AISD Assessment Philosophy (DRAFT)

Introduction

Understanding how students are achieving as they progress through their educational career is important, but difficult to measure. Parents "want to know how their children are progressing academically. They want to know how they compare with other children, and they want accurate measures of whether their children are on track to be successful in college or careers" (Hart et al., 2015). Additionally, parents want to know how their children are progressing socially and be able to identify their students' academic weaknesses. A user-friendly tracking system that monitors student understanding of various concepts is informative.

Assessing students is essential in understanding their level of achievement and how they are progressing with respect to their peers. Assessment comes in a variety of forms: performance-based, portfolios, multiple choice tests, writing assignments, etc. Regardless of the form of the assessments, without some standardization when administering and scoring them, the data are difficult to interpret. Standardized multiple choice assessments have been popular in the past because they provide this standardization, are easy to administer, and require minimal time to administer and score. Other assessments may be more authentic, but require more time to administer and score, and produce scores that are not as reliable (e.g., writing assignments). Securing 100% grader calibration on scoring is desirable, but is a nearly impossible task and still does not guarantee 100% consistency.

In the assessment process, it is essential to align a test's purposes with decisions most likely to be made in practice and policy contexts (Caines, Bridglall, and Chatterji, 2014). "Done well and thoughtfully, assessments are tools for learning and promoting equity. Assessments must be:

- Worth Taking
- High Quality
- Time-limited
- Fair – and Supportive of Fairness – in Equity in Educational Opportunity
- Fully Transparent to Students and Parents
- Just One of Multiple Measures
- Tied to Improved Learning (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, p. 1)"

Reliability and Validity

Assessment data should be both reliable and valid. When possible, the AISD Research and Accountability Office will analyze the scores from local assessments for reliability and validity and make recommendations for ways to improve the assessment process to the AISD Curriculum Office.

Key types of reliability are:

- Internal Consistency
- Test/Retest
- Alternate Forms
- Test/Retest With Alternate Forms

Key types of validity are:

- Response Process Validity
- Face Validity.
- Content Validity
- Construct Validity
- Concurrent Validity
- Predictive Validity
- Known Groups Validity
- Consequential Validity
- Convergent Validity
- Discriminant Validity (NSSE, 2017; Trochim, 2006)

Please note that relying solely on subjective assessments (e.g., teacher observations, portfolios, and performance based assessments) can potentially provide unreliable and invalid measures of student progress (Stiggins, 1995).

Informing Student Instruction

The use of assessment data should be maximized while minimizing the time spent on assessment. It is suggested by the Assessment Reform Group (as cited by Wiliam in Tan, 2015), that in order to inform student instruction with assessments, we should ensure that

- "It is embedded in a view of teaching and learning of which it is an essential part;
- It involves sharing learning goals with pupils;
- It aims to help pupils know and recognise the standards they are aiming for;
- It involves pupils in self-assessment;
- It provides feedback which leads to pupils recognising their next steps and how to take them;
- It is underpinned by confidence that every student can improve;
- It involves both teacher and pupils reviewing and reflecting on assessment data" (p. 190).

Formative Exams/Summative Exams

Formative exams are exams that students take to assess understanding during the learning process (e.g., grade 4 math). Summative exams are exams that students take at the end of instruction for a specific curriculum and are used to indicate mastery level of the content taught and whether or not the student is ready for the next level of curriculum in that discipline (e.g., grade 5 math).

<u>Curriculum Assessments (Formative):</u>

Curriculum Assessments (CAs) are assessments that measure a student's mastery level of a course or the content for a specified period of time (e.g., the 1st six weeks of a course) for the purpose of informing instruction. When possible, the passing standard is set at the same level of difficulty as other externally accepted standardized exams (e.g., the STAAR/EOC exam) for that course in order to have meaningful interpretation of data from one curriculum assessment to the next, as well as, to those external exams. When curriculum assessments are administered periodically throughout the course, educators are able to monitor how students are performing throughout the course in relation to standardized exams administered at the end of the course (i.e., monitoring of student progress). In addition, curriculum assessments allow for measurement of vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum for consistency of implementation. For example, the fourth grade curriculum assessment is designed to measure how consistently the Grade 4 Math curriculum is being implemented throughout the district.

<u>STAAR/EOC Benchmarks/Blueprints (Formative):</u>

Benchmarks/Blueprints are released STAAR exams that measure the entire content of a course as related to the live STAAR exam at the end of the course. Benchmarks/blueprints are used to predict the performance of students (and provide data for interventions) on the STAAR exam at the end of the course as well as identify any persisting gaps that need to be addressed in order to ensure students' preparedness for participation on STAAR/EOC . The most effective model for administering benchmarks/blueprints is to administer them at the same point in time of the curriculum each year and in the same environment as the STAAR exam at the end of the course.

<u>STAAR Exam (Summative)</u>

The STAAR/EOC Exam measures the entire content of a course as related to the identified state TEKS assessed and indicate whether or not a student is ready for the next level of curriculum in a specified discipline. STAAR/EOC exams are summative exams. STAAR/EOC exams are also used to measure alignment of the district curriculum to the state curriculum.

Types of Measures

Standardization**: Scores have similar meaning from one student to the next

High Stakes

**Multiple Choice Tests
Performance Based Tests
Writing Assignments
Class Grades
Portfolios
Observations
Group Projects**

Objective
- Multiple Choice
- Rubrics

Continuum

Subjective

Consequences
- School Ratings
- Graduation
- Promotion
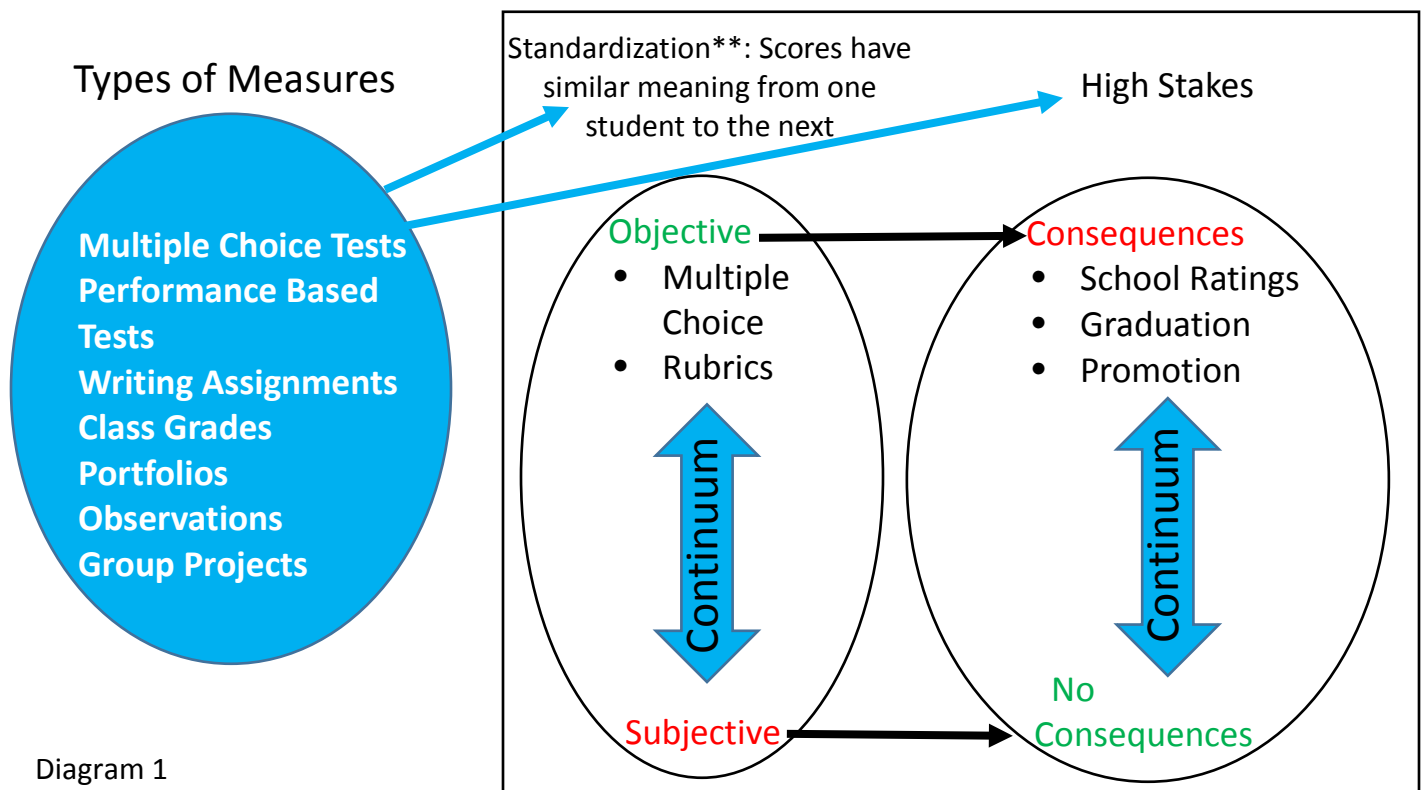
Continuum

No Consequences

Diagram 1

**Without standardized measures it is difficult to understand how a student performs. Teacher grades are not necessarily standardized.

Using diagram 1, one can see that there are numerous types of measures that can be both standardized and not standardized as well as high stakes and not high stakes. The current standardized multiple choice assessments that most states use in accountability are only high stakes when some consequence is attached to the results. Any assessment can be made into a high stakes assessments simply by attaching a consequence to the results. Likewise, accountability only factors in when there is some consequence attached to the results. The current state standardized multiple choice tests can exist without being high stakes or used in accountability.

Philosophy
The assessment philosophy of the AISD is grounded in the belief and the expectation that all students should have access to and mastery of a shared, guaranteed, and viable curriculum. Common assessments (local and state) are administered to measure and report the level of student mastery of learning concepts in specific content areas. The AISD recognizes that system-wide improvement (e.g., implementing best instructional practices) maximizes student learning; however, individual student interventions are necessary as well. Thus, the AISD implements a balance of two broad assessment approaches: 1.) assessing to gather data to make campus/district systemic improvements, and 2.) assessing to report achievement data of individual students in order to provide appropriate student interventions. Ideally, the AISD

would like to maximize the use of data to inform instruction with as minimal amount of time spent on testing as possible.

<u>Assessing to gather data to make campus/district systemic improvements</u>

- Allows for a more efficient measure of overall system performance
- Promotes and sustains long-term improvement of system-wide teaching and learning
- Exposes strengths and gaps in the campus/district curriculum and instruction

<u>Assessing to report achievement data of individual students in order to provide appropriate student interventions</u>

- Provides a more comprehensive look at the learning needs and strengths of each student
- Reports the achievement results of each student
- Allows for the application of individual student interventions

Guiding Principles
- Assessment is not a punitive, accountability-driven interruption to the learning process; rather, assessment is an essential component in the formation and certification of student knowledge and skills.
- Data from assessments guide teachers, administrators, and district staff in the instructional decision-making process as well as inform stakeholders of student achievement progress.
- All students are provided a balanced assessment system that includes a variety of formative and summative assessments at the classroom, district, and state levels.
- Student achievement is monitored at the district level via interim *curriculum assessments* that measure student mastery over a specified set of curriculum as well as *benchmark assessments* that provide a system-wide picture of student achievement as it pertains to corresponding state assessments.
- Through various forms of assessment, the diffusion of knowledge – which is generally considered a *foundation* for success, but not a *predictor* of success – is measured regularly and communicated expediently.
- State assessments serve as system-wide summative measures of student mastery of state-identified student expectations.
- At the classroom level, all students engage in ongoing formative assessment experiences for the purpose of self-monitoring their current attainment of knowledge as well as setting goals for further study.

Planning Assumptions
- Curriculum Assessments (CAs) are administered periodically throughout the year as a measure of the district's taught curriculum and are aligned to the district's written curriculum scope and sequence. CAs are typically administered in subjects that have a corresponding state assessment in the current and/or following grade level.
- Benchmark Assessments are administered once a year and measure the entire curriculum for the grade level in alignment to the state assessment. Benchmarks are only

administered for subjects for which a corresponding state assessment exists during the current school year.

- End of Year (EOY) Assessments are administered to a randomized sample of students in grades 3-11 in core subjects and foreign language courses for which no corresponding state assessment exists. Data collected from these assessments in conjunction with data collected from the state assessments are used to monitor the complete core curriculum in Grades 3 – 11 in order to provide feedback for curricular adjustments.

Data Disaggregation

Typically, data for each assessment are reported by student, teacher, campus, and district and disaggregated by various demographics. These data are used for instructional diagnoses, program evaluation, curriculum evaluation, school improvement plans, and accountability (*The Curriculum Management Improvement Model Level I Audit Training Program Book 1 of 3*). Appropriate professional development is conducted with teachers and administrative staff that addresses appropriate data interpretation and the appropriate responses to these data as well as assessment design. These data should not be punitive in nature for the student, teacher, or principal, but rather informative. Reports are delivered through various hardcopy and online reporting tools.

Assessment Design

The end-goal is to have assessments that measure the level of students' mastery and district implementation of the K-12 curriculum in all core and non-core areas. Local assessments are written at the appropriate level of rigor. Periodically, data from these assessments are analyzed for reliability and validity (*AISD curriculum Audit*) to ensure consistent and meaningful measures of the curriculum.

References

AISD Curriculum Audit

Caines, J., L. Bridglall, B., & Chatterji, M. (2014). Understanding validity and fairness issues in high-stakes individual testing situations. *Quality Assurance in Education*, *22*(1), 5-18.

Hart, R., Casserly, M., Uzzell, R., Palacios, M., Corcoran, A., & Spurgeon, L. (2015, October). Student testing in America's great city schools: An inventory and preliminary analysis. Washington, DC: Council of Great City schools. Retrieved from http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/87/Testing%20Report.pdf

Tan, K.H.K. (2016). Asking questions of (what) assessment (should do) for learning: the case of bite-sized assessment for learning in Singapore [Electronic version]. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, 16(2), 189-202.

Trochim, W.M.K. (2006). Measurement Validity Types in *Research Methods Knowledge Base*. Retrieved August 14, 2017, from http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/measval.php

NSSE. (n.d.). *Validity*. Retrieved August 14, 2017, from http://nsse.indiana.edu/html/validity.cfm

Stiggins, R.J. (1995). *Sound Performance Assessments in the Guidance Context*. Greensboro, NC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Student Services. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED388889)

U.S. Department of Education. (2015). Fact Sheet: Testing Action Plan. Retrieved August 14, 2017, from http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-testing-action-plan