Essential Elements and Recommendations for a Quality Michigan Assessment System

Superintendents in Macomb, Oakland and Wayne counties believe that before Michigan changes to a new state assessment system it needs to ensure that the new system meets the requirements of a good state assessment system. A good state assessment system needs to:

1. Be criteria-based, not norm referenced
2. Be aligned to the state academic standards
3. Measure the standards of learning accurately for grades 3 through 11
4. Use data on student achievement only as intended by the assessment developers.
5. Have evidence that supports the validity of each inference that is to be made from the state assessment data
6. Incorporate multiple forms of assessments; formative, interim and summative
7. Have appropriate target-method match in the assessment
8. The summative assessments, and perhaps some interim assessments as appropriate, should be adaptive to student levels not just computerized
9. Have evidence that any single state test can be implemented across an entire state
10. Ensure that as an online computer adaptive test it works on multiple platforms
11. Have evidence that any single state test is reliable and valid
12. Ensure that the assessment accommodates learning difference of Special Education and English as a Second Language Learners (ESL)
13. Allow for ESL learners to have 2 years of U.S. schooling before scores count
14. Have total transparency so state/districts can see how scoring happens and generate meaningful reports to help educators use the data for improved learning
15. Provide metrics for proficiency as well as individual student growth
16. Protect the privacy of individual student data from any single statewide test
17. Protect the use of data collected for educational purposes only
18. Be owned and controlled by the state not a vendor
19. Be cost effective, efficient and proven for grades 3 through 12
20. Minimally meet federal rules for assessment in order to retain federal funding
21. Have a transparent appeal process
22. Maintain consistent targets or proficiency levels
23. Test every student only as often as necessary to meet federal requirements

Note: Michigan Assessment Consortium has developed "Principles for Creating an Effective Statewide Student Assessment System" which is a credible reference.

We believe that the above criteria are aligned with the assessment positions published by the Michigan Assessment Consortium as well as other statewide organization position statements on assessment.

As to a specific assessment system, while the Smarter Balanced assessment system seems to meet the requirements listed above, it is unclear whether or not Michigan has done sufficient field testing to assure accurate and adequate implementation of this new

assessment system. Also, there are parts of the system still under development. We recommend due diligence on the state's part before implementing and then using this new assessment system for accountability purposes.

That said, the Smarter Balanced assessment is aligned with Michigan's adopted academic standards; it is an adaptive test which competitors' assessments are not; it is being built from the ground up as a balanced assessment system; it has the promise of providing growth data; it has a demonstrated, stable, technology platform as well as provisions for schools that can't currently access that technology; and, because it has been developed by a consortium of states it provides cost savings and faster/more advanced test development compared to what Michigan could do on its own. Further, the Smarter Balanced contract for the assessment is content only – Michigan would be handling its own data collection and analysis which protects the sharing and use of the student data.

However, we believe a statewide assessment applied to every student in every grade needs to be carried out ONLY because it is required by the federal government in order to receive federal funds. If not for that, we would **not support** a single statewide test given every year to every student for accountability purposes. If federal rules allowed, we believe that the state could accurately inform itself as to the progress of students on the standards via state developed benchmark testing which could be done at three grade levels (such as 4,7,10) with a random sample of students.

Doing this rather than a single statewide test on every child every year would prevent that test from being misused beyond its designed purpose for teacher evaluation and grading of individual students or schools.

Benchmark testing gives local schools and districts the targets they need to make, while allowing them to choose a system of developmental assessments in getting to those targets. The state could certainly assist in the development of these more diagnostic interim formative assessments as part of an overall assessment system.