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|  | **District Assessment System Design Toolkit**  *Project Report* |
| *Version 0.9 (beta) released June 29, 2018* |

**Developed By**

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| < District Logo > | **< District Name >**  **District Assessment System Design Report** |
| < External Facilitator Name >  < External Facilitator Title >  < External Facilitator Affiliation >  < Date > |

# Executive Summary

< District Name > made a decision to invest in examining its existing assessment system and designing a revised system. The district did so by selecting a team of district administrators, school administrators, and classroom teachers from all levels of schools in the district (<list of levels, e.g., elementary, middle, and high school >) to engage in a principled process carried out in < number > workshops of three and a half hours each. The workshops were conducted at < location of workshops > on < dates of workshops >.

< If applicable, indicate any financial or in-kind contributors to the project beyond the district >.

## Why the Work is Important

Assessment is a key component of education, supporting instruction, instructional programming, program and policy evaluation, placement, eligibility for programs, grading, and eligibility for honors or awards. However, it is rare that there is a carefully constructed system that is able to provide each stakeholder in a district the information they need in which each type of assessment complements the other and sends a clear and consistent signal about the kinds of knowledge and skill the district values. Because there are so many stakeholders that need information about student learning for different purposes, and any given assessment is only good for a small set of purposes, a district assessment system can easily become out of balance and even bloated.

The work the < district name > team did through this principled process addressed many challenges that can make a district assessment system feel incoherent and like an obstacle rather than a tool to improve learning and instruction.

## The Principled Process and the Challenges It Addressed

The three workshops were conducted using the District Assessment System Design Toolkit[[1]](#footnote-1), which was developed to address several challenges to developing and maintaining a district assessment system that serves students, their educators, and district policymakers with the appropriate balance. The specific challenges addressed by the toolkit are presented in the table below.

**Table 1. *Challenges Addressed in the Principled Design Process*.**

| **Challenge** | **Associated Need** |
| --- | --- |
| Assessment Literacy | Shared vocabulary/understanding of types, characteristics, and purposes of assessment. |
| Appropriate Use | Shared understanding of what assessment types/characteristics match intended purposes |
| Parsimony | A system that minimizes duplication (and thus time devoted to formal test taking) |
| Coherence | All components form a coherent whole to create a balanced picture of student learning |
| Power Sharing | A system in which educators share power and collaborate across all levels in the district |
| “Systemness” | An approach to developing an *assessment system* rather than a *collection of assessments* |
| Implementation | A plan for implementation that attends to potential hurdles |
| Maintenance | A plan for thoughtful revisions so that the **system** remains a **system**. |

## The District Assessment System Design Team

The district selected a team of < number > members to participate in the process, with broad representation of < teachers, administrators, counselors, other? >, as follows:

* < # > participants from the district central office
* < # > participants representing < level, e.g., elementary school >
* < # > participants representing < level, e.g., middle school >
* < # > participants representing < level, e.g., high school >
* < # > administrators
* < # > teachers
* < # other key groups? >

The complete list of participants is provided in Appendix A.

## Results of the System Design Process

In the three workshops, the district team prioritized the purposes of the district assessment system, identified the types and characteristics of assessment that will be used to fulfill those purposes, and developed a timeline and plan for implementing the system they designed. The results are provided in three sections: a narrative vignette describing the system, a schematic representation of the system, and a high-level outline of the plan for moving from the existing system to the newly designed system.

### Design Team Recommendations

< in bullet form or narrative form>.

Note that professional learning will likely be necessary for most of the system, as shown in the schematic below. Some professional learning resources may be available from the state.

# Workshop 1

In Workshop 1 the Design Team first reviewed key assessment vocabulary. The purpose of the review was to address the issue of a fractured vocabulary in the field of assessment, where the same term is used to mean different things by different people. Sometimes this is just a natural outgrowth of a developing field, and sometimes this is because a term has been used inappropriately to market assessment products. The definitions of key terms are provided in Appendix B.

The team next reviewed a considerable list of purposes for assessment, which are provided in Appendix C.

To finish the first workshop, the team began performing an audit of the existing district assessment system using a Workbook that used the vocabulary and purposes reviewed in the workshop. This was completed between Workshop 1 and 2. The results of the audit are provided in Tables 3 and 4 below. The table was developed by evaluating the characteristics of the assessments entered into the audit against the purposes entered into the audit for the same assessment. The ratings of how well the characteristic of assessments matched the purposes listed is based on an expert rating of the degree of match by staff at the Center for Assessment.

# Workshop 2

In Workshop 2, the district team reviewed the results of the district assessment audit, using the figures on the following page. <summary of the figures on the following page>.

### Detailed Results of the District Assessment Audit

< insert the large table from the WS2 Audit Summary tab in the Project Workbook >

### Summary Results of the District Assessment Audit

< insert the small table with rainbow-colored cells from the WS2 Audit Summary tab in the Project Workbook >

Following the review of the results of the district assessment audit, the Design Team selected a subset possible purposes of assessment to design a system that is simple enough to be feasible but comprehensive enough to serve the needs of the various stakeholders. From that subset deemed important enough to include, they then prioritized those purposes relative to each other on the scale *low*, *mid*, *high*, and *critical* (where the prioritization is relative to each other; the entire set was deemed important in the first step). Based on that ranking, the Project Workbook showed what mindsets/types and characteristics of assessment were best matched with each intended purpose, giving greater weight to *critical* priority purposes than *high* priority purposes, which were in turn given greater weight than *mid* priority purposes, and so on.

By starting with *critical* and *high* priority purposes, the team was able to select mindsets/types of assessment and characteristics of assessment that were ideally-matched or strongly-matched to the most important purposes as determined by the team. The team was then able to move on to *mid* and *low* priority purposes and were able to use some of the assessments already selected for higher-priority purposes if it was felt that a stronger match could make the system more complex and burdensome that was justified.

The results of that activity produced a design matrix giving a strong depiction of what the final recommended system would include. The design matrix is shown in the figure on the next page. That figure was interpreted by the External Facilitator to produce the narrative and graphical vignettes of the recommended system as given in the Executive Summary and on the following pages. The graphical vignette bears some explanation. A complete slide deck explaining how all of the components work together has also been created. It builds up the system piece by piece to show the roles of various stakeholders, the kinds of assessment that are intended to be used, and how they fit together. This schematic can be helpful in evaluating whether any new proposed components of the district assessment system will fit within a coherent system of assessments. It also gives a sound basis for periodically evaluating whether there are modifications needed and doing so in a principled manner.

### Design Matrix Resulting from The Project.

< insert the first table from the WS2 Activity 3 tab of the Project Workbook >

< interpret the matrix here. The matrix was created to be sufficiently detailed to be able to tell a coherent story about how the different pieces are intended to work together and what they are to be used for. It could be put into bullet form, but it could also be put into a more prose style. >

### Design Schematic Resulting from the Project.

< insert the last slide of the design schematic PowerPoint presentation >.

< note here that this figure is helpful, but it is more helpful to see the complete set of slides where the system is built up piece by piece >

# Workshop 3

In Workshop 3, the Design Team reviewed the narrative and graphical vignettes of the district assessment system described by the design matrix developed in Workshop 2. The Design Team reviewed both products and finalized them for inclusion in this report.

The Design Team also reviewed a comparison between the existing district assessment system as described by the assessment audit and the new design resulting from Workshop 2. The difference is shown in the figure on the following page.

The Design Team also began the process of identifying potential barriers to implementing the new system design, identifying potential strategies to address the potential barriers, and began the process of planning the next steps, which include the following:

* Developing a timeline for implementation
* Identifying who will be responsible for selecting and/or developing assessments that meet the design criteria from the project.
* Identifying the professional learning needed to implement the new system at the classroom, school, and district level in a way that is consistent with the narrative and graphical vignettes described in this report.
* Identifying who will be responsible for identifying and coordinating the needed professional learning activities.
* Developing a plan to periodically check in on progress toward implementation (and, when necessary, reviewing implementation for quality and consistency with the high-level design criteria identified in this project).

# Appendix A – Members of the District Assessment Design Team

All members of the District Assessment System Design Team are listed in the table shown below, demonstrating the diversity of roles represented by the team membership.

**< INSTRUCTIONS (TO BE DELETED)**

Groups that could be named in the right column include but are not limited to district leadership; central office staff; school administrators; kindergarten teachers, first grade-teachers, …, middle school teachers, high school teachers; special education teachers, Title I teachers, English learner teachers, career and technical teachers, mathematics teachers, English teachers, social studies teachers, science teachers, performing arts teachers, fine arts teachers, P.E. teachers, school counselors, school psychologists)

Make sure to include the District Liaison in the table >

| **Team Member Name** | **Team Member Title** | **Group(s) the Team Member Represented** |
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In addition to participating as a team member < name > also served as the District Liaison for this project. Finally, to ensure that all district team members could fully participate in the project, < name > (< role > of < affiliation >) served as an external assessment expert to facilitate the work of the district team.

# Appendix B – Key Terms and Definitions

< Insert key terms and definitions document from the workshop 1 design team packet>

# Appendix C – Detailed Analysis of District Assessment Audit

< detailed summary table from the *WS2 Audit Summary* tab of the *Project Workbook* >.

Red = no match between purpose and characteristic

Orange = weak match between purpose and characteristic

Yellow = modest match between purpose and characteristic

Light green = strong match between purpose and characteristic

Dark green = ideal match between purpose and characteristic

Numbers = number of entries in the district assessment audit

The top two rows are purposes that are applicable for most or all types and characteristics of assessment.

1. Developed by the Center for Assessment (nciea.org), the Michigan Assessment Consortium (michiganassessmentconsortium.org), Wayne RESA (www.resa.net), and Oakland Schools (www.oakland.k12.mi.us). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)