

PERFORMANCE
ASSESSMENT
EXAMPLE:

MASSACHUSETTS CONSORTIUM FOR INNOVATIVE EDUCATION ASSESSMENT



Education Commonwealth Project

Performance Assessment System Example: Massachusetts The Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment



Education Commonwealth Project

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About the Education Commonwealth Project

The Education Commonwealth Project (ECP) works to support assessment of student learning and school progress that is valid, democratic, and equitable. Pushing back against the overreliance on standardized testing, ECP offers free and open-source resources that all schools can use. And thanks to support from the Massachusetts State Legislature, ECP offers additional support for public schools and districts in Massachusetts.

System Overview

The Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment (MCIEA) believes there are richer means of assessing student and school progress than high-stakes state standardized tests. The state's current assessment system fails to accurately reflect school quality and student learning for all students, particularly for students from historically marginalized groups, including students of color, low-income students, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities. MCIEA believes all students should have access to equitable and transparent education communities with authentic, fair, and responsive learning and assessment systems. Robust measures of accountability should highlight strengths and areas for growth of students and schools. Thus, MCIEA seeks to build a more robust system of multiple measures of student learning and school quality. The consortium is a partnership of public school districts and their local teacher unions from Attleboro, Boston, Lowell, Milford, Revere, Somerville, Wareham, and Winchester.

MCIEA Principles

- Community members identify what is most important to know about school quality
- Multiple measures provide a robust picture of student learning and school progress
- Local leaders, teachers, parents/guardians, and students use data from multiple measures to make decisions that meet the assets and needs of their schools and communities
- Students demonstrate what they know and can do through real-world application of teacher-designed, curriculum-embedded performance assessments
- Benchmarks based upon the full characteristics of a high-quality school establish a fair measure for school performance
- State support and resources, rather than high stakes tests and sanctions, build capacity of schools and districts, which leads to improvement

MCIEA is building a robust assessment system through two overlapping frameworks: School Quality Measures (SQM) and Quality Performance Assessment (QPA). Together, QPA and SQM make up a holistic form of student and school assessment that fosters a more accurate and nuanced understanding of strengths and areas for improvement for both students and schools.

Drawing on multiple data sources, SQM captures school strengths and areas needing improvement across School Culture, Community & Wellness, Resources, Teachers & Leadership, and Academic Learning. School communities examine this data, celebrate strengths, engage in data-based inquiry to uncover causes of identified gaps, and create and implement plans to address them. SQM assesses school quality in a fair and comprehensive way that reflects the unique character of each school community.

To assess student learning, educators design standards-based, culturally responsive performance assessments, and submit them to a MCIEA Performance Assessment Task Bank for peer review and approval. Teachers administer these tasks for students to demonstrate what they know and can do in ways that are authentic, culturally responsive, and engaging. Looking to the future, if this performance assessment model were adopted statewide, teachers across schools and districts would be regularly brought together to engage in blind scoring of student work to ensure scoring reliability. High school graduation decisions would be made at the local level, using in part portfolios of student work. The state's role would be limited to provide districts with resource support and technical assistance. State assessments would be used for diagnostic purposes to provide a consistent data source on student learning to schools and educators, without the requirement of passing state tests to graduate high school.

Curriculum & Instruction

MCIEA embraces a belief that inquiry- and project-based instruction should go hand in hand with performance assessment, and that curriculum, instruction and assessment should be seamless, with performance tasks a culminating activity at the end of curriculum units.

Professional Development

In order to build teacher capacity in curriculum-embedded, standards-based performance assessment design, MCIEA brings together lead teams of teachers and an administrator from MCIEA schools to participate in a hands-on, four-day institute spread across summer and school year to learn performance assessment design, task validation (e.g., alignment, Universal Design, engagement, fairness) and reliable scoring of student work. The teacher lead teams are then supported to engage the entire faculty in this same performance assessment capacity building. Volunteer teachers are also trained and stipended to be peer reviewers of teacher-generated performance tasks that are submitted to the MCIEA Performance Assessment Task Bank, assessing tasks against a set of criteria for high quality performance tasks and giving feedback to teacher authors on how to strengthen the task prior to approval for uploading to the task bank.

Technical Quality

Teachers receive training and protocols on how to design a quality performance task, including task alignment (validity and fairness) and scoring of student work (inter-rater reliability).

Impact

MCIEA has yet to measure impact on student learning, graduation, and college-going. A survey found that MCIEA teacher leaders agreed they had improved their skills and knowledge to create performance assessments that adhere to all five key elements of a quality performance assessment (validity, reliability, data analysis, fairness, and student voice and choice), and that teacher leaders are successfully embedding this work in their practice. A second survey found that almost two-thirds of all MCIEA teachers agreed

their skills and knowledge improved in all five areas of the Performance Assessment Literacy Scale. In a separate small pilot study, teachers felt that tracking student learning progress using teacher-developed, multi-grade, and standards-based learning progressions was a useful practice and provided added support for their conversations about student learning during parent/guardian conferences. Rather than relying on external instruments to provide growth determinations, teachers reported they were glad to have multiple examples of student work aligned to a content-based learning progression so they could talk specifically about student progress.

What Can We Learn from MCIEA?

- Teacher unions having a seat at the decision-making table, as well as superintendents communicating to educators that the district is adopting performance assessments, ensures there will be more buy-in from teachers in engaging in performance assessment work.
- Training lead teacher teams from participating schools who participate in building faculty-wide performance assessment capacity can be an effective means of school-wide adoption of performance assessment practices.



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