Assessment Considerations & Best Practices for School Year 2021-22

Vision

The central priority of a comprehensive assessment system is to ensure that all educators, families, and students have actionable feedback and data to inform instruction. We recommend that schools or districts use this guidance for assessing student learning in conjunction with high-quality instructional materials to ensure that instruction is rigorous and grade level appropriate.

Specific Considerations

- A comprehensive assessment system includes different types of assessments intended for specific purposes administered strategically throughout the school year to measure students' ability to apply their knowledge and skills according to the content standards.
- Assessments should align to the high-quality curriculum and standards taught, with results analyzed within the context of the assessment's purpose and its method of administration (in-person or remote).
- Assessments are intended to serve curriculum and instruction, and therefore administration should respect and support instructional time.

Best Practices

Learning gaps and summer learning loss are not new challenges, but given the unprecedented move to statewide distance learning due to COVID-19, the extent of the gaps and learning losses are unknown. We know what works to help students succeed – high expectations and rigorous grade-level instruction; therefore, our assessments need to provide the data needed to inform that instruction. The goal is to protect instructional time while at the same time provide educators the information they need.

1. Plan and Establish Learning Outcomes
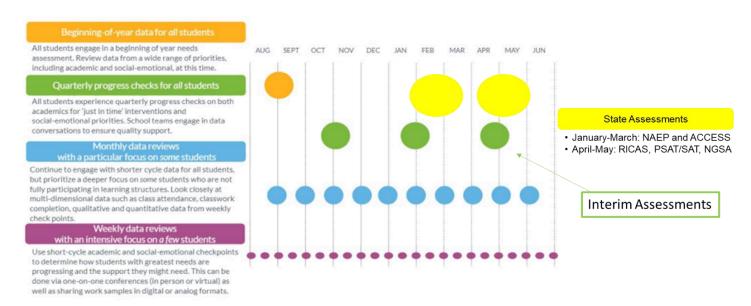2. Teach
3. Learn and Practice
4. Assess

Four best practices form a cycle to support student learning and meaningful progress.

1. **Plan and Establish Learning Outcomes:** Gather student academic data through these types of assessments as part of your school and/or district comprehensive assessment system (see the sample year-long data review map on the next page). Use the data to inform your instruction, next steps, and supports, especially for students not making progress.

- **Beginning Year Data (orange dot):** Historical data, needs assessments (e.g., prerequisite knowledge/skills for first unit, students' social emotional needs), and/or discussion of student's progress with prior year teacher(s). What skills and knowledge were not covered in the curriculum? Which skills and knowledge were a challenge due to distance learning?
- **State Assessment results from 2020-21 (yellow dots)** for RICAS (to be released late fall), NGSA, SAT, PSAT 10, and DLM, as applicable. When comparing grade-level results, do lower scores at the reporting category or domain level correspond to lack of coverage in the curriculum? If not, when and how is that curriculum content taught?
- **Interim Assessment (green dots)** denotes assessments like Star, IXL, iReady, NWEA, etc. Are students progressing in their learning? If assessments were administered remotely, are the results consistent with other measures of student learning?
- **Diagnostic Screener data (blue dots)** indicates MTSS and other measures used to identify and prioritize students who are not making progress. Where do the students need additional supports or interventions? How can their learning be accelerated?
- **Formative Assessments (purple dots)** are quick checks of student learning, such as homework, exit tickets, or practice during class. What does students' work tell you about what they are learning successfully, having challenges with, or missing entirely at an individual student, small group, or classroom level? How does that inform your practice on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis? What may need to be revisited when introducing new content?

SAMPLE YEAR-LONG DATA REVIEW MAP:

Source, with State Assessment addition:
- Achievement Network. "3 Principles for Assessments During Instructional Recovery and Beyond". http://go.achievementnetwork.org/rs/731-WJI-089/images/ANet%20Guidance_3%20Principles%20for%20Assessment%20During%20Instructional%20Recovery%20and%20Beyond.pdf

2. **Teach:** Learning gaps are not a new challenge, and we know what works to help students succeed:
   - Keep expectations high and prioritize rigorous grade-level instruction.
   - Don't waste time trying to make up for all the gaps; identify the prerequisite knowledge and skills needed to access the current lesson and scaffold for those who need more support.
   - Keep remediation limited to a relatively short amount of time each week and make sure it is personalized.

3. **Learn and Practice:**
   - Ensure that students are able to learn and practice skills that were challenging due to distance learning.
   - Ensure that in-class and distance learning practice opportunities cover the same knowledge and skills.
   - Differentiate teaching methods and materials so that students who are in class and are distance learning make progress through the curriculum together.

4. **Assess and Reflect:**
   - Compare results from formative assessments (and any other assessments that were administered) to benchmarks used to create learning goals.
   - Are students making progress on learning goals?
   - Does the data you collected support your course of action?
   - Did each student make progress on learning the prerequisite knowledge and skills? Is additional teaching or remediation necessary?
   - Reflect on whether the assessment tools included in your Comprehensive Assessment System:
     - provided information to identify students who may need additional supports to demonstrate proficiency of grade level content standards?
     - supported in-person and remote administration?
     - allowed administration with accommodations for differently-abled students and multilingual learners?
     - measured the knowledge and skills included in your curriculum?
     - measured the learning goals you developed?
   - Consider other sources of information about your students' learning, such as conversations with students and families.
   - Share results from assessments with families and discuss implications from the results and other sources of information on student instruction.

RIDE — Rhode Island Department of Education

For Further Support for Educators

- **Consider providing PD on formative assessment practices**. Be sure to reflect on and include practices that worked well during distance learning in the event that some students will continue to learn in a virtual environment.
- **Carve out time for collaborative data-driven discussions throughout the year**. Be sure to align with MTSS practices.
- **Information on interim assessments and other related resources and guidance** are posted on the RIDE website at www.ride.ri.gov/TC.

References

- Huff, Kristen. "Educational Assessment 2020-21 Is Assessment 101". Center for Assessment. https://www.nciea.org/blog/school-disruption/educational-assessment-2020-21-assessment-101
- Achievement Network. "3 Principles for Assessments During Instructional Recovery and Beyond". http://go.achievementnetwork.org/rs/731-WJI-089/images/ANet%20Guidance_3%20Principles%20for%20Assessment%20During%20Instructional%20Recovery%20and%20Beyond.pdf
- Sawchuk, Stephen. "5 Tips for Measuring and Responding to COVID-19 Learning Loss". June 12, 2020. https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/06/12/5-tips-for-measuring-and-responding-to.html?cmp=eml-contshr-shr
- RIDE Comprehensive Assessment System webpage: www.ride.ri.gov/CAS
- RIDE MTSS/RTI webpage: www.ride.ri.gov/rti and https://mtssri.org/
- RIDE Data Use PD web page: www.ride.ri.gov/Data-Use-PD