

The APS/ATF Teacher Testing Task Force met several times over the 2016 Spring Semester and into the summer. Our task was to advise APS as they re-evaluated all of the District's assessments. According to Rose-Ann McKernan, this group of teachers will make recommendations to the Superintendent for a comprehensive assessment system and supports for student information.

In assessment, we started by answering these questions:

- What information do teachers need around student academic achievement?
- When do teachers need that information?
- What are the non-negotiables for teachers around obtaining this information?
- Define the non-negotiables so that we are all clear about what these mean.

The teachers represented K-12, general, special, and bilingual/dual language education. It was very difficult, as it usually is, to discern exactly what is state-, district- and school-mandated.

We agreed that it was futile to debate any assessment that is not in our influence to change. These include all federal- and state-required tests such as the PARCC, Science SBA, EOCs, DIBELS, ACCESS, and the newly state-mandated KOT.

We attempted to address the above four questions by creating a grid for each grade level (K-12) and then separating out the testing requirements for general education, special education, and bilingual. The discussions were engaging and complex.

We found that most testing—and the instructional time diverted for testing—is at kindergarten, and works its way up in diminishing proportions to high school seniors. The teacher participants, especially in the primary grades, agreed that the amount of required testing was overwhelming for themselves and their students.

We had general consensus that tests created and mandated by the District have not always been useful for instruction and the results have not been returned in a timely manner. Teachers were surprised that assessments were mandated by several different departments within APS and at times are idiosyncratic to a school. Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) as well as individual principals have mandated tests, such as interim assessments in reading and math, Stepping Stones assessments, ACCESS, and the IOWA. We found that identifying the source of the issues could be difficult and identifying solutions even more so. We kept moving the conversation back to the four questions above.

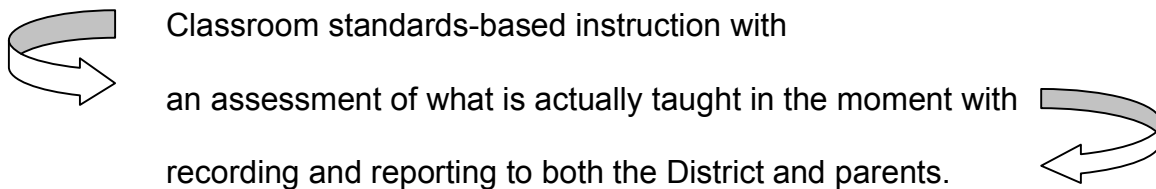
An agreement was developed on a few simple concepts that cut across grade levels and subjects.

1. The District should mandate very few assessments—if any. They should be limited to what the District needs to know.

2. What, when and why the District needs this information should be communicated clearly to teachers and principals.
3. Assessments must be streamlined.
4. Once streamlined, mandated assessments must be useful. The more that one assessment tool can be used for multiple purposes, the more its usefulness increases. For example, elementary progress reports for parents and reports to the District should be one and the same.

We discussed a way to assess and record milestones as students master the skills and concepts embedded in the Common Core State Standards. We recommend a recording system that is based on a developmental continuum.

That tool, if developed well, can connect:



In years past, APS had a well-respected assessment tool that accomplished all of the above. It was called the Kindergarten Developmental Progress Report (KDPR). The original version of the APS KDPR was research-based and allowed for authentic assessment throughout the school year. Teachers utilized observations, work samples, and student interviews to determine each student's level of proficiency over time thus, alleviating the issue created when students are developmentally diverse, yet only assessed at a moment in time *en masse*. The KDPR showed the progression and growth of student skills and was also designed to inform parents of their children's progress.

While we are not advocating for APS to mandate that every teacher in every grade give a time-consuming 1-to-1 assessment like the KDPR, we would like to work with the Office of Accountability and Reporting on some kind of standards-based, developmentally-appropriate, checklist that might be useful for instructional and reporting purposes.

Assessments, recording, and reporting using a single tool supports teachers to use timely information in order to plan instruction and easily account for how their students are progressing. This is the type of assessment that is practical, embedded in instruction, and useful to the District, teachers, parents and their students.

The District should not mandate the majority of assessments—if any. Benchmark tests from central office cannot substitute for day-to-day formative assessment conducted by teachers. Teacher-created formative assessment delivers information *during* instruction.

Teachers and students use formative assessment results to determine next steps. It is an ongoing, dynamic process of including information that enables teachers to adjust instruction quickly, while learning is in progress. The greatest value of formative assessment lies in teachers and students making use of immediate results to improve teaching and learning in real-time.

We suggest that as the District minimizes its efforts in creating and scoring benchmark assessments, it maximize its effort in working with teachers to develop rubrics that will support them to create the best teacher-created formative assessments possible. This District effort will result in:

- Capacity-building among teachers.
- Engaging, authentic work during Professional Learning Community time.
- Clearer, more useful communication to parents about what their child knows and is able to do with that knowledge.

For the immediate future, we have the following comments which we respectfully ask the District to consider:

- We want all assessments embedded in textbook programs to be optional—including whether or not the teacher decides to use such assessments, and if so, when.
- Currently, parents are encouraged to look at student grades on Synergy. This practice assumes the teacher is grading student work based on regular assignments, quizzes and tests, and not on-going multi-disciplinary projects. As we move toward project-based learning, how can high schools and middle schools transition to standards-based assessments, grading, and reporting to parents?
- Currently, much of our recording and reporting is steeped in a deficit frame of what a student is not accomplishing (i.e., on grade level or mastery according to a pacing guide). We want to start recording and reporting information about where students are as well as describe where they will be going in their learning from there.
- Finally, please help primary teachers, special education teachers and the students they teach. Over-testing is particularly severe at the lower grades and because of prescribed programs in special education. Students in these programs, in particular, deserve time to learn and develop.

Respectably submitted by the teachers on the APS/ATF Testing Task Force,

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Jennifer Arellano  
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Ree Chacon  
Michael Evans  
Joe Hartsock  
Sonja Kortsch  
Jason Krosinsky  
Tanya Kunhee

Miriam Martinez  
Nadine Morales  
Dwayne Norris  
Natalie Olague  
Leila Pochop  
Casey Reid-Kadlec  
Sonya Romero Smith  
Lisa Sahadeo  
Toni Seidler

	<b>ELEMENTARY</b>	<b>GRADE LEVEL; CONTENT AREA; POSITION</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
1	Sonya Romero Smith	Kindergarten, Bilingual, ESL	Lew Wallace
2	Miriam Martinez	Kindergarten, Bilingual, ESL	Emerson
3	Dwayne Norris	5 <sup>th</sup> , NBCT, ESL	Bandelier
4	Rachel Baucom	1 <sup>st</sup> grade, Bilingual	East San Jose
5	Nadine Morales	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	Lavaland
6	Natalie Olague	Instructional Coach, ESL, GLAD trainer	Valle Vista
7	Ree Chacon	4 <sup>th</sup> grade, NBCT, ESL	Zia
8	Jennifer Arellano	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	Wherry
9	Sonja Kortsch	Special Education, 2 <sup>nd</sup> , ESL	Bandelier
10	Casey Reid-Kadlec	Instructional Coach/Math, NBCT	Inez
11	Eugene Anderson	3rd-5th Special Education	Lavaland
	<b>MIDDLE SCHOOL</b>		
1	Jason Krosinsky	Special Education	Cleveland
2	Toni Seidler	Special Education	Wilson
3	Lisa Sahadeo	Math	Eisenhower
4	Leila Pochop	Special Education	Van Buren
5	Joe Hartsock	Math	John Adams
	<b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>		
1	Tanya Kunhee	Language Arts	West Mesa
2	Michael Evans	Language Arts	La Cueva