

Maximizing Resources to Improve Student Outcomes



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MAY 7, 2014
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Guiding Questions



- How are we assessing students to inform the learning process?
- How do we prepare students to be successful in college?
- How can we better utilize existing resources to maximize learning opportunities for students?

Assessment Best Practice



“In the context of the classroom assessment, however, one key purpose can be to use assessment results to inform students about themselves. That is, classroom assessments can inform students about the continuous improvements in their achievement and permit them to feel in control of that growth. Thus, classroom assessments become assessments for learning. Teachers involve their students in the classroom assessment process for the expressed purpose of increasing their achievement.”

The National Education Association (NEA, 2003)

Current Assessment System, cont.



External Assessments:

- ACT
- LAS
- Accuplacer
- PSAT (AP Potential provides data on college readiness)
- SAT
- CAPT
- SBAC
- Advanced Placement
- End of course exams (as per CSDE, beginning with Class of 2020)

Current Assessment System



Danbury Public Schools:

- Common curricula in core areas include required end-of-unit assessments
- Common Formative Assessments (CFA) – pre/post tests created by teachers who teach the same course
- Common benchmark assessments
- Teacher-created quizzes, tests, projects, and papers
- Midterms (students receive a grade and limited feedback in a year-long course and none in a semester course)
- Finals (students receive a grade and no feedback)

Benchmark Assessments



- Benchmarks measure student progress towards end-of-year learning expectations
- Benchmarks must be administered in September, December and May to be in line with the CSDE teacher evaluation requirements
- Resulting data are used formatively by teachers and students to inform the learning process

Assessment Frequency



- Benchmarks – 3 times a year (performance tasks take 3 days per administration)
- Pre-CFA – 4 times a year
- Post-CFA – 4 times a year
- End of Unit – average of 6 times a year
- CAPT/SBAC – 1 week
- PSAT – 1 time a year
- Accuplacer – 1 time a year
- Teacher-created quizzes and tests
- Midterms – 4 days
- Finals – 4 days

Process



- Faculty Meeting
- School Data Team with 30 staff members in subcommittees
- NEASC
- DHS Faculty Survey
- TDEC
- BOE Subcommittee
- Department Head Focus Group
- Central Office Focus Group
- WCSU Student Focus Group
- DHS Student Focus Group
- PTO Presentation

Summary of DHS Faculty Research Review



- The institution of midterm and final examinations has developed over time to meet institutional needs, not as a deliberate strategy to maximize student learning. In general, the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of these large-scale, traditional summative assessments in a high school setting has not been extensively studied. Recent research indicates that more frequent low-stakes formative assessment is more effective than less frequent higher-stakes summative assessment (such as midterm and final exams) in promoting student learning.

Current Issues in College



- Despite the fact that many schools across the country are administering traditional midterm and final exams, remediation rates in college have been estimated to be more than 60% at 2-year institutions and approximately 40% at 4-year institutions
- Cramming practice is not a proxy for whether or not students are prepared; the quality and level of coursework and instruction, the degree of alignment with postsecondary expectations, and opportunities for students to be creative thinkers and problem solvers are what prepare students for success in college

What are colleges looking for?



- Faculty research and focus groups found that traditional assessments (e.g., multiple choice) are used far less frequently than performance-based assessments and research projects
- DHS focus on student-centered instruction and personalized learning is in line with preparing students for college
- SBAC will be used by some colleges to determine placement of students

Cons to Eliminating Current Structure



- Students will not have practice taking traditional midterms and final exams for college

Pros to Eliminating Current Structure



- Gain back up to 10% of instructional time every year (this is the equivalent of 14.5 weeks of instructional time over the course of a student's 4-year high school career)
- Current research reflects more frequent, low-stakes formative assessment has greater impact on improving student outcomes
- Increase time for more authentic, student-centered assessment that will prepare students for SBAC, college and the work place

Pros to Eliminating Current Structure, cont.



- Afford students the opportunity to spend more quality time on fewer, more powerful assessments that provide students with feedback to inform their growth and instructional plan
- Align with movement in higher education to utilize more meaningful assessments
- Support the student-centered and personalized learning approach of DHS

Pros to Eliminating Current Structure, cont.



- Review of DHS data reveals that exams have a negligible impact on grades (1.4% of exams caused failure of class and 1.1% caused passing of class)
- Decrease student anxiety and frustration
- No impact on college admissions
- Students receive limited or no feedback on exams due to security issues and timing of exam administration
- Simplify grading format

Pros to Eliminating Current Structure, cont.



- Eliminate issue of grade turn-around time
- Save 200,000 sheets of paper annually from 34,723 exams taken last year
- Eliminate test security issues
- Eliminate test administration issues
- Eliminate resources expended on revision and modification for special populations

Potential Alternatives



- Revise current end of unit assessments to reflect more cumulative retention expectations
- Teachers to create traditional summative assessments in Data Teams
- Embed study & organizational skill-building into Advisory
- Capstone (required for all seniors, as per legislated graduation requirements to begin with Class of 2020)
- Presentations
- Research papers
- Portfolio
- Demonstrations

Thank you!



QUESTIONS?

COMMENTS?