

Accountability: An Unfulfilled Promise?

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Background

- Test based accountability is not a “new” idea.
- Nearly two decades ago, Linn was discussing “balanced accountability” and the use of summative assessment for high stakes accountability (2000, 2002, 2003).
- Since then, states have investigated a myriad of ways of creating accountability systems through NCLB, waivers, and now ESSA.
- Has accountability fulfilled its promise?

Background

- The Center has been extensively involved in accountability design from the beginning.
- At the Center we've had the honor to work with some of the most intelligent and hard working state leads to develop and implement accountability systems.
- We've tried (and invented) almost everything under the sun with regards to summative accountability.
- Has accountability fulfilled its promise?

Background

- There's some evidence to suggest small systemic improvement attributable to high stakes accountability (Ahn & Vigdor, 2014)
- I'd wager that most who were enthusiastic about the possibilities of large scale assessment and accountability are underwhelmed with the results in 2018.
- Has accountability fulfilled its promise?
- Probably not.

**Insanity Is Doing the
Same Thing Over and
Over Again and**

Expecting Different

Stepping Back

- Seriously, how much systemic improvement should we expect from an optimally designed accountability system?
- In terms of John Hattie's Visual Learning Effect Sizes, what's the upper bound? 0.25, 0.5, 1.0?
- Expectations for what accountability can, in theory, yield leads to different paths forward.

Stepping Back

- If there is an expectation that an ideal system can yield significantly superior results to current systems:
 - Worthwhile to improve current systems.
 - Changes to improve current systems to reach optimal status likely to be significant.
 - Small tweaks (e.g., fifth indicator, demographic adjustments) unlikely to bend the needle yield big changes.

Stepping Back

- If there is an expectation that an ideal system will do about as good as current systems:
 - From an efficacy perspective not clear whether
 - Changes to improve current systems to reach optimal status likely to be significant.
 - Small tweaks (e.g., fifth indicator, demographic adjustments) unlikely to bend the needle yield big changes.

Conclusions

- We're optimistic: We feel there is likely significant improvements possible from an optimally designed accountability system.
- Will likely require most than just tweaks to existing systems.
- My colleagues have some ideas in that regard :-)

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