



WHITEPAPER

Why an Assessment and Analytics Solution?

How districts can benefit from having connected systems for the analysis of their student data

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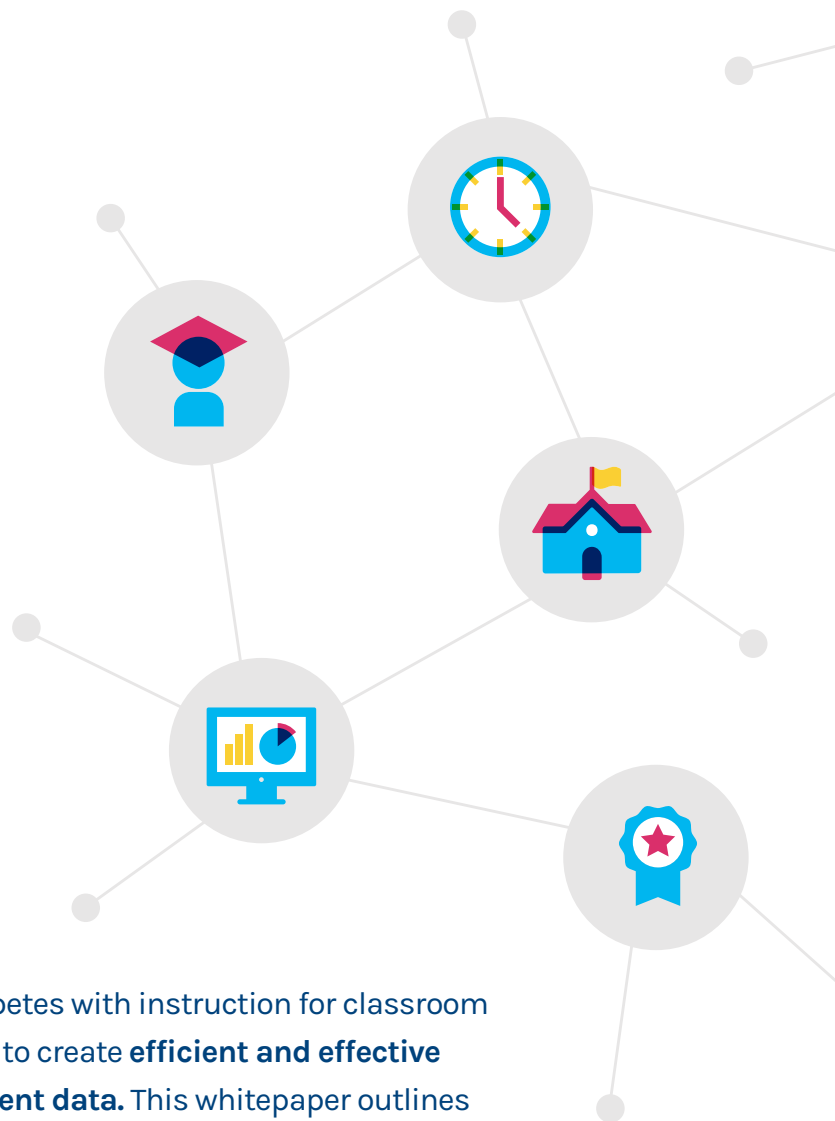


Introduction

Assessing student achievement is key to understanding a student's level of content mastery. In fact, **implementing and connecting student data systems** to help students succeed is a national priority. **Current legislation, both federal and state, calls for the collection, analysis, and use of student data to improve district and school performance.**

This process can be burdensome and time-consuming, causing pushback from teachers and administrators. Recent legislation has even gone so far as to set limits on the amount of classroom time that can be devoted to testing.

The need for assessment and the fact that it competes with instruction for classroom time makes it increasingly important for districts to create **efficient and effective systems for collection, analysis, and use of student data.** This whitepaper outlines why it's essential for districts to have an Assessment and Analytics solution that's fit to meet their needs.



1. Different levels of assessment and their uses

A well-developed assessment program can help districts inform instructional practices, target professional development and adjust curriculum needs. A first step in building or auditing assessment programs is understanding assessment methods and how they can be used to inform decisions related to advancing student achievement.

Classroom Assessment



In the classroom, teachers assess for a variety of reasons and use a variety of techniques to gauge learning.

Through formative assessment practice as well as developed "mini" assessments, teachers and students **gather the evidence needed to make in-the-moment, timely decisions about immediate next steps.**

School-level Assessment



At the school level, common assessment across a course (i.e., all teachers of the same course using the same assessments) might be

less frequent but can **showcase successful instructional strategies, highlight areas of growth for teachers, support fidelity to a curriculum, and build a collaborative teaching environment.**

District Assessment



District-level assessments—sometimes referred to as benchmarking or interim assessments—are valuable to monitor system-wide performance of student

performance against state and local standards, which can inform decisions about high-level program decisions. These broad assessments also serve to **identify areas where focused attention should be provided to groups of students based on lower performance relative to their peers.**



2.

Make sure you get the most out of your student data

Assessment data are not artifacts to be recorded and forgotten or simply mathematically married to other data to create a course grade. They are live reports, evidence of student achievement, and inform many facets of the educational program. Connecting this data to student achievement requires analysis and action to complete the process of assessment.

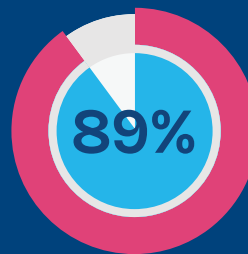
Analysis

Before analysis begins, the questions that an assessment needs to answer should already be known. These might be as simple as, "On how many standards has a student demonstrated proficiency?" or something more complex, such as, "How much growth has a group of students in a particular program shown since implementation?" In either case, **assessment data provide the information needed to interpret the extent of progress and make decisions about next steps.**

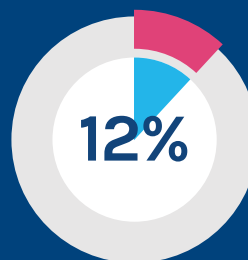
Action

To improve student learning performance, **it is important stakeholders be provided an opportunity for action once analysis is completed.** Analysis without action does not connect the data to student achievement in a meaningful way, as it treats an assessment as a goal rather than as a valuable piece of information that can lead to improved student achievement. The act of assessment itself does not lead to an increase in student achievement. It is the **use of rich information to effect a change** to instructional, curricular and programmatic next steps that will lead to such increases.

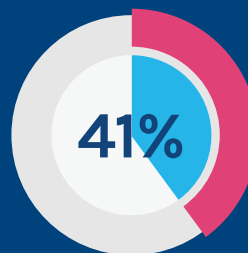
The value of accurate informative data



89% of all superintendents indicated that the greatest challenge facing their districts is **improving academic performance of underprepared students**¹



Educators believe that educational software should provide **real-time updates** yet **only 12% receive them**²



Only 41% of educators feel they have the tools that enable them to provide personalized and effective education to students³

Sources:

1. The Gallop 2018 Survey of K-12 School District Superintendents
2. PowerSchool National Teacher Survey, Finn Partners May 2016
3. America's Teachers on America's Teaching Profession, 2012. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

3.

Make your data matter

Data-informed decision-making has become the norm in education. With vast amounts of data at our fingertips, today’s challenge is figuring out what the data is saying about student achievement and how to use that knowledge to improve student outcomes.



Context is Key

Classroom teachers use a number of formal measures to assess student mastery. If these measures are analyzed in isolation, there is limited value. Educators who know the **purpose and context** of the individual measures and metrics then **have a basis for connecting all of that data to student achievement in a meaningful and intentional way.**

Multiple Measures

Having multiple measures is critical, as that facilitates triangulation of data around a particular attribute. One isolated measure may not have much diagnostic or predictive value, but **multiple measures viewed against a backdrop of purpose and context** can make it possible to alter the learning trajectory for individual students or groups of students.

Baselines and Benchmarks

The only way to ensure that critical educational decisions are appropriate and valid is to consider all available data and create appropriate measures when none exist. **Student achievement can only be meaningfully evaluated in comparison to a baseline of past performance and a standard for what constitutes acceptable performance,** with benchmarks in between for gauging progress.

Connecting Data to Student Achievement

Everyone benefits from being able to see growth and connect instruction to improvement. **Making connections between performance data and student outcomes helps students see their progress** toward what can sometimes seem to be elusive goals. Teachers are able to see what instructional strategies are working well and which aren’t and adapt their teaching accordingly.

4.

Recognize the value of integration

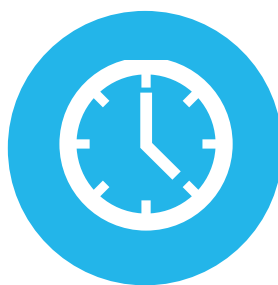
An assessment system, connected to a districts' SIS, makes it easier to access all of a district's assessment, attendance, and behavior data across multiple sources and combine the data into a single, online reporting dashboard portal. Districts can easily import state assessment data, third-party assessments, student demographic, and roster data to truly create a "one stop shop" for educators increasing efficiency and ultimately time savings that translates to additional one on one time with students.

Key benefits of an integrated assessment and analytics system:



Single, online tracking & reporting portal

- **Easy access** to all district student assessment, grades, 3rd party measures, attendance, and behavior data
- **Provide quick feedback** for students and parents
- Evidence of **mastery**
- Ensure **consistent** measurement
- **Connecting** student data to student outcomes



Saved time on reporting

- **Easily incorporate** state assessment data, third-party assessments, student demographic information, and roster data for a "one-stop data shop"
- **Provide holistic views** into student progress



Improved student performance

- **Quickly access** relevant data to allow teachers to identify risk factors
- Make student and school-level reporting, identification, and improvement initiatives **easier**
- Adjust learning based on **real-time data**
- **Determine strengths and weaknesses** to point toward actions and inform instruction
- **Gain insightful data** toward high stakes tests



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