

# 2016-2017 DISTRICT ASSESSMENT GUIDE

Districts have many tools to support the day-to-day learning of students. The three most direct tools that influence daily classroom instruction are curriculum, assessments, and teacher professional development and support. This guide is intended to support districts in making assessment decisions for the 2016-2017 school year. It is designed to help districts understand the role of different assessments and ensure that those assessments contribute to increased student learning.

Districts give assessments for a variety of purposes: to comply with universal screening policies, to assess specific reading foundational skills such as phonemic awareness or fluency, to assess mastery of standards (benchmarking), to expose students to item types that are on state summative assessments, and to collect data for teachers to use when setting learning goals.

To have the most impact on student learning, assessments should be:

- **Meaningful:** Fully aligned to the standards and state summative assessments
- **Minimal:** Take as little time as possible from learning
- **Connected:** Easily connect to curriculum and day-to-day learning
- **Transparent:** Teachers have a shared depth of understanding about the purpose and design

## ENSURING ASSESSMENTS SERVE THE INTENDED PURPOSES

To ensure assessments are meaningful, minimal, connected, and transparent, districts should do a full [audit](#) and reflect on the current assessments being given. Teachers, administrators, and district staff should participate in the audit through [focus groups](#) [and/or surveys](#). Questions to consider throughout the audit process include:

- How does your district define the purpose of assessments? Do district staff, school administrators, and teachers agree on the purpose? Is the data being used for the intended purpose?
- Are your assessments serving the intended purposes with the fewest number of overall assessments?
- Are your assessments giving you and your teachers accurate information to improve student learning?
  - » Is the data from district assessments consistent with the data from state assessments?
  - » Are there assessments that are either not aligned or are not being used to improve student learning and should be cut?
  - » Are there multiple assessments that give the same information; therefore, additional assessments can be cut?

Both during the audit and while making decisions around district assessments, districts should focus on three priority areas.

## FOCUS 1: PURPOSE AND VISION

KEY CONSIDERATIONS	RESOURCES
<p>Define the purpose of given assessments and ensure each assessment is serving the intended purpose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Assessments               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Help teachers gain clarity on what learning expectations look like</li> <li>» Provide information for the district to make key decisions such as the focus of PD, areas to supplement the curriculum, and individualized teacher support</li> </ul> </li> <li>• K-3 Literacy Assessments               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Identify students that may be at risk of reading failure</li> <li>» Provide information to address specific skills deficiencies</li> <li>» Show whether students are progressing in their ability to read fluently and comprehend text</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Universal Screeners               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Provide information on which students may need more support for success</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Overview of national and state law and policy</a></p> <p><a href="#">Sample case studies</a></p> <p><a href="#">Pilot districts: strategic plans</a></p> <p><a href="#">The Role of Interim Assessments in a Comprehensive Assessment System</a></p> <p><a href="#">Fewer and Better Local Assessments: A Toolkit for Educators</a></p>

## FOCUS 2: QUALITY

KEY CONSIDERATIONS	RESOURCES
<p>Districts choose quality assessments or plan to build assessments that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focus on important content and skills necessary for student success,</li> <li>• fully align to the standards,</li> <li>• include a variety of item types, especially those that require rigorous thinking such as multiple select and constructed response questions, and</li> <li>• include texts worth reading and tasks worth doing.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Benchmark assessment reviews</a></p> <p><a href="#">Assessment review rubrics</a></p> <p><a href="#">K-3 literacy assessment guidance</a></p> <p><a href="#">Indicators of quality for benchmark assessments in ELA</a></p> <p><a href="#">Indicators of quality for benchmark assessments in mathematics</a></p>

## FOCUS 3: ENGAGEMENT

KEY CONSIDERATIONS	RESOURCES
<p>Plan for teacher and district communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly define the vision and role of different assessments</li> <li>• Ensure that teachers understand the scope of content and skills that will be assessed so they can fully prepare students for success</li> <li>• Make data reports simple and accessible</li> <li>• Ensure educators use the data for the intended purposes</li> </ul> <p>Meaningfully connect SLTs to appropriate, quality assessments</p>	<p><a href="#">Sample case studies</a></p> <p><a href="#">Pilot districts: strategic plans</a></p> <p>SLT Guidance</p>