

Conference Sessions

Session 1: Next Generation Education Systems

Keynote: Peter McWalters, Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

This session will focus on the public education system that next generation assessment and accountability systems are intended to support. There is little argument that the current public education system was not designed to accomplish the current goals or meet the current demands placed upon it. In what areas can the historical, cultural, political, and physical structures of the current public education system be adapted to meet future needs, and in what areas is it necessary to start from scratch? What is the purpose of public education and what goals are consistent with that purpose? What type of education system is needed at the federal, state, and/or local level to support goals such as equal access and opportunity for all students, 100% proficiency, and all students prepared to succeed in postsecondary education and training, or simply all students graduate from high school?

Session 2: Next Generation Assessment Systems

Keynote: Stuart Kahl, CEO, Measured Progress

This session will focus on moving beyond the preeminence of and overreliance on large-scale assessment to building balanced assessment systems that support instruction and classroom learning. Topics will include the role(s) of various levels of assessment (state, district, classroom) and various types of assessment (summative, interim, formative), the types of information that different types and levels of assessment are best suited to produce, and how they can be combined and results reported coherently. What types of measures, beyond traditional, quantitative content area assessments, are needed to measure key aspects of school or district performance? What organizational structures powerfully support the processes of using assessment information to inform learning and teaching? What do we already know about assessment at each level, and how do we move from the current top-heavy state to a balanced system? The session will also address issues related to the assessment of all students within a balanced system. A key topic addressed will be the pre-service and in-service preparation of teachers and administrators to assess student performance in the classroom and use data/information from assessments.

Session 3: Next Generation Accountability Systems

Keynote: Eva Baker, Director, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, & Student Testing (CRESST), UCLA

This session will focus on the relationship between the purpose and the design of accountability systems. In public education (K-12, K-16, birth through life) whom do we want to hold accountable and for what? What assumptions are implicitly and/or explicitly built into current accountability systems designed to meet NCLB requirements? In what ways do those assumptions support and in what ways do they undermine our long-term goals? What might next generation accountability systems look like to meet those goals? Must they continue to be based on large-scale assessments and the counting of individual students who have met a particular target? Will they remain focused on a narrow set of key outcomes, include a broader set of outcomes, or include an evaluation of process indicators as well as outcomes? Will a single set of indicators or outcomes be used to gauge performance at the state, district, and school levels? How might technical, practical, and social challenges be addressed to implement these improved accountability systems?