

Port Angeles School District
Assessment Committee 2009-2010 Report
July 12, 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Port Angeles School District Assessment Committee was commissioned and charged in the fall of 2003, and continues to present recommendations to direct district assessment work since that time. The superintendent's charge focused on eight areas of responsibility. The committee continues to respond to all eight of the areas in both narrative and graphic detail.

The District Assessment Committee is responsive to the Port Angeles School District Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP). Objective 2.1 states, "...consistent assessment systems will be in place at all schools to document student needs and progress in reading, writing, math, and science." The committee continues to align the district and school systems to meet this objective.

The context for the work outlined in the committee report has dramatically changed in the last few years. Increased levels of external accountability, the high stakes nature of assessment now required for graduation for all students, and the need to do our work more efficiently as time and resources continue to be more limited, have all converged to exert pressure on the viability of a sustainable and effective systemic assessment system. It continues to be more imperative than ever to have our internal assessment system match the external assessment system. With the new curriculum materials selected for use in the district, the internal assessment structures and the instructional calendar accompanying it necessarily becomes more important to be aligned.

We must embrace the idea of assessment *for* learning rather than an exclusive focus on assessment *of* learning. Further, as a system, we must develop and share a collective understanding of effective assessment content and practice. We must train our new staff in effective assessment practices, not leave this important topic to chance. To this end, the committee will engage in current research article study this coming year as we continue ways to improve our collective understanding of effective assessment practices. As the relatively new K-5 report cards become more embedded in our practice, the day to day grading practices must also keep pace in the standards based classroom plans. The sixth grade report card is a topic that will be reflected in recommendations for the coming year as this year is recognized for the pivotal nature in transitioning to a secondary structure. The entire sixth grade level team provided input into this recommendation after spending significant time piloting and researching sixth grade options.

With regard to specific content assessments, district math assessments for grades K-10 have been developed and were piloted during the 2009-10 school year. These have been reviewed by the grade level teams and the math curriculum adoption specialists. The K-10 assessments match the new math performance expectations and will be reviewed in the fall for their predictive accuracy on the MSP and HSPE assessments. These will continue to be used uniformly across the district and their data recorded in the individual school CSIP documents. Scenario assessments for science are new practices requiring professional development. Grades K-10 will continue this important work during the coming year. The middle school science teachers again spent significant

time this year collaboratively writing scenario MSP like science assessments. The middle school science teachers met in grade level band teams to review the assessment data and inform instruction in real time. With the relatively new curriculum at the ninth and tenth grade levels, the internal assessments will also need to flex and be consistent from classroom to classroom. Now since the State Board of Education has directed the high school science exam to be an end-of-course biology exam, there will be new assessment work to do in this area in the coming year.

District writing assessments will continue to be MSP and HSPE like prompts at grades three through ten, as the state is making relatively few adjustments to the writing state assessment. We will do fewer writing prompts throughout the system as we will continue to consciously pass writing samples from grade level to grade level this year. This eliminates the need to do a fall writing prompt at multiple grade levels. At all the MSP and HSPE years for writing assessments, fourth, seventh and tenth grades, the fall and winter writing prompts are still an expectation. We continue to endeavor to refine the end of year fifth grade writing assessment to integrate into the required Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) in social studies. This year, one of the reading series integrated theme tests provided the springboard for the social studies classroom based assessment at grade five. Middle and high school students, at grades eight and ten also participated in the social studies CBA work.

The writing continuum will continue to be the mode of assessment directed and supported by the district for grades kindergarten through the fall of third grade. Writing at the end of year for grades 3 and 5 are intended to be connected to the newly required social studies classroom based assessments at these grade levels. As previously stated, this is an example where we are trying to work smarter, not harder as we integrate content areas with process strategies. The district writing curriculum materials will continue to be in use for the upcoming year in grades K-8. Curriculum adoption specialists in the literacy area will be part of the comprehensive support provided for staff in this area if the budget allows.

As we continue the work of the district math curriculum committee, further assessments will no doubt be coming forward to the assessment committee for review and implementation.

Particularly, the high school math department will be developing new assessments as they revamp the curriculum with the advent of end of course exams for the incoming freshman class. These should compliment the assessments already developed for the grade nine curriculum this past year. They will be meeting twice a month on Wednesdays to work these out and then forwarding this work to the assessment committee. Both the extended block Algebra I and extended block Geometry courses will require formative assessment integration.

District reading assessments will continue with the ARI and DRA at grades one through ten. The DRA will continue at the high school level for readers at the level one on their most recent HSPE, requiring professional development for designated staff. With the advent of the reading intervention courses at the high school, the DRA gives invaluable diagnostic and intervention strategy assistance. Both middle schools and the high school will continue using the DRP as a screening for reading skills, and administering the ARI or DRA for identified struggling readers. Grades one through ten teachers have approved winter benchmark assessments using items that are MSP and HSPE released when possible. These mid-year benchmark assessments will be re-

vised in the coming year as the test map for reading has changed at the state level. The secondary teachers will be modifying the DRA for more effective use in classroom assessment practice.

Integral to the success of the new assessments has been alignment to state standards and the manner they are authored – utilizing our own teachers’ professional expertise. Finally, since we recently approved new report cards at the kindergarten thru sixth grade, teachers are now concerned about the alignment to the new state math standards. This topic has been addressed as the report card structure must be responsive to the state standards and accurately reflect student progress toward same. Parents must be able to clearly understand the purpose and goal of the report card as they partner with teachers to support strong academic achievement for all students. The new state test maps in reading and math are also being taken into consideration with the report card reporting structure.

Middle level reporting and grading practices will need to continue to be studied. The Skyward Parent Access option for parents and students is continuing, requiring continued conversation regarding grading practices at this level.

At the high school level, the correlation between grades and the HSPE is a topic continuing to get significant attention. This will be a hot topic for study of the committee in the coming year as the graduation pathways continue to come into play, particularly in the content areas of math and science. Graduation rates still continue to be a challenge for high school staff. The degree to which we can improve the formative assessment processes in challenging content areas should enable a better early warning signal for students struggling with earning required credits for graduation.

ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The staff members listed below represents the Assessment Committee membership for the current school year, 2009-2010. These hard-working professionals represent every school in the district, the kindergarten program, and the special education department. Classroom teachers, support teachers, and administrators collaborated regularly—really regularly—to produce this report. There were multiple other staff who contributed by way of the grade level team meeting process.

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Beth Backus | 9. Gary McLaughlin |
| 2. Jan Collins | 10. Michelle Olsen |
| 3. Patti Dunlap | 11. Roni Prince |
| 4. Katie Haggard | 12. Michelle Reid |
| 5. Rindy Hainstock | 13. Debra Roos |
| 6. Patti Happe | 14. Bruce Rothweiler |
| 7. Molly Hibler | 15. Kelly Sanders |
| 8. Renee Lancaster | 16. MaryAnn Unger |

BACKGROUND

The background for the need to address a district-wide assessment system lies in a state and national context as much as the local district assessment climate. As our nation and state have experienced more and more explicit levels of accountability for student achievement outcomes, districts everywhere have been challenged to set internal accountability measures to prepare their students for success in this high-stakes assessment environment. As districts struggle to develop and implement internal accountability systems that match external accountability structures, there are pressure points which come to bear on the system. Limited time, fiscal resources, technology, information-sharing structures, availability of quality assessments and/or assessment items, shared assessment understanding and expertise and clear curricular targets all combine to impose significant pressure on systems already under stress. This committee has weathered these factors and come forward with plans that are both courageous and competent.

In the autumn of 2003, it became increasingly clear that the assessment system coherence and effectiveness across the system needed focused assistance. In response to this need, the Assessment Committee was commissioned, and a Letter of Agreement between the district and the Port Angeles Education Association was signed December 18, 2003, to begin the work of a district-wide committee whose charge carried multiple objectives.

This district-wide Assessment Committee would include representation from all the schools in the system. Principals and teachers from all levels within the system would represent expertise and share thoughtful research and reflection during the course of this endeavor. The unique assessment needs of special education students were also represented by the inclusion of a certificated special education support staff member.

A significantly contentious factor continues to be the need to have an assessment system in place, while we research, review, and revise the system to have it be responsive to many competing needs. In other words, the need to maintain stability while in the midst of being responsive to a quickly changing context in which we live and work continues to challenge us.

Fundamental truths regarding assessment continue to be debated at all levels of the local and national education system. Agreeing on some fundamental beliefs surrounding effective assessment practice is necessary in the development of a coherent and effective assessment system. The collective accountability the system takes for assessment of the instructional core is directly connected to the student achievement potential for all students in the system. Assessments must inform and guide instruction.

With the various new content area curricula being put into place, the assessment committee is charged with coherent assessments to be developed, implemented and reviewed for use in the classroom. Further, with the emergence of the classroom based assessments in selected content area, the assessment committee is charged with their administration, organization and record keeping.

Finally, with the advent of the Class of 2008 (and beyond) graduation requirements, significantly more assessment topics and processes are necessary to have in place. As juniors and seniors now

are taking both more core academic coursework and continue to take state assessments into their capstone high school years, more internal assessments are required to inform the instruction at these levels. The collection of evidence option for graduation purposes at the high school level has added a layer of complexity to the assessment planning. While this remains a current option for reading and writing, it will not return as an option for math until passing the math HSPE is required for graduation.

PARAMETERS

The Assessment Committee was charged with eight specific directives (see Appendix A). The superintendent met with the committee at the outset to charge the committee with these responsibilities and lend clarity to the scope of the work. The assertion was made that the committee would be responsible for a broad range of review and recommendations to the superintendent to continuously improve the effectiveness of, responsiveness of, and value received from the assessments used by the district. The following eight responsibilities are:

- Review the assessments currently in place.
- Review and recommend revisions to the matrix indicating when district assessments are administered, the audience for the assessment, the purpose for the assessment, and whether the assessment is mandated or optional in each content area.
- Review local assessments to ensure their fit with federal and state mandated assessment requirements.
- Review proposed new assessments to determine how they will enhance the current assessment system's ability to deliver timely, useful data for learning and teaching growth.
- Review how assessments will be used to support instruction, report to parents, and identify professional development needs.
- Make recommendations for professional development to ensure the appropriate implementation of an assessment.
- Make recommendations for addition or removal of assessments as needs of teachers and students change.
- Review and recommend changes to the district's report cards, beginning at the elementary grades, in order to better link them with the state standards and the data produced by the district's assessment system.

The committee was charged to work diligently on these myriad responsibilities and make recommendations at the conclusion of the 2004-05 academic year, and each year thereafter. The committee will continue its work as the new recommendations are implemented over the next several years in order that there is a high level of support for the new expectations outlined later in this report. The committee reviewed all of these expectations at the outset of the 2009-10 year and again at the end of this year.

These parameters helped to focus all of this critical work in a context that acknowledged there were both short and long-term considerations, research, and actions which would have to be taken in order to accomplish the proposed recommendations. Significant communication and

professional development work continues to be necessary and recognized as a foundation to the success of the new recommendations.

PROCESS

In addressing the district Assessment Committee charge as outlined by the superintendent, the committee met monthly during the 2009-2010 academic year, the third Wednesday of the month. They met from 3:30 to 5:00 pm at the Skills Center. The committee read and discussed many of the major tenets of the big ideas around effective assessment system structures and strategies. Spirited conversation informed the collective thinking of the group. During the past year, the committee reviewed several articles written in current education journals or reviewed in current research. A significant goal of the committee was to not be candidates for the “assessment committee protection program” at the end of the work. The work will continue into the next year as well. The committee is one that is respected for its thoughtful deliberations and reasoned recommendations.

In addition to the meeting calendar structure and book or article study components of the process, it was determined early on that teacher voice from throughout the system was a necessary internal structure. It provides a foundation for thoughtful discourse around really thorny dilemmas in certain content areas and at certain levels within the system. To this end, an additional responsibility was made explicit to the members of the committee. They need to be a key communicator for the staff they represented at the table. This created conversation that was iterative in its nature. Staff input into this process was considered critical. Particularly with the rollout of the secondary Gradebook pilot project at grade six and the discussion on a new internal reading assessment, this communication and support role took on critical importance.

The committee has endeavored to be responsive to teacher voice, ever mindful of the need to maintain high support for the high expectations in place for teachers. Professional development for the efficient technology use of the new report card has continued to be provided and will be added for secretarial staff with the implementation of the sixth grade report card in the coming year.

With the recognition of the high need for communication around this topic, beginning of the year faculty meeting time was devoted to assessment conversations and clarification. Both internal and external data points continue to be discussed at faculty and grade level team meeting times. During the course of the year, we continue to live in parallel worlds represented by the need to live with a less than perfect system for the current year, while the committee deliberates and recommends a smoothly articulated, well-researched system of beauty for the coming years.

We are getting closer and closer to this end.....

ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

There were several significant points of learning along the way that guided the thinking and work of the committee. Among these were that it became clear for the committee to have some clear guidelines for their role as the committee developed. The following guidelines are ones the

committee, after researching and integrating the book study work, created for effective district Assessment Committee leadership and stewardship:

- Having a vision of excellence in assessment that is in balance in terms of understanding and meeting the assessment needs of *all* users, from students, parents and teachers, principals and district administrative staff, to board members and legislators.
- Understanding the conditions, including the assessment competencies of teachers and administrators, that must be in place for a balanced vision to be attained; that is, knowing the path that will take you from where the district is now to an assessment system that is in balance.
- Understanding the research on classroom assessment, recognizing that assessment quality and accuracy, descriptive feedback, and student involvement in assessment are essentials in realizing the gains available to schools and systems when principles of assessment *for* learning are routinely applied in the classroom.
- Leading the district team to excellence in assessment by securing and allocating the resources needed to remove barriers to completing the journey.

The result of committee consensus is essentially reflected in the assessment schedule and plan utilized this year attached as an appendix to this report (see Appendix B). The committee engaged in spirited dialog, inspired problem-solving, thoughtful research and intentional planning.

A system that is in balance will ensure that the right kind of assessment is used for the right purpose, and that assessment will be used to continually improve student learning. Through the use of high-quality assessments *of* and *for* learning, linked to the targets of instruction, all students will be able to show what they know and can do.

A high quality assessment system relies on a variety of assessments to provide timely and understandable information to all who need it, so they can make the instructional decisions that maximize student success. In this sense, the concept of a “total system” attends carefully to the following:

- Defining the achievement expectations to be assessed; in other words, clear curricular targets.
- Understanding who is to use assessment results and how.
- Deciding when and how student achievement will be assessed.
- Communicating results effectively to intended users of the assessments, whether they are students, parents, teachers, administrators, the board or community.

Lastly, a tenet that frames our vision is that in an organization that functions as a system, we know that the system is viewed as a whole, with all component parts connected, each working toward a common purpose. Those component parts affect each other over time, and so actions taken in the system consider all components rather than function as isolated decisions with a narrow focus. We contend that, because of the diverse information needs of instructional decision makers, the only assessment system that can work effectively is one that balances the effective use of periodic, standardized tests with the effective use of day-to-day classroom-based assessments. Reporting practices must be timely and accurate.

This area particularly informs our work as a committee. Both the assessments themselves and how we use them are critical to the success of the internal accountability system. Further, how we communicate to students and their parents becomes an integral part of the effectively functioning system.

All of the aforementioned information describes the context in which we find ourselves today, with the increased level of external accountability expected from our community, the state, and nation. The committee spent considerable time getting clear about this context and the big ideas guiding our district-wide assessment efforts. As the committee continues its journey and leadership of the assessment system work in this district, all conversations necessarily will be framed by this context. It is interesting to note the focused attention being given currently to common assessments across the educational system. Both at the state and federal levels, policy makers are focused on common assessments. Our district is well prepared to compete in these topic areas.

The narrative recommendations will be organized by responding to each of the eight charges the committee was directed to address by the superintendent at the outset of the work:

1. Review the assessments currently in place.

The committee continues to spend a considerable amount of time reviewing the assessments currently in place. The extent to which the assessments respond accurately to the state standards was reviewed as well as their timing, purpose and frequency. This bulleted charge item will address only the review of the assessment(s) themselves.

Assessments were reviewed in the core areas of reading, writing, science, social studies and math. Given that the state has delayed the science competency requirement for HSPE mastery and graduation, the science assessments are still being refined and implemented. The K-8 assessments have been completed and are ready for publication and systemic use.

This year state assessments had a different look. At grades 3-8 the WASL was replaced by the Measurements of Student Progress (MSP), which was administered in May instead of April. This assessment featured no extended response items, fewer short answer (two-point) items, and completion items (where students must provide an answer) as well as a greater percentage of multiple-choice items. The reading, math, and science assessments required one day each instead of the previous two days.

At grade 10 the WASL was replaced by the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE). It had changes similar to those described above but continued to be administered in March for reading and writing and April for math and science.

Since state assessments this year eliminated extended response (four-point) items in all grade levels, benchmark assessments in reading were revised to eliminate any extended response items.

The benchmark assessments in math for grades 3-8 were also changed to reflect the current math standards. Field tests were developed for each of these grade levels. The high school developed one test for grades 9-10 for one year use. Next year the state is changing to end-of-course assessments in algebra and geometry. These will require the development of more formative assessments over the course of the year so instruction can be adjusted to meet the needs of students.

High school math department members wrote a math assessment to be administered to eighth grade students so that incoming ninth graders would be more accurately placed. Further, a seventh grade math placement test has been written and is being implemented for better placement of seventh grade math students.

Another new feature of state assessments this year was online testing. The committee supported the middle school's interest in participating in online testing. Reading tests in grades 7 and 8 and math tests in grade 8 were administered online over a longer testing window—May 3 to June 4. The district technology staff did all the preparation work necessary for these assessments to take place. A few tests—22 out of 892—had to be administered with the traditional paper/pencil because of accommodations that students required.

With regard to the review of district writing assessments, the committee spent significant time early on looking at the different writing prompts at the different grade levels. Spirited discussion ensued with regard to prompt design, sequencing and purpose. The current prompts were retained with the annual review of released writing prompts left as an option so that the anchor papers are as current as possible.

With regard to the review of district reading assessments, the committee spent a considerable amount of time reviewing the major reading assessments currently being required of students. The Developmental Reading Assessment™ (DRA) currently being utilized in grades one through eight was reviewed. The committee approved a recommendation to pilot the Analytical Reading Inventory (ARI) in grades 3-6 for students at and above grade level instead of the DRA. The DRA would be continued for students below grade level. At the middle school and the high school, the ARI would be used instead of the DRA. The committee felt that the ARI could provide as much useful information as the DRA with less time required for administration.

2. Review and recommend revisions to the matrix indicating when district assessments are administered, the audience for the assessment, the purpose for the assessment, and whether the assessment is mandated or optional, in each content area.

The bulk of the committee work this year lay in the tasks defined by this bullet item. The committee spent a significant amount of time reviewing content area assessments and the nature of requirements connected to these. Keeping in front of us the notion of audience and purpose for these assessments continues to guide our thinking.

Clearly, the committee wanted to address these topics, and the accompanying chart (see Appendix B) is an effort to do this by the core content areas we addressed this year. This chart includes classroom-based assessments as well as a separate chart more specifically outlining these as-

assessments. One CBA that was moved at the outset of this year was the elementary physical fitness CBA which the committee approved moving from grade five to grade six. This enabled a reduction in the amount of assessments the fifth graders had to participate in. Previously, this spring assessment cycle had been deemed onerous by the fifth grade staff. Moving the assessment has relieved the pressure for these students at the fifth grade level and seems more developmentally appropriate for them as well.

3. Review local assessments to ensure their fit with federal and state mandated assessment requirements.

The committee integrated their review of the assessments (as outlined in bullet one) with the task set intended under this charge. The federal *No Child Left Behind* Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements and implications were discussed. As the number of these required assessments has increased, the load on the system continues to increase. Integral to this review was the realization that more specific information is necessary for student achievement to flourish and for other ancillary mandates to dovetail more efficiently, e.g., the required individual student learning plans. Teachers, students and parents become more significant partners in this context.

The committee looked at the state GLE documents in the core assessment areas and also the test map implications for reviewing type and style of writing prompts, reading or math prompts. It is clear in the review that both the content and the style of the district mandated assessment(s) must match the content and style of the external assessments. The science scenario assessments also reflect this work. The social studies CBAs, fine and performing arts CBAs, and the PE CBAs are also being reviewed in an effort to provide more systemic support for teachers and students. As previously stated, these assessments have been paced differently to support students and staff.

4. Review proposed new assessments to determine how they will enhance the current assessment systems ability to deliver timely, useful data for learning and teaching growth.

The committee did not review many new assessments during this past year. The committee is supportive of assessments collaboratively constructed by teachers that are aligned with the state standards and can inform instruction in real time.

An example would be the sixth grade math teachers who met collaboratively multiple times this year with support from the district. This was a most productive year as they developed and piloted common unit assessments. The extensive use of state assessment requirements helped frame their work. Again, the teacher-developed assessments contributed to the shared understanding of the purpose and use for the assessments developed. The Assessment Committee approved this process and oversaw the work.

5. Review how assessments will be used to support instruction, report to parents, and identify professional development needs.

The committee will continue to address the tasks outlined in this bullet item. Clearly, an analysis of all currently proposed assessments must include how they support and guide instruction.

A necessary function for the system is the manner in which we must share assessment data, particularly grade level to grade level in a more coherent and systemic manner. Currently, a significant reason for the feelings of overload is that everyone feels responsible for everything. As we share more with each other and refine our collective understanding of standards across the system and within buildings, we will have more real time data to inform instruction.

Professional development needs will continue to emerge from our intentional look at assessments. The better the assessments we utilize, and our expertise in using and interpreting their results, the more effective we can be. We will continue to use the day prior to the work day in August to review the data from the previous year. District grade level team meetings throughout the year will also review data as will teachers engaged in collaborative time activities during the year. Also, Tuesday early release days and Wednesday late start days will be utilized in terms of looking at data as it informs instruction.

6. Make recommendations for professional development to ensure the appropriate implementation of an assessment.

It is imperative that the work of the district's Assessment Committee be done in concert with the work of the Professional Development Systems Council (PDSC), the district committee charged with oversight of the professional development system in the district. While one of the most significant factors in the development of new assessments is the participation of the teachers in the design of the assessment, a real professional development need will be the orienting of new teachers to the system or grade level to the assessments and what we do with them in our district and at our schools. In particular, the new math assessment work and 'test talks need continued professional development.

An example of the professional development designed to meet a new assessment need was the work done to prepare teachers for the use of the new secondary gradebook pilot report cards for sixth grade teachers. The Skyward Parent Access program will require continued professional development and monitoring as we implement it at the sixth grade across the district in the coming year. Classified office professional staff will also need professional development.

The committee realized that, as part of its recommendation on piloting the ARI, teachers would need training in the use of that instrument. There are enough current staff members familiar with the instrument that will be able to provide that training. The training is proposed to occur during the Tuesday early release days and the Wednesday late start days depending on the grade level of staff.

7. Make recommendations for addition or removal of assessments as needs of teachers and students change.

Once the proposed assessment system is underway and in the implementation phase, a significant part of the work will be the continued monitoring of the assessments in place and their scheduling, use, necessary professional development, etc. As can be seen in the attached chart, recom-

mendations are being proposed that endeavor to address the changing needs of teachers and students in an increasingly more accountable climate and context. Our ability to be responsive at all levels of the system will ensure our success in this rapidly changing context.

This particular bullet item argues for the continuation of the Assessment Committee work for many years to come. This monitoring, with clear goals and frameworks is critical for this well tuned, smoothly articulating assessment system to flourish. Again, end of course exams at the high school level will also require scrutiny for a formative framework to guide instruction for these critical subject area tests.

8. Review and recommend changes to the district’s report cards, beginning at the elementary grades, in order to better link them with the state standards and the data produced by the district’s assessment system.

As noted in last year’s report, the committee supported a pilot of the secondary gradebook for all sixth grade teachers. Teachers would have multiple gradebooks so they can continue to give separate grades in math, reading, writing, science, social studies, PE and fitness, and music. The district would provide a separate report card attachment to allow teachers to report on behaviors that promote learning. Family Access would also be a feature of this pilot.

The district provided training for sixth grade teachers in the use of the secondary gradebook in August. As of December 1 parents were given the necessary information for logging in to Family Access on Skyward. In April the committee surveyed sixth grade teachers about their experiences with the secondary gradebook (Appendix C). The committee also surveyed parents about their experiences with Family Access (Appendix D). Based on the information contained in these surveys, the committee recommends continued use of the secondary gradebook in all sixth grade classrooms and of the separate report card attachment. Further, the committee recommends having the specialists trained in the use of the tool so that they can post grades to the system as well.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

There are several salient points that the Assessment Committee wants to continue to underscore with these recommendations. A significant point of our recommendations lies in the strong preference for classroom teachers to be part of the development, construction and review of the mandated district-wide assessments. The development and scoring of these assessments is a valuable professional development activity in and of itself as it enables teachers as professionals to really familiarize themselves with the curricular targets and state assessment expectations. Where teachers will continue to be challenged is in the grade spans that do not yet have state testing “released items.” For these grade spans, the assessments will be more internally constructed and will need continued refinement for them to be responsive to the changing teacher and student needs. We continue to review these at grade level team meetings.

With regard to the development and implementation of district-wide science assessments, there was a real effort being made by the building science leaders several years ago to build this into

the required professional development for the science kits at grades K - 8. This has enabled the teachers to better use their time. The grades 9 - 12 science teachers will be continuing their work to write scenario assessments that match the HSPE style for assessments. With the advent of the end of course biology exam replacing the current science HSPE, more study will need to take place to support students and staff with formative assessment in these areas. A key for the Assessment Committee will be to work in concert with the Science Committee in their recommendations for future district-wide science assessment. The test map for both the MSP and the HSPE will inform this work.

The Assessment Committee will be looking at the articulation between the writing and reading continuum at the primary level particularly. With the new writing curriculum materials in use, and the support provided, writing assessment work should continue to be prominent. Curriculum adoption specialists continue to provide support for this work as the budget allows. Several of the integrated theme tests in the core reading series will be piloted as social studies CBA springboards. This will enable a more streamlined assessment structure. This worked well this year at grade five and promises to be a logical progression for other elementary grade levels.

The district's Assessment Committee will continue to review, refine and communicate recommendations for mandated district-wide assessments. These assessments will be carefully studied and must meet the researched criteria for the context in which we find ourselves. Effectively gaining teacher, administrator, parent, and student feedback as well as communicating changes to the appropriate audiences in a timely manner will be major focal points for the committee's continued work. Maintaining stability, while needing some flexibility, requires a balanced approach to a challenging task.

The committee needs to research an organizational tool, whether or not it is technology-based, to support the management of the data and enable timely responsiveness for the assessments the district employs. Currently, the Scantron system is being used as this vehicle. The school and district CSIPs also must reflect this data in real time if it is to focus and guide the work. Grade level teams at individual schools study this data in real time. Time was also used at district grade level team meetings to review this benchmark data on the Scantron system in real time during the winter grade level team meetings.

Professional development will need to continue to be addressed as support for the assessment structures and systems put into place. Part of the new teacher training will continue to be devoted to this end. Curriculum adoption specialists will continue to support this work.

The Assessment Committee will need to continue to refine the forms and reporting tools used in the assessment system. Further, continued ways of documenting how we use assessment results will be on next year's committee work plan agenda. The Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) tool at both the school and district level is currently the significant tool for reporting and analyzing the data. In particular, the new reading assessment information will need to be more easily reportable in the coming year.

The Assessment Committee also would like to shed light on the need for schools to look at the possibility that some building schedules will need to continue to be modified during assessment

windows district level assessments are administered under more and more MSP-like conditions. This is a topic for further discussion as the committee continues its work next year. There is a definite need for these common district assessments to be administered in as similar a manner as possible across the system. Common templates as well as directions for these assessments are now being utilized district wide. This will be more challenging next year as the district assessment TOSA position has been eliminated.

Another real focus for the Assessment Committee is the movement of assessment information from one grade level to the next. How we share assessment information is critical for the system to maintain its smooth, efficient focus and function. Structures are being put into place to also share assessment information from one building to the next. Being more and more organized in this regard will enable each of us to take a bit of a breath as we will avoid so many repetitions. The CSIP form each school requires documentation of both internal and external assessment data points. These assessments inform instruction in the core academic areas and drive action plans at the individual school sites.

Classroom based assessments will need focused attention as these need to be administered in a systematic manner and the results documented for state compliance purposes. These assessments are somewhat complex and certainly require more professional development to be effectively used. The work on the social studies and physical fitness and health CBAs was significant this past year. The physical fitness CBA has been moved to the sixth grade level after much discussion on the concentration of assessments at the fifth grade level. Fine and performing arts CBAs were completed and time consuming this spring. A board report illustrating several examples of these will be provided in the fall.

Finally, a major challenge the Assessment Committee will continue to work on is how to work with students and staff new to the district or new to a grade level. If the transitions are not relatively seamless, gaps will continue to permeate the system, marring the thoughtful and systemic design and effectiveness for all students and staff within the system.

The curricula recently chosen and implemented will require significant assessment committee oversight. **Assessment drives instruction** and as such must be aligned and commonly administered across a grade band as well as a school and district. The fidelity of implementation of a curriculum can be charted by effective assessment practices. A conscious decision was made to rewrite the current internal math assessments this year as the curriculum was not as new and the state was releasing the new math standards and test map. The committee felt that the coming year provided the best timing for the review of the internal assessments connected to this new curricular target area. The Assessment Committee clearly needs to remain steadfast in its commitment to effective systemic assessment and the oversight of the new assessment system within the narrowly defined context, as it continues to be utilized next year.

With the new state math standards, new end of course exams in math and science at the high school level, and the changing graduation requirements, it is more important than ever to maintain oversight on the internal assessments required by the district. Furthermore, as the state revises its assessment structure and test maps in varied content and at varied grade levels, the district must be responsive to revisions in the district internal assessment structure.

APPENDIX A**School District Assessment Committee Charge****PORT ANGELES SCHOOL DISTRICT ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE**

The district's Assessment Committee will be responsible for a broad range of review and recommendations to the superintendent to continuously improve the effectiveness of, responsiveness of, and value received from the assessments used by the district. The general scope of the committee's charge includes the following responsibilities:

- Review the assessments currently in place.
- Review and recommend revisions to the matrix indicating when district assessments are administered, the audience for the assessment, the purpose for the assessment, and whether the assessment is mandated or optional, in each content area.
- Review local assessments to ensure their fit with federal and state mandated assessment requirements.
- Review proposed new assessments to determine how they will enhance the current assessment systems ability to deliver timely, useful data for learning and teaching growth.
- Review how assessments will be used to support instruction, report to parents, and identify professional development needs.
- Make recommendations for professional development to ensure the appropriate implementation of an assessment.
- Make recommendations for addition or removal of assessments as needs of teachers and students change.
- Review and recommend changes to the district's report cards, beginning at the elementary grades, in order to better link them with the state standards and the data produced by the district's assessment system.

11-07-03 and beyond

Appendix B Port Angeles School District Required Assessment, 2009-2010

Grade	Subject	Fall	Winter	Spring
K	READING	Screening by 9/25	Benchmark by 1/28	EOY by 6/4
	WRITING			Sample and Writing Continuum by 6/11**
	MATH			EOY by 6/4
	SCIENCE		Wood and Paper	Animals 2x2
1	READING	DRA optional	DRA all by 1/28	DRA below standard + Tchr. Dis.* by 6/4
	WRITING	Sample and Writing Continuum by 11/6	Sample and Writing Continuum by 1/28**	Sample and Writing Continuum by 6/11**
	MATH		Benchmark by 1/28	EOY by 6/4
	SCIENCE	Insects	Solids & Liquids	Air & Weather
2	READING	DRA all by 10/30	DRA below standard + Tchr. Dis.* by 1/28	DRA below standard + Tchr. Dis.* by 6/4
	WRITING	Sample and Writing Continuum by 10/30	Sample and Writing Continuum by 1/28**	Sample and Writing Continuum by 6/11**
	MATH		Benchmark by 1/28	EOY by 6/4
	SCIENCE	Pebbles, Sand & Silt	Balance & Motion	New Plants
3	READING	DRA all by 10/30	DRA below standard + Tchr. Dis.* Benchmark by 1/28	MSP
	WRITING		Narrative by 1/28	Expository by 5/29
	MATH		Benchmark by 1/28	MSP
	SCIENCE	Earth Materials	Physics of Sound	Human Body
	CBA	Social Studies by June 1		
4	READING	DRA below standard + Tchr. Dis.* by 10/30	DRA below standard + Tchr. Dis.* Benchmark by 1/28	MSP
	WRITING	Narrative by 10/30	Expository by 1/28	MSP
	MATH		Benchmark by 1/28	MSP
	SCIENCE	Water	Magnetism/Electricity	Structures of Life
	CBA	Social Studies by June 1		
5	READING	DRA below standard by MSP results + Tchr. Dis.* by 10/30	DRA below standard + Tchr. Dis.* Benchmark by 1/28	MSP
	WRITING		Expository by 1/28	Expository by 6/4 CBA—Social Studies
	MATH		Benchmark by 1/28	MSP
	SCIENCE		Astro Adventures Variables	MSP Mixtures & Solutions
	CBA/CBPA	The Arts—in Music Classes and Social Studies—Civics by June 1		

Appendix B Port Angeles School District Required Assessment, 2009-2010

6	READING	DRP by 9/25 DRA – below standard + Tchr. Dis.* by 10/30	Benchmark by 1/28	MSP
	WRITING		Expository by 1/28	Persuasive by 5/28
	MATH		Benchmark by 1/28	MSP
	SCIENCE	Models & Designs	Levers & Pulleys	Land Forms; Food & Nutrition
	CBA	Health, Fitness, and Social Studies by June 1		
7	READING	DRP by 9/25 DRA below standard + Tchr. Dis.* by 10/30	Benchmark by 1/28	MSP
	WRITING	Expository by 10/30	Persuasive by 3/5	MSP
	MATH		Benchmark by 1/28	MSP
	CBA	Social Studies--Civics by June 1		
8	READING	DRA below standard by MSP results Mini-assessments + Tchr. Dis.* by 10/30	Benchmark Mini-assessments by 1/28	MSP Mini-assessments ongoing
	WRITING		Expository by 1/28	Persuasive by 5/28
	MATH		Benchmark by 1/28	MSP
	SCIENCE			MSP
	CBA/CBPA	The Arts—in Music Classes, Health, Fitness, and Social Studies by June 1 Some may occur during 7 th grade year.		
9	READING	DRP by 9/11, by 9/18 for Level 1 students Benchmark by 12/4		Benchmark by 4/30
	WRITING		Expository by 1/28	Persuasive by 4/30
	MATH		Benchmark by 1/28	Benchmark by 4/30
10	READING	DRP by 9/10 DRA for Level 1 9/19	Benchmark by 1/8	HSPE -- March
	WRITING	Expository by 12/4	Persuasive by 1/28	HSPE -- March
	MATH		Benchmark by 1/28	HSPE -- April
	SCIENCE		Benchmark by 1/28	HSPE -- April
	CBA/CBPA	The Arts—in Music Classes, Health, Fitness, and Social Studies by June 1 Some may occur during 9 th grade year.		
11	READING	Advanced DRP by 10/23		
	CBA	Social Studies—Civics by June 1		
12	READING	Advanced DRP by 10/23		
	WRITING		Senior Project Paper by 12/18 or 5/12***	

Appendix B Port Angeles School District Required Assessment, 2009-2010

Classroom-Based Assessments

Grade	The Arts	Health	Fitness	Social Studies
3				By June 1
4				By June 1
5	Music Classes by June 1			Civics by June 1
6		By June 1	By June 1	By June 1
7				Civics by June 1
8	Music Classes by June 1	By June 1	By June 1	By June 1
9 or 10	Music Classes by June 1	By June 1	By June 1	
11				Civics by June 1

Appendix C Secondary Gradebook Pilot Questionnaire Results

Teachers responding: 9 of 11

1. The secondary gradebook allowed me to communicate to parents more effectively about student progress.

4—strongly agree 4 3—agree 4 2—disagree 1 1—strongly disagree
3.3

Comments:

I'm selecting agree because there isn't a more neutral selection. I think it allowed me to communicate with some but I was forced to copy the gradebook and email it to the ones that were not logging on. Although some were logging onto Skyward the numbers seemed to be few.

I like that I'm able to check how often parents check the online gradebook. Also, with several clicks (and some wait time), I can send copies of a student's updated progress reports to the parents' e-mail addresses on record. When I had to print out progress reports to send home during the 1st trimester, I would use over 140 sheets of paper per printing (when there were lots of assignments near the end of the trimester.) Electronic versions save the district a lot of money, and put student grades/progress in the family's living room, 24/7.

This is a great tool for communication, but many parents don't use it.

I spent more time talking with some parents trying to explain that they need to wait for me to update the online entries before they react. I also had the more worrisome parents stress out more. These parents are already highly involved in the progress and growth of their child...I did not have any increase in response from parents who don't closely track the progress of their child and I still needed to send home progress reports and make phone calls on these kids. This is something I need to do every year so I would say that the program didn't decrease this need...However, I do agree that it help me to better communicate the level 3 range. I could show parents that their child was a 70% level 3 vs. a 94% level 3. I don't see that I need this to be online. Just having the program and way to grade with percentages was the nice part. If there is a less costly program to do this, I wouldn't mind having it instead.

2. The secondary gradebook improved my ability to track student achievement.

4—strongly agree 3 3—agree 3 2—disagree 3 1—strongly disagree
3.0

Comments:

I don't know that it was any better in tracking. In some ways it was worse because the computer I have would not allow me to print a multiple class progress report. I've found Easy Grade Pro to be much more user friendly for the teacher.

This is a vast improvement, for sure, over the Standards-Based (elementary) version!!! It is very quick and easy to print report cards. There are, however, some drawbacks compared to Grade Machine. It is much slower to bring up a student's overall grades and there is a long wait to print progress reports (sometimes over an hour when trying to print in the middle of the day!) I haven't figured out how to print off a report that shows ALL students' grades and assignments in all subjects, like a hardcopy of a grade book... Many of us feel that

Appendix C Secondary Gradebook Pilot Questionnaire Results

Comments should be written free-form for each subject right on Skyward, rather than as a separate attachment with an Excel spreadsheet. Putting the comments directly on Skyward would improve tracking of achievement, because then future teachers could access the comments too.

Previous to this pilot I would use Grade Machine and then convert to the elementary report cards level system. This didn't work well because some parents didn't understand why I was concerned that their child might not pass the major assessments even though they were a level 3.

3. The district provided sufficient support for me in the use of the secondary gradebook.

4—strongly agree **3** 3—agree **7** 2—disagree 1—strongly disagree
3.3

Comments:

The training provided by the district was sufficient for me to use the system. The computer technology made it sometimes difficult. I would like additional training to attach newsletters as email.

There was initial training, but there are a few important things I haven't learned how to do yet, and don't even know if certain things are possible with Skyward, so more training or a few Q & A sessions would be very helpful. Several of us had trouble with posting grades at the end of the trimester (we apparently forgot how). A step-by-step reminder e-mail would have been helpful.

The class before school started provided the basics. Gary has been helpful following up on other questions and concerns.

My computer is outdated and has consistently given me problems loading and viewing gradebook.

4. The secondary gradebook's Family Access capability worked well for me.

4—strongly agree **2** 3—agree **5** 2—disagree **2** 1—strongly disagree
3.0

Comments:

Those that used it seemed to like it. Unfortunately, most of the parents using it are parents that don't need to. Their child is always doing what is necessary to be successful. It is the at-risk students' parents that do not or rarely access. I'm still finding that I'm making the same number of phone call or emails.

I required at-home, on-line grade checks at least once every two weeks, and tried to hold parents accountable by requiring a signature on a sheet that had students list their grades in every subject along with missing assignments. There were a number of parents who were "too busy" to go on-line to check grades and student progress. The capacity was there, but some didn't take advantage.

I'm neutral on this question. Parents haven't used the tool very much. Particularly those who have students that are struggling in school don't seem to use the tool.

Appendix C Secondary Gradebook Pilot Questionnaire Results

It worked, but the families that I would think we would want to target aren't the ones checking online. I still had to track them down and keep them aware of how their child was doing. Since this is the same as previous years, I would rather use a program like Grade Machine, etc.

5. The use of secondary gradebook resulted in students taking more responsibility for their effort and performance.

4—strongly agree 3 3—agree 3 2—disagree 3 1—strongly disagree
3.0

Comments:

I'm not finding students at the sixth grade level taking any more responsibility for their effort or performance because of Skyward. I think students, especially sixth graders, take more responsibility when there is a relationship. The use of an inanimate, computer program alone will not provide incentive for students to take responsibility.

My students went on-line every week to check their grades at school. For many, this was the first year they got to see letter grades and how their percents could change if they corrected errors, retook tests, or turned in missing work. Most students were very motivated by this and would go to great effort to get missing work in and raise C's to B's, and B's to A's, etc. In my opinion, students' taking personal responsibility was the number one benefit from using letter grades and giving families access to the on-line gradebook!! Students would use class computers to check their grades daily.

Some students check their work regularly and ask questions. Usually these are the students who are responsible anyhow. I still print traditional progress reports for many families.

Disagree -- Handling out progress reports that I required a parent signature on resulted in students taking more responsibility.

6. Please provide the Assessment Committee with any other comments you feel are appropriate in evaluating this pilot.

This program has so many benefits for the parents, teachers and students. It is a huge time saver. I LOVE IT !

Overall the grade book is a good tool, although at times it can be cumbersome. I don't know if it's a traffic issue or my computer, but I find I have to wait, sometimes several moments, to change from one screen to another. Also, I would like to be able to prepare my grade book more completely, then present it for parents to see, rather than having it posted continually. I think that's a function that's available on the program, however. I'm just not sure how to use it yet.

I don't know that a year was sufficient to assess the success/failure of this pilot from a parent standpoint. As a teacher it was at times slow and clunky. It sometimes kicked me out without my grades being recorded. I don't feel that Skyward was user friendly for teachers with the flexible grouping my teaching partner and I have developed. I was not able to move students from one class in the gradebook to another without substantially impacting the secretary. As a result the assignments that were differentiated for students did not appear that way in the gradebook. This caused those parents, who did logon, to sometimes get inaccurate information. It is designed as a secondary program, which our 6th grades are no longer part of. I do like the letter grading, but wish the system allowed for more flexibility with students.

Appendix C Secondary Gradebook Pilot Questionnaire Results

Please continue the on-line gradebook next year!! It is such a valuable resource for students and parents, and one that they will use for the rest of their years in the PA School District. Training parents to use this in elementary school should really help with the transition in middle school. I think there should be refresher Skyward training and Q and A sessions offered for teachers next year, and the elective course teachers should be included and asked to enter their own grades on Skyward.

The report card and secondary grade book have been fine. I'm disappointed that despite being trained on how to use the system, many parents and students lose their passwords and choose not to use the system.

This program has a lot of potential if we learn to utilize the communication tools present in the program to complement the gradebook.

I understand that I am one of the teachers that voted to try this program. I wanted to communicate grades using percentages rather than a 4 level system. I was frustrated that I couldn't show the difference between a "C" student who was a level 3 in grades and an "A" student who was a level 3....I'm not fond of all the extra time it takes to learn, organize and enter grades on Skyward and I still had to print off the reports and send them home. I can do this with any other program. I do like to be able to communicate grades using percentages. I will use whatever grading method the district decides to use, but if I get a vote, I would rather just use Skyward to report grades in percentages and not have the online tracking system.

Appendix D Parent Survey Response

Family Access Survey for Parents of 6th Grade Students

Surveys returned: 78

How often have you logged in to Family Access since we made it available?

- Several times 22
- About once a week 18
- A few times 18
- I have not logged in yet 20

How helpful did you find Family Access?

- Very helpful 46
- Somewhat helpful 11
- Not very helpful 1

What features of Family Access were most helpful to you?

- Viewing my child’s academic progress 57
- Checking on my child’s attendance 7
- Keeping track of my child’s lunch account balance 11
- other: 2
 - o Having dates & names of missing assignments
 - o Homework

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

- I don’t use it because it doesn’t really help my child.
- Yes, it was helpful to have the missing assignments listed so we could make those up in a timely manner.
- I am extremely pleased with the direct access to my child’s academic information.
- Don’t take it away! A great tool for parents!
- I think it’s a great idea, nice to keep up to date on what’s going on with each kid.
- Like it very much.
- My daughter was pulled from regular math and put in special math. But it still shows her in regular math and it gives her an F. There should be a way teachers can take that off their...
- I love having this available.
- I used Family Access in Sequim and loved it. Since we have moved to Port Angeles I have not logged in, unsure if it’s a new login or password.
- It is very helpful for showing both parents and students where the student needs more help and for getting kids involved in their progress