

Oakland Unified School District/Cleveland State University

It Isn't Data-Driven Instruction Unless There's Instruction

Currently, many urban school districts struggle with the complex work of planning, implementing, and monitoring comprehensive and balanced assessment systems. The requirements of the Federal *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) have forced states to place greater emphasis on the results generated by the large-scale testing programs that are fundamentally designed to measure how much learning has taken place at a given point. But summative assessments alone will not result in learning. There is a need for each district to nest within its NCLB summative assessment system, a commonly available standards-aligned formative assessment structure whose fundamental purpose is to promote learning, and not just measure it.

We submit that the degree to which assessment programs embody the following five characteristics, the greater the chance that assessment results can be used formatively to move student learning forward.

1. The assessments must be able to measure the standards-aligned instructional targets their authors intend them to measure.
2. There must be a fundamental alignment and coherence (both in form and content) between the assessments that monitor learning and the instructional practices that teachers use on a daily basis to promote learning.
3. The closer assessment feedback is to the instruction, the more potential the assessment feedback has to impact learning. (Ideally, for an assessment to be formative, feedback from the assessment should most often take place during the instructional cycle, when there is still enough instructional time left to fix the learning.)
4. Information on how students performed on the assessment must be tied directly to the actual assessment items or tasks that generated the data. (Without knowledge of the specific items or performance tasks that generated the assessment data, teachers are in a perpetual guessing game as to which specific skills or concepts under a given standard are being measured. Every assessment item is just one operational definition of a standard!)
5. Actual assessment data must be available at the individual student level. (Classroom-, school-, or district-level data do not allow teachers to disaggregate data to engage in targeted and differentiate instruction at the student level.)

Educators from Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and Cleveland State University/Cleveland Metropolitan School District have worked together over the past five years to construct a series of formative assessments that are nested within the NCLB summative assessment structure. This presentation shares specific formative assessments products and techniques that we have developed to close the achievement gap. We will emphasize how we engaged teachers in the development and use of school-based common assessments and district-developed progress and benchmark assessments. This work resulted in Cleveland State University creating a collaborative with the Cleveland Schools (as well as other inner-ring school districts) to continue work in the area of

assessments that promote learning. This partnership was created because of participants' common interests and relationship with the Stupski Foundation.

Contact: Donna Snodgrass, Program Manager of Assessment, Intervention and Evaluation Collaborative, Cleveland State University, d.snodgrass@csuohio.edu