|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **District Assessment System Design Toolkit**  *Workshop #1, Advance Reading #1* |
| *Orientation to the Project* |

**Developed By**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Joseph Martineau** | Senior Associate |  |
| **Kathy Dewsbury-White**  **Ed Roeber** | President & Chief Executive Officer  Assessment Director |  |
| **Ellen Vorenkamp** | Assessment Consultant |  |
| **Steven Snead**  **Jonathan Flukes** | Supervisor, Curriculum & Instruction Unit  Research, Evaluation, & Assessment Consultant |  |

# Memorandum

## FROM: < Project Champion >, < Title >

## < District Liaison >, < Title >

## DATE: < Date >

# SuBJECT: Orientation to the District Assessment System Design Project

As you know, you have been selected to participate in our district assessment system design project. This memorandum is intended to orient you to the work you will be during over the course of the next < length of time >. We thank you for agreeing to engage in this important work.

## Why We Are Engaging in This Project

We are looking forward to < designing a new district assessment system | revising our existing district assessment system > so that it fulfills the needs of all of our stakeholders. We know that this will be hard work but will be worthwhile because we do not believe we have satisfactory answers to some of the following questions:

* Do we have a coherent and effective district and school assessment system to complements and enhances instruction? Does it serve student, teacher, administrator, and policymaker needs, and with good balance?
* Was the system designed so that teachers, principals, and administrators share power in service of providing students the best possible education? Or does the collection of tests feel more like a collection of bricks than a well-designed house?
* Does each test have a clear and appropriate purpose? Are these purposes clearly understood? Agreed to by all parties? Are current uses appropriate to the test purposes? Is it clear what uses are appropriate, and which are not for data from each test? Does it feel like some tests will crumble under the weight of use?
* Are some tests given by tradition without a clear understanding of why? Do we experience “system creep,” with new tests added but old ones rarely dropped? Are test data actually used when they become available? Are tests used for new purposes without explicit attention to whether the new uses are appropriate?
* Are our tests (taken as a set) coherent, or do tests prescribed by the state, district, school, or the classroom teacher conflict with each other in timing, content standards, or results?
* Does it feel like, overall, testing disrupts rather than facilitates instruction?

If at least some of this sounds familiar, then we are in good company. We can improve our situation by intentionally and thoughtfully designing an assessment system. But designing, implementing, and maintaining a coherent district and school assessment system is challenging work. It requires the will to work together across all levels in the district.

It requires time for a team of stakeholder to intentionally consider our most important instructional and assessment purposes, and to design a system that supports those purposes. Maintaining a system over time requires clear policies that refer back to the purposes of the assessment system, and periodically, the time and effort to keep the system coherent and useful. This is needed to ensure that the design of the assessment system evolves intentionally to meet changing needs, without continuing to hold on to components that are no longer useful or necessary.

## What the DASD Toolkit Is and Is Not

We will be using the District Assessment System Design Toolkit. The DASD Toolkit is intended to provide a structure for a team of our stakeholders to have the difficult conversations, in a principled manner, that are necessary to design a sound and useful district assessment system. It will help us structure a process over a set of three workshops, ultimately providing us with assessment system design documents.

The Toolkit materials stop at the completion of the design process. While it does provide some documents that can help us plan implementation, implementation is another process that requires additional effort, from selecting or designing assessments to meet each need identified in the design process to providing professional learning opportunities and other support to various stakeholders in the system (e.g., district leaders, district central office staff, school leaders, and teachers). We know this will still require additional effort even after the design workshops

## Issues the DASD Toolkit is Designed to Address

Several issues that must be addressed in designing a coherent and useful district assessment system. Based on conversations among some of the author team, some key issues are identified in Table 1 below. The DASD Toolkit is intended to address those issues.

Table 1. Addressing challenges and needs in the toolkit.

| Challenge | Associated Need | How the Need is Addressed in the Toolkit |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Limited Utility | Address conflicting needs within a single system | By including all key district stakeholder roles in the process. |
| Poor Assessment  Literacy | Basic assessment literacy | By developing a shared, consistent, and coherent assessment vocabulary necessary for designing a district assessment system. |
| Poor Assessment Use Literacy | Basic assessment use literacy | By developing shared, consistent, and comprehensive, shared, coherent vocabulary around assessment purposes and uses, and identifying the types and characteristics of assessment(s) appropriate for each use/purpose. |
| Parsimony | A system that minimizes duplication (and thus the amount time devoted to formal test taking) | By using a disciplined process to identify a prioritized set of uses and purposes. This is followed by (for each purpose/use) the smallest set of assessments that can adequately fulfill those needs. This may be reflected in tweaks to, considerable modification of, or wholesale replacement of an existing system. |
| Incoherence | A system in which various components form a coherent whole to create a comprehensive and balanced set of information about each student’s achievement | By attending to coherence throughout the disciplined design process. |
| Power Boundaries | A system in which educators share power and collaborate across all levels in the system (from the classroom to the district superintendent and school board) | By attending to power sharing and power differentials through the disciplined design process. |
| Implementation  and Maintenance  of an Assessment  System | A plan for implementing the system that attends to potential hurdles and protects against *ad hoc* modifications to the system | By using a disciplined process that identifies anticipated hurdles from all stakeholders’ perspectives. This includes near-term barriers to implementation and a plan for addressing them. It also provides a strong set of design documents that can serve as a foundation for ongoing evaluation of the sufficiency of the system and for evaluating (1) whether existing assessments should be continued as is, (2) whether and how they may need to be modified, and (3) whether and how any new proposed assessments would fit into the overall system. |

## What We Will Invest

The DASD Toolkit is not a “silver bullet.” It requires commitment from district leadership to invest in, support, and follow up on the work of a small Facilitation Team and a larger Design Team. The investment comes in the following forms:

* Procuring the services of an External Facilitator who is also a measurement expert.
* Materials, food, and facilities to host three six-hour design workshops.
* Time for the members of the Facilitation Team to prepare for and conduct the three workshops and to follow up on homework assigned in advance of each workshop.
* Time for all members of the Design Team to do pre-workshop homework and attend each of the three workshops.

## What We Will Get in Return

Upon conclusion, the External Facilitator and District Liaison will deliver to the Project Champion a package containing the following:

* A summary of the existing assessments used in the district
* A document describing the Design Team’s proposed district assessment system design
* A report describing how the team created the final design
* A document describing potential barriers to implementation with associated strategies to address them.

These deliverables will both document why the system was set up the way it was and serve as a baseline for returning to as the system evolves. Returning to this new baseline can help the district ensure that the evolution continues to be intentional, coherent, and balances the needs of various stakeholders.

This investment will give the district a strong baseline from which to begin the real work: implementation. To assist with implementation, the district may desire additional follow-up meetings with the External Facilitator to review progress in implementing and improving the system. The External Facilitator may be able to provide expertise on difficult issues and an independent viewpoint not constrained by living within existing district systems.

## Your Homework to Prepare for Workshop #1

We would like to use our time together as productively as possible. Therefore, we ask that you carefully read the remaining five advance readings (2 – 5) before coming to the first workshop. As you read, please note any questions, concerns, or needed clarifications. You will be able to raise them during a brief review of the vocabulary and purposes of assessment.

## Members of the Facilitation Team

There are four key project leadership roles necessary to make the district assessment system design process successful. They are:

* Project Champion
* External Facilitator
* District Liaison
* Meeting Coordinator

### Project Champion

The Project Champion for this project is < name and title >. < She or He > has a vision for our district assessment system and has a charge for our work.

< vision for the district assessment system >.

< charge to the Leadership and Design Teams >.

The External Facilitator for this project is < name and title >. < brief bio for the External Facilitator, giving credentials an expert in assessment at the various levels, e.g., classroom, school/district, state, nation >

The District Liaison for this project is < name and title >. < brief bio for the District Liaison, giving credentials an expert in assessment at the various levels, e.g., classroom, school/district, state, nation >. < name > was selected by < name of Project Champion > to work directly with < name of External Facilitator > and our Meeting Coordinator to plan and carry out the assessment system design workshops. < She or He > will also participate in the Workshops as a member of the Design Team and coordinate the Design Team’s completion of homework after each workshop.

The Meeting Coordinator for this project is < name and title >. < relevant information about the Meeting Coordinator, including history of coordinating logistics for stakeholder meetings >. < name > was selected by < name of Project Champion > and < name of District Liaison > to work directly with the rest of our Facilitation Team to carefully address logistical needs so our workshop meetings are as smooth as possible.

## Members of the Design Team

We have carefully selected members to represent the district central office, school leadership, classroom teachers <, and parents>. < The people we have selected to perform this important work have all agreed to serve on the Design Team because they understand how important it is to get this work right >. The table on the next page shows the full membership of the Design Team. Again, thank you for agreeing to join us in this work. We look forward to learning and working together.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| District Design Team Member | | Representing | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Role | | | | | | | | | | Specialty Area | | | | | Discipline | | | | | | Level | | |
| Department Chair | District Administrator | District Central Office | Instructional Coach | Parent | School Administrator | School Board | School Counselor | Teacher | Teacher Leader | Assessment | Curriculum | English Learners | Special Education | Title I | Arts | Language Arts | Mathematics | Physical Education | Science | Social Studies | Elementary | Middle School | High School |
|
|
|
|
|
| # | Name |
| 1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 13 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 15 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 16 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 17 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 18 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 19 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 20 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 21 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 22 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 23 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 24 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 25 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 26 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 27 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 28 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 29 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 30 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

< Enter “X” in each white cell to the right of each person’s name to indicate the role(s) the person represents. Delete any extra rows >