

Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Assessments

Recommendations

June 6, 2017

The Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Assessments is pleased to provide the following recommendations to the state superintendent for consideration in addressing the challenge of streamlining the culture of over-testing in Ohio as it exists currently.

We recognize the value of assessments for monitoring and improving student learning, contributing to instructional improvement and ensuring content is being effectively taught. Additionally, we recognize the importance of assessments used for accountability purposes. At the same time, we share a belief that the system of testing can be more efficiently implemented, while maintaining a robust set of assessments that provide measurements for federal purposes and Ohio's accountability system, as well as each school district's local objectives. There has been widespread recognition among various stakeholders that overuse of testing has the potential to cause undue stress for students, while taking the wonder and excitement out of learning.

It is in that context that this list of recommendations regarding state and local assessments is presented in the shorter term, as well as ideas to consider in the future.

State Assessments

- 1. Reduce assessments to the federal minimums (content specific) – eliminate social studies (fourth grade, sixth grade, American history and government), eliminate one math end-of-course test, eliminate English language arts I and eliminate the third grade fall English language arts administration (if the retention policy is removed) (21 votes).**

This recommendation specifically includes eliminating English language arts I because the English language arts standards are two-year standards and the group supports testing students after the completion of both years of English language arts standards/content. This recommendation includes eliminating the fall administration of third grade English language arts only if the Third Grade Reading Guarantee retention policy is revoked. If the retention policy remains, then the fall administration should remain in place to provide students an additional opportunity to demonstrate reading ability/achievement and to ensure their first exposure to the test is not one upon which their progression to fourth grade is dependent (key policy point to only eliminate this administration if the retention policy is changed).

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, students must test annually in grades 3-8 and once in high school. Ohio received a waiver for middle school students to allow them to substitute a high school end-of-course exam in cases where the student is taking a high school course with a test, but they are not exempt from taking a test in their eighth-grade year. Approximately one-third of Ohio's eighth-graders take algebra I/integrated math I in a middle school grade. Because of the requirement to test annually through eighth grade, eliminating the algebra I/integrated math I end-of-course exam would result in these students reverting to taking the eighth grade test that is not aligned to the content they are receiving. If geometry/integrated math II were eliminated, then another high school

assessment would need to be administered for federal purposes. This also impacts students accelerated in English language arts – though that number is around 2,000 students impacted with the elimination of the English language arts I end-of-course exam. On the State Report Card, the Performance Index, Indicators Met and Gap Closing measures would need to be recalculated and new business rules established. The graduation requirements point system would need to be recalculated and new rules established with the reduction of high school end-of-course test options for points.

2. Remove the requirement to assess all kindergarten students with the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) if students are assessed with a district-selected tool (15 votes).

Many districts use another diagnostic tool in addition to the KRA because of the time required for its administration, data is not returned in a timely manner, and that other tests may align more closely with instruction. This results in over-testing because districts/schools are using another assessment instrument to have actionable data. The expectation is that all kindergarten students will be assessed using either locally selected assessments or the state-provided KRA.

3. Replace the end-of-course test system with a single-sitting general content exam covering English, math, science and social studies (12 votes).

Results for end-of-course exams come after students have completed a Carnegie unit in the content tested. Specific content in the domain encourages testing of discrete knowledge and not transferable skills. A single-sitting assessment designed to assess important, transferable skills will eliminate excessive retesting. We believe ACT has written a single-sitting test that provides clear data, and the state assessment can be created to address Ohio's requirements. A single test also will result in increased classroom time for learning and there would be fewer disruptions from makeup testing and accommodations.

Ohio's eighth grade students would be affected in the same manner as in recommendation number one, and changes to the report card and graduation requirements point system calculations would be affected in a similar manner.

4. Eliminate fourth and sixth grade social studies assessments (12 votes).

These tests are not federally required and do not measure students' readiness to participate in a democracy or preparedness for civic engagement. Concepts are better tested in a general content assessment later in high school. Eliminating the tests would increase classroom time for additional instruction, and there would be fewer disruptions from makeup testing and accommodations. The group believes in the importance of the content but does not believe the requirement of a state-mandated assessment is needed. Locally developed, non-reported formative assessments designed to inform instruction could be used as an alternative. Adjustments would need to be made to the report card for the Indicators Met measure.

5. In addition to recommendations 1 and 2, eliminate one or both:

- **ACT/SAT requirement** - Elimination of ACT/SAT impacts the report card, Prepared for Success, and reduces access for a college and career readiness assessment for some students, particularly those from extreme rural and/or economically disadvantaged populations.
- **WorkKeys** - The group believes that WorkKeys is not recognized or valued by the industries with whom career-technical education programs work, takes time away from hourly preparation requirements for credentialing purposes and, therefore, is unnecessary. Career-technical education students already test above what students in traditional paths test – through WebXams or other license and credential testing. This recommendation will require changes to the workforce readiness pathway requirements for graduation.

The above five recommendations reflect the prioritization of the workgroup. Several other recommendations were considered, but not prioritized as highly, and are attached for your information and consideration.

Local Assessments

6. **ODE to create and provide training/guidance to districts to assist with conducting an optional assessment inventory/audit, developing a meaningful assessment plan and using results for instructional improvement.**

This recommendation assists school districts in making meaningful decisions about assessments, may help to eliminate redundancy of tests and further allows for determination of the cost/benefit relationship of assessment instruments and strategies.

7. **ODE to create a directory of assessments, including those approved to fulfill multiple purposes, from which districts may choose to fulfill state requirements and district needs.**

The group believes that access to this information will assist districts in the selection of assessments that maximize time and use of funds, while maintaining quality and high educational value.

8. **ODE to create a broad-based communication plan using common language and key points about the state's testing system and its purposes.**

Implementation of the recommendation to targeted stakeholders (parents, families, educators, media, business and community leaders, legislators, etc.) will result in better clarity and is likely to garner increased support for various assessments.

Future Considerations

The advisory committee participated in a brainstorm activity with the purpose of generating ideas for future consideration regarding assessment systems and accountability systems. The group understands that these ideas will be shared with a strategic planning workgroup (Standards, Assessments and Accountability). The following is a verbatim list of the ideas generated by the group:

- More immediate feedback (timely)
- Assessment needs to align with best practice
- High stakes tests are not what is best for kids
- Resources for formative assessments aligned to summative
- Cost/benefit analysis of testing
- Alt. ways of assessment (PBL, portfolios, etc.)
- Adaptive technology for students (ex. Voice to text)
- Why are we assessing?
- Assessments should look like what they are doing everyday
- Assessments need to hold value by the stakeholders
- More emphasis on formative assessments; less on summative
- Timeliness of assessment results – useable data, currently too broad
- The future of online testing (formats)
- Assessments that match student pathways (e.g., ACT does not)
- Exploration of adaptive testing options (differentiating assessments)
- Accountability testing equal across all schools receiving public funding (traditional, community, parochial)
- Instant results with disaggregated data (district, school, grade level, teacher, student levels)
- Instructional map based on results
 - Where to go next in instructions
 - What to use
 - Resources
- Variety of formats – performance, computer-based, paper/pencil
- Assessment strategy – cohesive purpose, timelines, implications aligned assessment to match purpose and outcome
- Take assessments when student is ready. Competency-based

We appreciate the opportunity to be part of this process and make a meaningful contribution to addressing the present challenge of testing in Ohio's schools.