Developing Balanced Systems of Assessments
National Landscape Scan of States: Balanced Systems of Assessments

Paul Leather, Center for Innovation in Education
Balanced Systems of Assessments in the Time of COVID 19
(and thoughts regarding Accountability)

A Letter From Gene Wilhoit: Response to the Secretary’s Letter September, 2020

Assessment in This Moment of COVID -- 19

• Many States/Districts/Schools have returned or are returning to former state Systems of Assessments
• Psychometricians have warned us – Comparability is questionable, inferences even more so.
• We are encouraged to assess with an asterisk, looking for learning loss primarily, focusing more on Opportunity to Learn measures
• Like having a car engine die and asking others to push to get where we are going....
• Why not try another way?
Definition of Comprehensive, Balanced Assessment System:

Multiple assessments with potentially different designs, sponsored by different people, who are at different levels of control.

Coordinated by a common theory of learning.

Working together to meet a specific use or uses.
Why? Because in Today’s Schools, We have:

Too many assessments

given by too many people

for too many purposes

all providing too little information.

Nathan Dadey, *Center for Assessment*
*NCSA, June, 2018*
Two Levels of Assessment and Accountability -- Two Different Sets of Purposes:

State/Federal:
• Equity – Comparability of Opportunities to Learn
  • Use Cases:
    • School and District Performance
    • Evaluation of Improvement Processes
    • Education Funding

Local – District/School/Classroom:
• Address Student Learning Needs
  • Use Cases:
    • Measure Student Learning and Growth
    • Curriculum and Instruction Decisions
    • Local Accountability:
      • Educator Evaluation
      • Resource Allocation
The Look of Balanced, Innovative Assessment Systems Emerging Pre-Covid:

- **Loosely Coupled** Assessments for different purposes at different levels
- State/Federal – **Small Footprint State Assessments in core content** to
  - Monitoring equity across districts
  - Funding Formulas
  - Allocation of School Improvement Resources
- **District/School** – **Common assessments** for formative purposes around curriculum and instruction
- **Classroom** – **Performance Assessments** (Performance Tasks/Portfolio Defense/Capstones) for students to demonstrate learning, tied to a Portrait of a Learner/Graduate
- **More Focus on Horizontal, less on Vertical Cohesion**, particularly in the classroom, building on Instruction, curriculum, authentic Learning and assessment.
  - Lorrie Shepard
- This **Shift of Balance To the Classroom** requires that we learn to **Support and Trust Our Teachers**!

Design Principles for New Systems of Assessment Shepard, et al Phi Beta Kaplan 2017
A Scan of Innovative Assessment Systems Nationally

https://www.leadingwithlearning.org/performance-assessment-map
NH PACE is a “re-Balanced” Assessment System

• The emphasis on local assessments and **collaboratively-created “common tasks”** along with the limited use of the state assessment helps to **rebalance the system**

• Such a system supports multiple stakeholders:
  • Students
  • Teachers
  • Parents
  • District & School Leaders
  • Policy Makers
State Purpose -- Comparable Performance, but PACE is really about classroom impact!

- Building educator capacity
- Enhancing student engagement
- Increasing rigor
- Developing student agency
- Preparing students to engage meaningfully in their post-secondary plans

Marion_NCLS_May 9, 2018
New Mexico – An Emerging re-Balanced System --

- PARCC
- Local Community Expectations

Small Footprint State Test + Community of Practice Advancing Local Capstones based on Community Wisdom & Graduate Profiles
In this complex time...

→ Given the power of current state level accountability and assessments to unhelpfully constrain learning and innovation...

→ How might a visionary leader use a shared redesign process to lead back to the true and reciprocal idea of accountability Richard Elmore spoke of in 2002 --

“For every increment of performance I demand from you, I have an equal responsibility to provide you with the capacity to meet that expectation. Likewise, for every investment you make in my skill and knowledge, I have a reciprocal responsibility to demonstrate some new increment in performance.” (Elmore 2002)
To re-Balance the System Requires a Different Stance --

How best to lead through complexity?

• Embrace the idea that we are leading a complex enterprise in a complex time.
• Calls for cycles of probing first, then sense making, followed by responding
• Partner with those at the local level that are seeking the same outcome
• See and seek the expertise of those closest to the ground.
• Expand membership and open up processes.
• Look for rigid constraints that impede probing, learning & innovation
• Define enabling constraints to help pull people out of chaos so they can work with complexity.

Recognize complexity transforms how we do business
## How Might Policy and Educational Leaders Lead in These Complex Times?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Looks like less of this...</th>
<th>and more of this</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning is the work</strong></td>
<td>Knowing exactly where you are going</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asking important questions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deep inquiry on equity</strong></td>
<td>Avoiding uncomfortable truths</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exploring thorny issues</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Convene many perspectives</strong></td>
<td>Focus groups and surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning communities that explicitly include students and families on the margins</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Disrupt silos, respect affinities</strong></td>
<td>Department meetings siloed from all-staff meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role-alike groups and identity-based groups weaving in and out of teams working across hierarchies and boundaries</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interrupt patterns of oppression</strong></td>
<td>Highest paid person in the room has sway</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Treating everyone like an expert</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Co-create for shared responsibility</strong></td>
<td>Change via memo and press release</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shared compacts, plans. Marshalling shared political weight.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Make systems more open</strong></td>
<td>Closed meetings where the “real” decisions happen.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>These ways of working spreading from one project team to another. Communities of communities.</td>
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Leave You with This Question –

How Might You, Policy and Educational Leaders, Create “Enabling Constraints” In This Moment?

• To Support New System Development?
• To Continue to Address Equitable Opportunity For All Children, AND
• To Improve, Innovate, and Meet The Needs Of Our States and Communities?
Thank You!

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