



Using Innovative Assessment to Drive Multimetric Accountability

by Nikki Eatchel, Chief Assessment Officer, Scantron

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 provides exceptional opportunities to develop a coherent, unified, and innovative assessment approach. By aligning the goals of formative, interim, and summative tests, states and districts can reduce testing while increasing the utility of the results.

But how can educational leaders avoid the trap of continuing to walk the safe, familiar path? By taking advantage of ESSA's funding provisions for innovative testing. Pilot programs allow states, districts, and schools to experiment with very different ways of measuring student proficiency.

One example is ESSA's acceptance of growth as a valid measure. Educators are no longer restricted to a single, on-grade snapshot of student performance. Instead, they can look at a student's growth over the course of the year. Even if he or she is not yet on grade, how much closer did the student get? Being able to show consistent progress toward aggressive achievement gap closure is an effective way to more individually measure school performance—and to celebrate student and school successes.

For on-grade proficiency (still a valid measure that should be part of innovative programs), might a segmented or cumulative approach be effective? For example, multiple tests can be created for administration throughout the year that evaluate proficiency of what the student has been taught by that point in time based on curriculum pacing guides (versus creating an environment that encourages teaching to the test). Individual assessment results can then build toward an end-of-year score. This turns the traditional approach on its head by using multiple data points to measure student proficiency in alignment with their exposure to the curriculum. This approach could provide more accurate and well-rounded depictions of student proficiency *and* provide valuable feedback to educators throughout the school year to drive educational decisions—while there is still time to change course if necessary.

And what happens when we then enable classroom teachers to create formative tests that provide immediate validation or course correction as they drive toward these incremental tests? An innovative approach could allow teachers flexibility to personalize instruction for students performing differently and yet maintain their attention on the grade-level pacing and sequencing guides. Combine this approach with growth measures where teachers are no longer penalized for inheriting below-grade students, and you can begin to see the possibilities. Perhaps such a system could change the educational assessment culture away from a punitive environment and toward one in which valuable assessment data can be used to assist our educators and to inspire our students to truly meet their full potential.

Learn more at www.scantron.com/k12