**ASSESSMENT SYSTEM REVIEW TOOL**

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**What is a Local Assessment System?**

All of the assessments that are administered to students over the course of the year in a district or school. These include:

* State-required annual achievement assessments (e.g., MAST)
* School- and/or district-required assessments
* Classroom *summative* assessments[[1]](#footnote-0)

**What is the Purpose of an Assessment System Review?**

All of the assessments students take should work together. An assessment system review is one way to:

1. Understand what assessments students take during the year, and
2. Evaluate how all the assessments work together, or not.

The local assessment system should provide the right information, to the right users, at the right time, at right level of specificity so that specific users to make better educational decisions. This is particularly important because the forthcoming MAST must work well with the other assessments to be successful. To help sure this is the case, we have to be clear on:

* What we want to do with the results of the current assessments in the system,
* What we want to do with the MAST results, and
* How this set of assessments are meant to work together.

**How is a Local Assessment System Review Conducted?**

| Phase 1: Create a Plan and Identify Assessment Needs  Phase 2: Conduct the Inventory  Phase 3: Describe and Analyze Assessments  Phase 4: Write Recommendations for Every Assessment |
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**Phase 1: Create a Plan and Identify Assessment Needs**

**Phase 1A: Create a plan** for when and how the group will work together to accomplish the local assessment system review. It will take time to do this work well!

* Identify **project champion** who has decision-making authority or influence.
* Select a **project leader** who will see this work through to completion.
* Conduct this work as a **team** made up of district/school leadership and classroom educators.
* Consider **starting small.** For example, begin in one grade span at one school (e.g., K-8 ELA & Math at River Way Elementary School).

**Phase 1A Activity**

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Then, the team should **identify and** **document** **the district (or school’s) needs** **and context** around assessment.

**Phase 1b:** Think through why this review is important to your school and district, as well what MAST means for your local assessment system.

| **Why are you doing the assessment system review?** |
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| **What are the school’s (or district’s) greatest needs regarding assessments?** |
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| **What worries/concerns do you have about the collection of assessments that are experienced by a student in this grade level?** |
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| **What questions does the team currently have about the collection of assessments administered to students in the selected grade and content area(s)?** |
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**Phase 1c:** Who needs what assessment information to make better educational decisions for students? Using the list of uses below, fill in the table of users and uses of assessment information.

| **Intended Use** |
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| 1. Inform Allocation of Support and Resources |
| 2. Monitor and Evaluate Programs |
| 3. Identify Professional Development Needs |
| 4. Inform Student Placement or Remediation |
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| 5. Identify Students in Need of Additional Supports |
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| 6. Diagnose a Specific Learning Need (e.g., Disability) |
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| 7. Progress Monitoring (i.e., within a MTSS) |
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| 8. Inform *Short Term* (e.g., Daily and Weekly) Teaching and Learning Decisions |
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| 9. Inform *Longer Term* (e.g,. Monthly and Yearly) Teaching and Learning Decisions |
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| 10. Identity Improvements for Future Instruction |
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| **User of Assessment Information** | **Use for the Assessment Information** |
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**Phase 2: Conduct the Inventory**

**Decide what information will be collected for the grade/content areas identified in the plan.**

* We recommend documenting every school- or district-required assessment that is administered to all students in a particular grade level or content area
* Be sure to come to agreement about the definition of terms before moving forward
  + See [glossary of terms](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_Skg8N-jqLBOCcdJZpeyiVzUpfNtixHY/edit?usp=drive_link&ouid=100993319813977835312&rtpof=true&sd=true) for definitions of typical school- or district-required assessments (e.g., interim, common assessment, benchmark assessment, diagnostic assessment, universal screener, etc.)
* We do not recommend collecting information about formative classroom assessments (see Teacher Module 23) or special education assessments in the first pass through.
* We recommend documenting the state test. You’ll see why later!
* You don’t need the actual assessment instruments, but you need some basic information about each.

**Phase 2 Activity**

Use the [spreadsheet inventory](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1rbFA2U5_kKnvUbBMlaABAL98CxU3u2outYBDiI4sQCw/edit?usp=drive_link) to document the assessments. We think it works best if the team brainstorms the assessment names, who requires it, grade, content area, type of assessment, and testing time together. Then the team can decide to divide up the work, or for one person to complete the Inventory to bring back to the group. Deciding together on a consistent manner in which to add this information and consensus on the meaning of terms is critical for later sensemaking.

**For each assessment gather the following information:**

* Grade
* Content Area\*
* Name of Assessment
* Month Administered\*
* Type of Assessment
* Item Types (Optional)\*
* Intended Uses
* Intended Users
* Testing Time\*

\*Indicates drop down options

**Phase 3: Describe and Analyze Assessments**

**A few key principles to keep in mind:**

1. Description before analysis, analysis before evaluation.
2. There are no ‘right’ answers. A review of this nature requires judgment and thought experiments such as: What would we lose if the assessment were removed from the system that another assessment could not provide?
3. Assessments should only remain in the system if the information gained is greater than the instructional time lost, yields new insights beyond state test results, and can feasibly be acted upon by the intended user(s).
4. Sometimes it is not the assessment, but what people are doing (or not doing) with the information that is the problem. Additional assessment literacy training may be needed.
5. Balance is fundamentally about the assessment users and use cases. Use Phase 1b-1c Activities to ground the analysis/investigation and ensure that intended users have the information they need to make better educational decisions that support student learning.

**Sorting the Inventory to Support Sensemaking**

We find that sorting the data by month of the year, content area, and grade can help with making sense of the information in the Inventory. Additionally, dividing the Inventory into manageable pieces/chunks can also aid sensemaking (e.g., just look at the assessments administered at the very beginning of the year first and then continue chronologically).

**Phase 3 Activity**

Use the space below to first describe observations about the assessments listed on the Inventory. Then add analysis comments and notes. Summarize overall findings at the end.

| Month \_\_ Observations & Analysis  Month \_\_ Observations & Analysis  Month \_\_ Observations & Analysis  Month \_\_ Observations & Analysis  Month \_\_ Observations & Analysis  Month \_\_ Observations & Analysis  Overall Summary |
| --- |

**Phase 4: Write Recommendations for Every Assessment**

Write recommendations (eliminate and replace; eliminate and do not replace; keep as is; keep as is with modifications) with a rationale and additional information *for every assessment* listed on the Inventory. You will complete this in the Excel sheet Inventory.

**Next Steps**

* Create a plan with the team for how these findings and recommendations will be shared with others to secure buy-in and facilitate a common understanding. Different audiences/stakeholders may need different communication (e.g., other leaders, teachers, school board, parents, and students).
* Duplicate the review process with other grade spans and schools.
* Optional: Go deeper and conduct a classroom assessment system review (see Teacher Module 23) to examine the quality of the assessments and system of assessments administered by teachers for grading purposes.

**References**

Some of the ideas about how to conduct a local assessment system review and what should be included in this tool were adapted from two related sources: Achieve’s *Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts* and Education First’s *Playbook* that illustrates how Achieve’s Inventory can be used.

Achieve (n.d.). Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts. Retrieved from <https://www.achieve.org/assessmentinventory>

Education First. (n.d.). Fewer and better local assessments: A toolkit for educators (playbook). Retrieved from <https://www.education-first.com/playbook/>

1. This tool excludes formative classroom assessments. A separate review can be conducted by teachers, drawing on this open-source learning module: [Teacher Module 23: How do you know if you have a high-quality classroom assessment system?](https://docs.google.com/document/d/17rvK7mZkZAVBpji_WPxTweGaFjm0j6oEYTURa7bkvnA/edit?usp=sharing) [↑](#footnote-ref-0)