSteps, maybe even ESEA re-authorization—go with it in a measured fashion
- Be ambitious—and estimate what it’s going to cost
- Plan for internet and other technology capabilities rather than simply paper-pencil testing
- After content standards, start test design at the Achievement Level Descriptors
- Consider adapting ECD to design, develop, and validate

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