

Teaching is the Core District Assessment Review

Balanced Assessment System

Assessment Review Team Members

Phase I – SY 2013-2014

Kristie Bliss
Kevin Cafararo
Adam Collister
Lisa Kaup
Joe Mack
Amoreena Tellaeché
Abby Withey

Phase II – SY 2014-2015

Abbey Albright
Kristie Bliss
Dustin Bush
Mark Chambers
Zac Darrow
Jaime Francey-Henry
Ryane Gagen
Mike Winchell

2015

Phase I: District Assessment Review

I. Purpose and Context of the Review

Review Rationale

In Phase I of the Assessment Project, June – August 2014, Cortland conducted a district assessment audit, or review, that, although limited in scope, provides the district with information that will be used as baseline data in making sure our assessments provide data needed to improve student achievement. The initial review provides both a model and a baseline for a continual assessment review process.

A K-12 system review of assessments supports the district goals of developing a standards-aligned curriculum, administering common formative assessments, and using data-driven instruction to improve student achievement. This review will improve student achievement because we plan to review assessments as they relate to the district assessment system as a whole. While completing this review, district staff will develop a common language that connects assessment with NYS standards. Aligning instruction, curriculum, and assessment for the purpose of increasing student achievement improves student performance on state assessments, increases graduation rates, and provides a mechanism for strategic planning.

Since the District is implementing a standards-based curriculum, we think it is relevant to use this audit to further improve the alignment between curriculum standards and student assessments. Therefore, our entry point for this assessment audit is a thematic approach centered on the alignment of our assessments to New York State standards.

The review will benefit Cortland students because assessments will be streamlined to

1. provide feedback about achievement of specific standards-based learning goals, and
2. avoid redundancy of assessments. (Claim 1 and 2)

Additionally, the audit team, in collaboration with our Cortland school community, will gain knowledge about K-12 assessments through seeking answers to the following questions:

1. Are our assessments standards-based?
2. Do we have gaps in our assessments or assessment system?
3. Do we have redundancies in our assessments or assessment system?
4. Do our assessments provide data that can inform instruction? (Questions 1-4)

Another reason for conducting this audit is to learn how to intentionally design and use assessment audits to inform decisions about increasing student achievement for all students. We chose to first review the alignment of our assessments with NYS standards because research supports the importance of aligning standards-based assessment, instruction, and curriculum. One researcher, Richard Stiggins promotes standards based grading that is directly linked to aligned curriculum and assessments. Cortland needs to align instruction and assessments before moving to standards based grading. Robert Marzano, whose instructional strategies are used in our classrooms, focused some of his recent research on the benefits of linking assessment systems to Common Core Learning Standards. According to the *New York Times*, conducting assessment audits is a nationwide initiative that is increasing the effectiveness of curriculum and assessment. The National Teacher's Union frequently discusses the perceived urgency of the implementation of aligned standards. Thus, our audit team chose the entry point of reviewing the alignment of

assessments to standards because it connects to our District vision, is supported by research, and prepares us to implement standards aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

II. Review Methodology

This audit consists of several components. These include:

1. review of assessments,
2. discussion with teachers,
3. survey of assessment practices.

A. Sample

1. The Review Team (Team) reviewed a small sample of fifty 2013-14 assessments provided by teachers and administrators. Through review of the assessments, the team realized that teachers provided only sample assessments that were aligned with Learning Standards.
2. The Team engaged in discussions with teachers who provided the sample assessments. The Team realized that these discussions about the purpose of collecting the assessments biased the sample.
3. When the Team realized that the assessment sample was biased, the Team decided to administer a survey. The Team created eight response items. Seven response items directly correlate with our two claim statements and four guiding questions.
4. The survey contains six restricted response items and two constructed response items.

B. Survey Focus

The survey was administered through an institutional level of *Survey Monkey*, thus providing security of response. District staff is familiar with the administration of the survey tool and the subsequent use of data. This survey was sent to K-12 instructional staff. (Appendix A)

Survey questions were constructed to inform the audit claims and questions identified on page 2:

The review will benefit Cortland students because assessments will be streamlined to

1. provide feedback about achievement of specific standards-based learning goals, and
2. avoid redundancy of assessments. (Claim 1 and 2)

Additionally, the audit team, in collaboration with our Cortland school community, will gain knowledge about K-12 assessments through seeking answers to the following questions:

1. Are our assessments standards-based?
2. Do we have gaps in our assessments or assessment system?
3. Do we have redundancies in our assessments or assessment system?
4. Do our assessments provide data that can inform instruction? (Questions 1-4)

Listed in the order of administration, the survey questions are:

[Restricted Response – RR; Constructed Response – CR]

1. RR: Claim 2: How often do you feel you are being too redundant in giving tests or assessments?
2. RR: Claim 1, 2, Question 1-3: How many teacher-generated tests or assessments do you give per year?
3. RR: Claim 1, 2, Question 1-4: If your answer is 'More than 40,' please identify the nature of the tests or assessments. Please mark all that apply.
4. RR: Question 1: How many of these tests or assessments are standards-aligned?
5. RR: Question 4: Do your tests or assessments provide data that informs instruction?

6. CR: Claim 1, Question 4: In what form(s) do you provide test or assessment feedback for students?
7. CR: Question 2, 4: Are there things you want to know about your students that our district's assessment system does not tell you?
8. RR: Please mark all that apply: I teach the following grade level(s):

III. Survey Data Analysis, Themes, and Implications

A. Survey Demographics

The survey was distributed via email to K-12 instructional staff on July 29, 2014 and concluded on August 8, 2014. The survey tool used was an institutional version of *Survey Monkey*. One hundred and six of a possible 215 instructional staff members completed the survey. The Team considers the 47% participation rate indicative of an effective sampling of the staff, considering the following circumstances:

- The survey was administered during summer vacation.
- The survey was emailed using the work email addresses.
- Relatively few staff knows about the purpose of the audit.
- Survey results show a relatively equal representation of responses for a cross section of the staff.

B. Survey Results

- Refer to Appendix A

C. Survey Implications

- Q1: RR: 62% of respondents felt some sense of redundancy, while 36% of staff felt no redundancy. Follow up questions/considerations: Do we have a shared sense of the meaning of 'redundancy'?
- Q2: RR: There is an equal distribution of staff giving teacher-generated assessments in all categories (from less than 10 to more than 40) Follow up questions/considerations: Which staff members are represented in each category? Is there equal distribution by grade level and/or subject area?
- Q3: RR: For teachers who gave 40 or more assessments, the teacher-generated assessments are primarily end-of-unit and content facts. Other assessments include
 - 1) Open-ended student response: [Combined responses coded by Team] e.g. presentations, discussions, questions, book reviews, posters, PowerPoint slides, peer review, group work
 - 2) Writing skills (3 responses)
 - 3) Formative assessments (2)
 - 4) Essays
- Q4: RR: As an average, teachers believe that approximately 25% of the assessments they administer are standards aligned. Eighty percent of teachers responded that more than 10 tests or assessments they use with students are not aligned with standards. Follow up questions/considerations: Without direct alignment with standards, it is difficult to assess student progress toward achievement of standards. Without alignment of standards and assessment, students' ability to understand their own progress toward proficiency is unlikely.
- Q5: RR: 94% of teachers believe data drives instruction. Follow up questions/considerations: How does data drive instruction? What is done with the data to inform instruction or to alter instructional plans? If data drives instruction,

but the majority of assessments are not aligned with standards, is instruction standards-based?

- Q6: CR: Responses were coded and grouped to indicate the level of student engagement with personal achievement.
 - 1) 68% (72) Responses indicate primarily teacher review and communication of student achievement as indicated by assessments.
 - 2) 24% (25) Responses indicate some teacher-student review and reflection of student achievement as indicated by assessments.
 - 3) 3% (3) Responses indicate reciprocal teacher-student review and reflection of student achievement as indicated by assessments.
 - 4) 6% (6) Responses did not respond or did not respond with relevancy.
- Follow up questions/considerations: Is the purpose of assessment feedback to indicate standards-based achievement or to indicate correct vs. incorrect understanding of tested items? Is feedback indicative of a growth-mindset or a fixed-mindset approach to student achievement? Does assessment feedback promote student responsibility for learning?
- Q7: CR: Responses were coded and grouped to indicate the categories of information teachers would like to know about their students. Fifty-two of 106 (49%) identified information about students that teachers thought would increase the ability to meet the instructional needs of students.
 - 1) 27% (13) Responses requested more information pertaining to student academic achievement.
 - 2) 29% (14) Responses requested more information pertaining to student IEPs.
 - 3) 47% (23) Responses requested more information pertaining to the social, emotional, developmental health (SEDH) of students.

IV. Implications for Phase 2: Assessment Design Project

A. Identified Areas of Professional Development

Through the process of developing a data-driven culture, professional learning must intentionally and specifically develop a common understanding of

- the purpose of assessment,
- the importance of improving student achievement through a 'growth mindset' rather than a 'fixed mindset,'
- how to use data to improve student achievement and instructional practice,
- how to write standards-based assessments,
- how to ensure student engagement through student participation in academic achievement rather than through student participation in class activity.

B. Additional Planning Considerations

- Ensure that teachers all have access to district academic assessment data and IEPs and know the process for acquiring the data and the IEPs.
- Support district and building systems that meet the SEDH needs of all students.

C. Guiding Questions for Phase 2: Assessment Design Project

- Assessment Impact: How do we use assessments to increase student learning?
- Student Metacognition: How do we use assessments to increase student engagement and responsibility for their own learning?

Phase II: Assessment Design Project

I. Phase II Rationale

As a result of the information obtained in Phase I of the Assessment Project, and as part of the District plan to develop an assessment system that informs instruction, measures student proficiency of academic standards, and engages students in the assessment process, three teams of teachers participated in training provided by Learner-Centered Initiatives, Ltd. through the OCM BOCES and funded through the Teaching is the Core (TiTC) grant. Formal training dates were December 2014 – May 2015. The training coincided with District standards work and professional development used to build capacity for increased use of Data Driven Instruction (DDI) within a balanced assessment system. The impact of such assessment systems is that engaging, embedded, standards-based assessments inform instruction and increase student achievement. Participants in Phase II will share the design process with colleagues as the District develops a balanced assessment system.

II. Assessment Design Process

Each of the teams designed performance based assessments aligned to the CCLS. The intermediate ELA assessment informs instruction and assesses student growth in ELA and Literacy Standards pertaining to research, writing, listening and public speaking. The intermediate mathematics assessment informs instruction and assesses student growth in ratios and proportional relationships. The secondary mathematics assessment informs instruction and assesses student growth in comprehension of systems of linear equations in two variables.

The assessments will replace current course assessments. Once the assessments have been field tested and evidence indicates a lack of assessment bias and a high correlation of inter-rater reliability, the assessments may be used as either Common Formative Assessments or Benchmark Assessments within and across grade levels and/or disciplines.

The following chart designates the assessment work completed by the BOCES TiTC Phase II teams:

Assessment Title	Subject/Grade	Design Team	Completed	Initial Implementation
Common Junior High ELA Public Speaking Assessment	English Grades 7 & 8	Dustin Bush Ryane Gagen Mike Winchell [Kristie Bliss-liaison]	May 2015	September 2015
Remodeling the Weight Room	Mathematics Grade 7	Mark Chambers Jaime Francey-Henry [Kristie Bliss-liaison]	May 2015	December 2015
Systems of Equations in the Real World	Algebra I	Abbey Albright Zachary Darrow [Kristie Bliss-liaison]	May 2015	April 2016

III. Future Implications for Assessment System Design

As a result of the Assessment Design Project, the District will develop a process for writing and assessing the value of standards-based assessments. Members of the Phase I and Phase II teams will share their work with colleagues and provide support as teachers participate in assessment development. Grade Level and Subject Level staff will continue to review, revise, eliminate and design assessments using a growth mindset approach to implementing data-driven instruction that is informed through a system of formative assessments, common formative assessments, benchmark assessments and multiple modes of assessment.

A Balanced Assessment System that informs instruction will be developed through multiple professional learning opportunities that first build the capacity for change and then lead the change process. Current plans are outlined in the following chart.

2014-2015	<p>Assessment Design Project – Team Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12/1/14 & 12/17/14 Assessment Foundations • 2/6/15 Use of Rubrics • 3/19/15 Bias, Reliability and Field Testing • 5/1/15 Looking at Student Work • Dec 2014 – May 2015 Additional physical and electronic work sessions scheduled as need by design teams <p>Growth Mindset and Standards-Based Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May – June 2015 Assessment Teams, GL Leaders, Curriculum Leaders • June – August 2015 Standards-based Assessment Development • June – August 2015 Development of Assessment Calendar
2015-2016	<p>Assessment System Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BOCES Assessment Academies • Review and Revision of Assessments • Data Analysis Protocol Development • Assessment Calendar of CFAs and Benchmark Assessments/ Grade Level and Discipline

IV. Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

District plans for increasing opportunity for reciprocal communication and collaboration with parents, families, and community members are being developed through multiple interactions of staff, families, and community agencies. Sharing of Cortland’s purpose and system of assessment for student learning will be more fully articulated as the District develops and implements a standards-based assessment system.

Under discussion as of April 2015 are the following venues:

Goal	Planned Activities
Parents, families, and community agencies will understand the purpose, scope, and sequence of the District assessment system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations • Website information • Workshops • Community coalitions
Staff will increase the number and quality of standards-based CCLS aligned assessments and use the assessments to inform instruction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a schedule of assessment development and administration • Create a packet of professional learning materials to use when writing assessments • Develop a data analysis protocol to use for evaluating assessments • Provide professional development to support the process of writing, implementing and evaluating assessments