



Phase 5: Update Assessment Strategy

Make key decisions; compare to original objectives; develop & communicate strategy staff and the community

With the findings and input from the Educator Reviewers, the district Working Group is ready to consider all of the information gathered during this process to outline the recommendations it will present to the Leadership Team. This playbook encourages school systems to raise the quality of assessments and to streamline assessments wherever possible to reduce the amount of testing that is not adding significant value.

ENGAGE WORKING GROUP TO REVIEW THE EDUCATOR REVIEWERS' INPUT & DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS

While each district will manage the process differently, it may help for the Educator Reviewers to convene and present its findings to the entire district Working Group to ensure that the Working Group members fully understand the findings and input of the Educator Reviewers. Once the findings are presented and the discussion is complete, the Working Group members should share their initial reactions and impressions of the findings. In such a meeting of the Educator Reviewers and Working Group, the district's Working Group members should ask questions and raise discussion points that specifically surface areas of disagreement. If the Leadership Team ends up making a different set of decisions, it will still feel like the teachers' input was considered if the discussion among the Educator Reviewers and Working Group identifies disagreements.

Most importantly, the Working Group is hearing from the Educator Reviewers to gather knowledge and inform its recommendations to the district's Leadership Team. The Working Group should be able to make good recommendations about improving, keeping and eliminating assessments and to carefully examine what other purposes assessments might serve. For example, do students need to take an end of course exam AND an Advanced Placement test in Physics? Do *all* students need to take a reading fluency assessment multiple times a year alongside a comprehensive interim?

If your district chooses not to have the Educator Reviewers present to the Working Group, the project manager should compile the Educator Reviewers' findings to determine key takeaways and initial recommendations. Some of this input will be straightforward and obvious, due to low rubric scores in certain categories.

//Implementation Tip: Focus the Working Group's efforts by asking them to consider the following questions:

- Are these the right assessments at the right times?
- Is it too much testing to achieve our instructional goals? Not enough?
- Are the most essential standards assessed adequately over the course of the year?
- Are the assessments we're using high-quality, meaningful and reliable?
- Are some assessments being given too close in time to another assessment?
- What assessments can be eliminated, even if the review team found that they're high-quality, simply because they're redundant with other assessments?

We recommend that the Working Group review the full assessment inventory and the Educator Reviewers’ recommendations as a pre-reading for the meeting. During the meeting, the Working Group should clarify any factual questions about the inventory or the recommendations, and then engage in productive dialogue about how to address outstanding redundancies and gaps.

Given that the goal of this work is to develop a cohesive, high-quality and streamlined assessment strategy, it will be important to go through all recommendations from the Educator Reviewers and to validate or disagree. For each assessment, the project manager should elevate one of the four recommendations to the Working Group:

- **Eliminate and replace with a different assessment**
- **Eliminate and do not replace**
- **Keep and modify the assessment**
- **Keep the assessment as is**

The Working Group also might consider the following possible categories of action:

- **Change the type of assessment altogether**
- **Stop doing in select pilot schools before making a final decision to eliminate**
- **Discuss further (in this case, outline the core issues to be resolved)**
- **Make operational changes, e.g., administration or data reporting**
- **Add an assessment to fill a major gap**

Ultimately, the Working Group or the project manager should emerge with a clear rationale for each recommended change to the district’s assessment strategy. The project manager also should share the recommendations with the C-level sponsor prior to engaging the larger Leadership Team, and ask her to help tee up the key decisions being presented.

ENGAGE LEADERSHIP TEAM IN RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISION-MAKING

Because assessment cuts across so many central teams and functions, all key district leadership must be aware of and supportive of the recommendations and actions to be taken as a result of this process. The Leadership Team will reconvene to provide final signoff on the Working Group recommendations, or provide input to the recommendations to be ultimately approved by the C-level executive. (In many cases, this will be the CAO, but, depending on the district structure, it may be another C-level or the Superintendent. Your district should have defined this decision-maker in Phase 1).

The Educator Reviewers process will undoubtedly surface complicated issues. For example, two high-quality assessments that overlap in content and/or frequency and/or serve similar purposes should probably not both be given. But which is better? If a high-quality assessment has stakes for students or educators, then the district might want to take the additional step to review the assessments in much more depth, using the [SAP Assessment Evaluation Tool](#) and/or [Quality Checklist](#) to make final decisions about which assessments to keep or which to eliminate.

The Leadership Team will discuss the Educator Reviewers’ findings and the Working Group’s recommendations with an eye towards how best to create a coherent and streamlined assessment strategy, adhering to the initial goals and vision set forth. To effectively engage the Leadership Team, the meeting should begin by recapping the objectives and priorities of this project; describing the process at a high level; and providing a summary of the findings from the process. This will serve to ground the Leadership Team in the broader purpose and context of the recommendations.

Take care not to get bogged down in the minutiae of the simpler recommendations, but rather reserve time for the 2-4 most complex decisions that need to be considered by the Leadership Team. Once the meeting is concluded, all members of the Leadership Team should understand the issues and feel that they can be fully aligned with the final assessment recommendations and action plan.

PHASE 5: LESSONS FROM SYRACUSE

Syracuse issued the following guidance after their process:

Unit assessments should take no longer than one class period

Envision and EngageNY math assessments currently take longer than one class period to administer. While some students can finish in one class period, other students cannot, therefore teachers should use their judgment and foundational documents (standards and shifts) to determine which questions are most important to ask in one class period.

Teachers can modify unit assessments to obtain specific information from students to inform instruction

Teachers should determine what information and data from assessments are needed to inform instructional decisions. Teachers can modify unit assessments as necessary; for example, modifying assessments for English language learners to eliminate language barriers and cultural bias where appropriate.

Unit assessments should not be administered in two different subjects within a week of one another

To the extent teachers are able, unit assessments in two different subjects should be appropriately spaced out so that students are not given multiple unit assessments within a week.

Unit assessments that fall within a week of interim assessments should either be eliminated or rescheduled at the discretion of the teacher or school

Interim assessments, including Math ANet and ELA ANet, are each administered at three different times during the school year. In many cases unit assessments in those subjects fall within a week of these interim assessments. To limit the amount of assessments students take during that period, teachers should try to reschedule or eliminate the unit assessment.

DEVELOP ACTION PLAN TO IMPLEMENT DECISIONS

At the highest level, once the decisions or recommendations are finalized, the Leadership Team should be able to articulate the district response to the following questions:

- **What was the core problem this process was designed to solve?**
- **What assessments have been eliminated? Added?**
- **Why are the remaining assessments important?**
- **How will the remaining assessments be used?**

Now that the Leadership Team has provided its input, the Working Group will develop an action plan to implement the decisions. This action plan will result in an updated assessment strategy, which should include:

- An Assessment Framework, with clear goals and priorities



- An Assessment Map
- A Timeline for Implementation
 - What to tackle for upcoming school year
 - Priorities over the next 2-3 years
- Specific quality assurance steps for assessments in need of improvement
- An ongoing process for review and annual improvements

BUILD PLAN FOR ONGOING MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT REVIEW

//Implementation Tip: Use communications and change management strategy to ensure final recommendations are supported by stakeholders.

The district team should develop these plans that outline the work ahead. This should begin with reconvening Educator Reviewers to share the final decisions and action plan so they can serve as positive ambassadors and speak to the process.

While you don't need to repeat this process every school year, it is important to have checks in place to ensure that the revised assessment system remains current and rigorous. Assign the annual monitoring of assessments to a person or department in the district. As teacher evaluation measures, state assessments, and curriculum choices change, assessments need to be re-examined.

The student assessment inventory is not a one-time event. Districts should regularly re-examine their assessments in light of changing district needs and improvements in available assessments.

-Illinois State Board of Education