

How One Kansas School District is Using Data to Rethink Common Assessments

WITH UNIFIED CLASSROOM™ PERFORMANCE MATTERS



In support of the strategic plans set in place by a new Superintendent, Lawrence County Schools needed the processes and tools to create common assessments, analyze student data, and provide timely reports for all stakeholders.

Without a platform to deliver standards-based common assessments, the district struggled to identify learning loss and at-risk students. They lacked the systems needed to unify data and implement built-in review processes and analytics. The COVID-19 pandemic solidified the need for learning loss data and the fact that it was now more critical than ever before.

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ZACHARY CONRAD
Executive Director of Research, Evaluation, & Accountability,
Lawrence Public Schools, KS



Challenge

- No platform to create and deliver standards-based common assessments
- Unable to identify at-risk students based on data (need data all in one place)
- Lack of essential tools for timely reporting



Solution

- Unified Classroom™ Performance Matters
- Schoology Learning
- PowerSchool SIS



Results

- Educators and administrators have a process and the necessary tools for assessment creation and delivery
- Reporting informs instruction and remediation, helping teachers address learning loss and therefore accelerate learning gains

It was difficult for the district to identify students without a way to create and deliver standards-based assessments

For years, Lawrence Public Schools administered high-level, norm-referenced, generic assessments that did not provide the student data they needed to ensure they were meeting students where they were. The teachers, instructional coaches, administrators, and curriculum leaders knew which standards they needed to cover in depth throughout the school year, but their assessment platforms did not always match up. They wanted to be able to create test items themselves. "We rolled out common assessments this year because we needed the data more than ever to monitor loss and impact," says Zachary Conrad, Executive Director of Research, Evaluation, and Accountability.

After exploring multiple options, the district settled on Performance Matters to support their efforts. Now, Lawrence Public Schools creates and releases between 19 and 25 District Common Assessments (DCAs) for each testing window. The DCAs cover grades 3-12 for English Language Arts (ELA) and grades 3 through Advanced Algebra 3 for math. Each DCA has between four and six standards with five items for each, for a total of 20 to 30 items for each assessment. The district has released over 100 DCAs in four testing windows to date.

Additionally, PLCs are forming in the district again after ten years without them. A significant portion of the PLC practice revolves around common assessments at the teacher and building level. Before Performance Matters, teachers in PLCs found it difficult to score assessments and collect data, but with the new processes and tools, they have greater insight into student progress.

Teachers need student data throughout the year, before state assessments

"It's critical for the PLC process to have grades, assessment data, and other indicators all in one place," says Conrad. This allows teachers and administrators to group students based on needs. With Performance Matters, Lawrence Public Schools can bring all that disparate data together onto a single platform, allowing teachers to identify early warning indicators and intervene promptly. With their data in a centralized location, they've set up a system to identify at-risk students based on multiple factors. "We needed a system that allowed us to build valid and reliable assessments aligned with the mission and vision of our Superintendent and Board of Education," says Conrad. "Our assessments need to provide the opportunity for teachers to calibrate the common assessments and their formative practice. We also needed to provide a place for teachers to actually use the data."



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Performance Matters streamlines reporting of student assessment data

"As the District Assessment Team, we are very interested in following industry standards for validity and reliability," says Conrad, which is why it's crucial for the district to have adequate reporting capabilities. Not only does reporting inform Lawrence Public Schools' teachers as they address learning loss through instruction and remediation, Performance Matters seamlessly exports data so that the district's assessment specialists can run additional analysis and provide teachers with more information about the mastery of a standard.

For Lawrence Public Schools, addressing learning loss begins with creating valid assessments and having data they can use

Lawrence Public Schools understood the need for a data-driven approach to identifying learning loss, as well as the importance of collecting their own data despite ongoing school disruptions. "We're excited to further integrate assessment management with additional district systems, such as PowerSchool SIS and Schoology Learning," says Conrad. "Having the ability to include Schoology Learning data in at-risk analysis and being able to provide DCAs directly in Schoology Learning course materials is our next step."



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