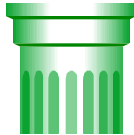


Now is the Time to Shape the Test Design

Wisconsin ASCD asks the Department of Public Instruction to take immediate action to:

1. Lead a collaborative effort with broad representation from appropriate groups to clearly describe **high-priority content standards** (power standards) in the main subject areas in each grade level.
2. Develop specifications for a testing system that is sensitive to achievement in the power standard areas and has clearly identified proficiency levels for use with test vendors in the bid process.

Effectively carrying out these actions will construct the two main pillars to support student learning in Wisconsin:



Clear targets



instructional tests

Clear Targets

Power Standards

Power standards can be developed from Wisconsin's 501 *Model Academic Standards* in order to identify a manageable number of critical or priority standards. In some cases this could be an identification of actual standards; in others it might be the combining of standards

Power standards are purposefully selected within and across the core areas so that educators can focus on the most critical targets for student learning, those which are essential for students to understand deeply. Power standards emphasize the "big ideas" and higher order thinking. Grade level benchmarks that are the building blocks toward the power standards need to clearly define what students should understand deeply as they pass from grade to grade. Power standards focus classroom intervention efforts so that the intent of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation can be a reality for Wisconsin children.

Instructional Tests

Getting the Right Test

When high-priority content standards (power standards) are clearly and thoroughly described, the knowledge and skills students need in order to demonstrate competence will be evident. **If** anchored in a design concept that requires results to be reported standard-by-standard for each student, school, and district; **and** requires information on how well students have learned what they have been taught; **and** provides for external accountability, **then** DPI could work with the appropriate vendor to develop state tests. These tests would be useful as point-in-time assessments and as part of a broader balanced assessment system that includes assessments developed locally according to formats described by the DPI. The tests and the broader system of multiple measures should provide guidance towards the improvement of student learning.

WASCD's position is based on the following *guiding principles*:

- Assessment in an educational system should provide information that will lead to improved student performance and will meet accountability needs.
- An effective state assessment supports improved student achievement through a close alignment among state standards, local curricula and assessment.
- A state assessment system should provide timely and meaningful feedback to students, teachers, administrators, and parents.
- A state assessment system that is used to make decisions about the lives of students needs to rely on multiple measures of what students know and can do.
- An effective state assessment system provides support and direction to school districts in developing local assessments on the defined standards; in measuring learning routinely, over time, in a variety of contexts; and in performing relevant tasks.
- An effective state assessment system is accompanied by a variety of support mechanisms to assist and motivate students and to continuously improve local performance in the classroom.
- An effective state assessment system reports results in a standard-by-standard and student-by-student format for district use in designing professional development activities focused on improving individual student learning in specific content areas.

Clear targets



instructional tests



When the standards and assessment pillars of this system are implemented well, we will be able to say:

"It is important." (We developed a power standard for it.)

"We all taught it." (State-wide approach to implementation)

"We tested it." (We have attained information that can be used to improve student learning and to meet accountability requirements.)

WASCD asks that the DPI take action on these items:

Accountability System:

- Lead a **collaborative effort** with broad representation from appropriate groups to clearly describe high-priority content standards (power standards) in the main subject areas in each grade level.
- Require **test** vendors to develop **proposals** for testing systems that are sensitive to achievement in the power standard areas and have clearly identified proficiency levels.

Process:

- **Attain expertise from national consultants, in-state professionals, and other states that are facing similar assessment decisions.** Accessing this expertise is especially important in the areas of setting proficiency levels, validating the proficiency levels with live data, and developing the criteria for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).
- **Develop requests for proposals (RFP) with above assessment guidelines in mind.** Consider coordinating the RFP with other states. The expectation and demand must be created from a consumer standpoint so that testing contractors respond to the needs of the state and these new requirements.
- **Reporting should be in a standard-by-standard format.** The results of a state's assessment of high-priority content standards should be reported standard-by-standard for each student, school, and district. This method of reporting results will clarify for ALL what the standards are and how well students performed on them.
- **Conduct on-going evaluation** to be sure tests are appropriate for accountability and for the optimization of student learning.
- **Develop a coalition of professional education associations, legislators, higher education (teacher preparation institutions), and representatives from the business community and other civic organizations** to build support for these recommendations regarding the standards and assessment system.

Conclusion

The Wisconsin Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (WASCD) believes it is vital for the future of education in Wisconsin's public schools that we develop tests that are based on clear and specific instructional targets defined by power standards. This will lead to enhanced teacher understanding of learning expectations, greater instructional focus, local assessments linked to standards, and results that are equally useful for accountability and for improving local instruction and learning.

