

School Board Action Report

“Every student achieving, everyone accountable”



DATE: June 17, 2009
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**STRATEGIC THEME/
FOCUS AREA:** Ensure Excellence in Every Classroom

TITLE AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Approval of Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) contract to allow implementation of Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) in the 2009-10 school year.

For Introduction:	June 17, 2009
For Action:	July 1, 2009

TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION/EVALUATION

Upon Board approval of this contract, staff will begin implementation of MAP in approximately 79 schools for the 2009-10 school year.

RECOMMENDED MOTION

I move that the contract with NWEA be approved as attached.

ISSUE

Excellence for All set student assessment as a top priority in Seattle Public Schools (SPS). One of the key themes expressed by stakeholders when conducting strategic planning was the need for accountability across the system as well as data on student achievement that supports academic growth. In a survey of ways that central office could better support principals, 86% of principals said that useful student achievement data that will shape instructional practices is one of the top five needs. Instructional staff also requested “useful student achievement data to inform instructional practices.” Further, the curriculum audit identified the need for a comprehensive assessment system to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum.

Through the Strategic Plan, we committed to pilot the computer-based MAP assessment in 2008-09, and by 2009-10, to implement assessments district-wide to track student progress and help teachers respond to student needs. Currently, schools administer more than 15 types of benchmark assessments; this wide variance hinders the district’s ability to support schools in using assessments and to track progress toward our strategic goals as a system.

As a result of more than one year of work to develop an assessment strategy, incorporating best practices and lessons learned from current assessments, staff recommended implementation of MAP district-wide, beginning in the 2009-10 school year. MAP is a computer-adaptive

benchmark assessment offered in reading, math, language use and science, for students in grades K-10, designed to be administered three to four times per year. In SPS, schools will administer only the reading and math tests three times per year in grades K-9. The assessments take about 45-60 minutes per subject to complete, although they are untimed. Teachers have immediate access to student scores after students complete the tests. The reports are detailed, showing for teachers the specific skills students have mastered and need to work on. MAP is aligned to Washington state standards and is used by 131 school districts in Washington state and thousands of districts across the country.

As schools begin using a new assessment, they will stop using other assessments. The district will discontinue the DRA requirement in grades K and 1 (except for struggling students), discontinue the Edusoft math benchmark assessments in math, and discontinue the PSAT in 9th grade.

Implementing MAP district-wide will promote the district's strategic direction by providing better information about whether we are meeting our goals. Implementing MAP will provide more frequent student data that will inform instruction to improve student outcomes.

Many stakeholders within SPS – primarily students, teachers, and principals – will be impacted by this decision. In order to support staff, we are prioritizing assessment as we plan professional development. We have also hired, with grant funding, four Instructional Coaches focused solely on data and assessment to train school staff on how to administer the test and coach staff on how to use and interpret MAP data.

BEST PRACTICES

To begin this work, a consultant was hired last year to provide background research on assessment best practices, inventory current assessments in SPS, and identify current priorities of assessment among SPS stakeholders. The consultant report recommended the district prioritize its purposes of assessment, streamline the number of assessments administered, and increase “data literacy,” or knowledge about how to use assessment data, among teachers and principals.

To select a set of assessment tools, the project team prioritized the implementation of a district-wide benchmark (three times per year) assessment in SPS beginning in 2009-10. The Team also studied the results of the MAP pilot this year. The Team researched and analyzed several other benchmark assessments, developed criteria to use in selecting assessments, and identified three that could potentially meet the needs of SPS:

1. Continue Edusoft math assessments, adding a high school math benchmark, and adding the Scholastic Reading Inventory in grades K-9;
2. MAP in grades K-9; and,
3. Stanford-10, a norm-referenced test, in grades K-9.

The criteria used to reach these options were:

- The ability to administer the assessment two-to-six times per year;
- Alignment to state standards;
- Predictability of WASL performance;

- Adaptability to specific populations (bilingual, special ed, advanced learners, struggling students);
- Speed of turnaround time for results;
- Measurement of student growth;
- Usability of results for teachers; and,
- Ease of communication with families.

By far, MAP most closely met the set criteria. In particular, MAP has the greatest ability to adapt to specific populations and to measure student growth. Another key consideration was the district's experience building assessments from an item bank, which is the strategy used currently with Edusoft. This process is very time-consuming for instructional coaches as it requires annual review for validity and alignment to the curriculum. With a pre-packaged assessment such as MAP, this work is done by the vendor. Finally, MAP is best aligned to state standards; other Washington state districts using MAP have seen a correlation rate of at least 80% between MAP and WASL scores. The Stanford-10, which is a norm-referenced exam, is not specifically aligned to state standards.

Pros and cons of MAP identified by the Assessment Team included:

Pros

- Aligned to state standards
- Adaptable to special populations through computer adaptability
- Results are immediately available to teachers and principals
- Measures student growth with the option to compare to growth norms
- Would have one test for reading and math across levels with a single vertical scale

Cons

- Computer-adaptive test requires computer labs in schools
- Requires more up-front professional development
- Logistical support from school staff is needed
- In some cases, impacts library use and librarian time
- Because the test is adaptive, teachers cannot conduct item analysis and must rely on other tools provided with this assessment

RESEARCH AND DATA SOURCES

A follow-up survey of MAP teachers conducted after the winter testing window showed:

- 78% had reviewed their students' MAP data; and,
- 57% understood how to determine student growth from fall to winter.

Teachers also rated MAP higher than other assessments with respect to:

- Turnaround time for results (89%)
- Amount of data on student skills provided (71%)
- Student growth data provided (68%)
- Usability by teachers to use results to inform instruction (63%)
- Amount of time required (61%)

Teachers rated MAP "about the same" as other assessments with respect to:

- Alignment to state standards (49%); and

- Adaptability to special populations (bilingual, special education, advanced learners) (29%)

POLICY IMPLICATION

The district's testing policy, C40.00, will be reviewed after the policy audit is complete and a workplan developed.

FISCAL IMPACT/REVENUE SOURCE

\$369,333.91

- The source of revenue for this contract is from BTA II funds that have been designated for strategic plan priorities in FY10.

Expenditure: One-time Annual

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The community was updated on the work of the assessment strategy in the community meetings held on May 5, 7 and 9, 2009. Staff also briefed the School Board on the assessment strategy at the May 20 Board meeting, which was televised. We plan to engage families in MAP by sending a letter to all parents updating them on the new district-wide assessment and by having teachers discuss MAP data at parent-teacher conferences in fall 2009.

Our goal is to have all comprehensive secondary schools, as well as the vast majority of elementary and K-8 schools, implement MAP in 2009-10. However, some schools may not have the technological infrastructure necessary to administer a computer-based assessment by this fall. Approximately 20 elementary and K-8 schools do not currently have computer labs and we are working to provide computers to these schools. The attached contract with NWEA assumes 83 schools will implement MAP in fall 2009. This is a high estimate; should the number of students tested decrease, the contract amount will decrease commensurately. The contract amount will be no higher than the amount listed in this Action Report.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

I recommend this contract be approved.

ATTACHMENTS

1. [NWEA Contract](#)
2. [Schedule A of Contract](#)
3. [MAP Overview](#)
4. [5/18/09 Superintendent Memo to Principals](#)