

Guidance to States on Reporting Assessment Results to Families and Educators

Several key findings emerged through the process of gaining feedback from parents, teachers and school leaders on the sample student assessment reports:

- The language and tone of the reports should be friendly, positive and personalized.
- The displayed results best engage readers if the report is simple, avoids information clutter and provides context to graphics.
- Text and font treatments can prevent readers from skipping important content.
- It is critical to provide support before, or along with, the report to guide readers through unfamiliar data or information.
- Accessibility to the report can be improved through more strategic timing and distribution via online platforms.

Language/Tone

Avoid the use of jargon to create a relatable and meaningful report for readers. Many parents found unfamiliar terms intimidating. Readers tend to misinterpret, or worse, abandon reading the report altogether when technical wording feels daunting. Direct and everyday language is important.

Keep a positive tone, even when describing unfavorable situations. Instead of using terms like “off-track,” language such as “likely to need support” or “need for improvement” provides a more constructive direction for supporting the student.

Personalize the report, when possible. Another method to create a relatable report is to use student names where applicable. It personalizes the report, enhancing ease of readability for parents.

Build consistency around descriptive words. To eliminate confusion of terms describing how well a student’s performance is, avoid the usage of multiple descriptive words throughout the report.

Displaying Results

Keep the visual introduction of results simple. To avoid overwhelming readers, start the report with a straightforward graphic of the student’s overall performance with supporting text or legends to help guide the readers.

Provide familiar points throughout the report as a guide. By creating familiarity of visuals throughout the report, readers will navigate and interpret the report with more ease.

Avoid information clutter by being mindful of content organization and whitespace. Clutter was the primary reason readers felt overwhelmed when presented with existing reports. Here are some other methods we learned in de-cluttering information:

- Create a visual badge for Performance Level tiers to give students a sense of achievement, which also makes reports more personal.
- Use color or other visual indicators for positive/negative information.

Guidance to States on Reporting Assessment Results to Families and Educators

- When using color to depict a term or situation, establish consistency by not reusing the same color to portray a different situation.
- Use different type treatments to emphasize or deemphasize certain content.

Build understanding of results by providing comparisons and context. Here are some examples we learned from the focus group sessions:

- When displaying Performance Level graphics, we provided clarity by including the cut scores that differentiate each level. For specificity, we also indicated where a student's scores fall within that scale.
- By sharing comparison data of the results, readers can examine how a student has done compared to his/her class, school, district, or the consortium. This information provided can help further explain where the student's performance is, in contrast with other students in the same grade.

Text

Make mindful decisions in text and font treatments to ensure readability. Readers tend to skim through content before reading it fully. If the text is illegible, many will not finish reading. To increase readability, here are some methods to do so:

- Avoid using small print to prevent readers from skipping important content.
- Stay away from using blocks of text. Instead, use bullet points to highlight key information.

Support

Provide resources along with or before the distribution of the reports as guidance for unfamiliar graphs and terms.

Here are some ways to include actionable guidance:

- Incorporate a concise explanation on the purpose of the test.
- Provide a number for parents to call if they had questions.
- Frame the displayed data to inform primary questions parents will have.
- Present practical next steps for readers to take.
- Suggest guiding questions for parents to feel more comfortable in initiating conversations with teachers.

Accessibility

Ensure that the availability of the report aligns with the timing of decisions that depend on the information in the report. It is important for the available data to drive certain decision making, especially for teachers. Depending on the state's or district's goals, these reports may be useful for a



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variety of occasions: from determining teacher professional development next steps to driving classroom instruction improvements. Teachers have also requested access to individual student reports to help facilitate conversations with families, especially during parent-teacher conferences.

Create meaningful platforms for teachers to navigate data in more depth. The majority of the teachers expressed the desire have access to interactive data, where they can drill down as needed. Data exploration is currently limited by the lack of resources and available data. With an online platform and access to more data, teachers can approach assessment data more purposefully, especially to drive decisions in classroom instruction. Additional data teachers requested includes: sample prompts, weighting of the categories, standards tested as well as descriptions of the categories, and a student's raw scores of each category.