

School Board Meeting:

May 13, 2013

Subject:

Performance Series Test Proposal

Presenter:

Pam Miller and Jack Brady

SUGGESTED SCHOOL BOARD ACTION:

Report only. Action will be taken at the next school board meeting.

DESCRIPTION:

Background:

The district's local assessments were due for a reanalysis before committing to a continuation of MAP testing. After seven years it is appropriate to explore all available assessment options available.

Rationale for Proposal:

NWEA's *Measures of Academic Progress* testing program has been used in BHM since 2005-06. Students in Grades 2-8 have been tested both fall and spring in math and reading to identify student strengths and weaknesses and measure growth over time. While the product is widely used in Minnesota we have identified the following issues/concerns:

- ✓ MAP tests provide a composite score and major strand data only – it does not provide information at the standard/benchmark level
- ✓ MAP data is not aligned to MN standards and as a result does not help teachers to prepare their students for state tests due to a lack of connection with state standards
- ✓ Using *DesCartes* to identify student areas of need is cumbersome and unreliable
- ✓ No formative or progress monitoring component
- ✓ Student interface not engaging
- ✓ Only a relatively small percentage of secondary teachers use NWEA data
- ✓ Reports are very basic and limited
- ✓ Expensive to administer with several schools hiring substitute teachers to proctor

Before investigating other potential assessment programs the following were criteria identified:

- High correlation to *Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments*
- Ability to measure growth over time, assist in monitoring student growth and progress within and across years and establish growth targets
- Provide diagnostic achievement information about students, classes and schools

- Provide data valuable in placement process for Title I, QUEST, Read 180 and special education eligibility for SLD
- Provide high quality parent reports and instructional information for parents
- Assist in developing individualized student plans
- Help identify professional development needs

The only other option meeting the above criteria, other than NWEA's *Measures of Academic Progress*, is the *Performance Series* by Scantron/Global Scholar. Global Scholar/Scantron has been in the educational assessment field for many years. *Performance Series* (PS) is a well researched, nationally-standardized, online computer-adaptive assessment for students in Grades 2 through 10 in the academic areas of reading, math, science and language arts. PS is the primary computer-adaptive testing platform used in the eastern and southern United States but is not widely used in Minnesota at this point. PS is currently used in Stillwater, Austin, Holdingford, Brooklyn Center Jr/Sr High School and a few other schools/programs.

Like MAP, PS is a computer-adaptive assessment that adjusts to student responses to questions, allowing educators to determine a student's instructional level, independent of the students enrolled grade level, and provides rich diagnostic information linked to Minnesota state standards.

The BHM Administrative Team recommended a limited pilot of the *Performance Series* reading/math assessments for January-February 2013. Approximately 1,500 students were assessed in math and/or reading with 50 participating teachers. After the conclusion of the pilot all participating teachers were surveyed on their thoughts. A majority of piloting teachers recommended that we move from MAP to *Performance Series* for the 2013-14 school year. This proposal was presented to the Elementary, Secondary and Community/District Teaching and Learning Councils this spring and the recommendation was positively received.

The following is a partial list of the advantages of moving to the *Performance Series* test program instead of MAP:

- ✓ Retains positive benefits of NWEA MAP testing, including setting growth targets and measuring growth over time, and provide diagnostic achievement information about students, classes and schools
- ✓ Provides student performance data at the MN standard/benchmark level
- ✓ Could reinforce staff knowledge of MN standards with frequent use
- ✓ Online analysis allows for student flexible grouping down to the standard/benchmark level
- ✓ Interface easier to use and more motivating for students with color and graphics
- ✓ Many BHM pilot teachers felt students were more engaged/focused than with MAP tests
- ✓ Can create small formative/progress monitoring assessments on each standard for students

- ✓ The Achievement Series platform for creating and administering locally established common assessments is a relatively inexpensive add-on
- ✓ Higher correlations with MCA-II tests than NWEA (as determined by Stillwater Schools)
- ✓ So simple to administer that proctors should not be necessary
- ✓ Math tests can be read to students using Mac computers
- ✓ Data reports more helpful for classroom instructional decision-making
- ✓ Direct link to "Skills Connection Online" which provides online resources with activities linked to Minnesota standards
- ✓ PS tests use true norms and not user norms like NWEA (new PS norms scheduled to be released fall 2013)
- ✓ Teachers can create their own "groups" of students for purposes of reporting and analysis

Program implications:

We hope that *Performance Series* data, with its direct connection to Minnesota math and reading standards, will prove beneficial to teachers. Our goal is to provide teachers with timely data that will enable them to modify their curriculum for the benefit of their students. MAP data just hasn't proven to be as useful as we originally had hoped. We also believe that *Performance Series* data will prove more helpful at the high school level than MAP.

All staff at Grades 2-5, all math and English/reading teachers at Grades 6-8 and special education staff at Grades 2-8 will receive training on interpreting and using *Performance Series* data during the October 16, 2013 staff development day.

Financial implications:

The cost of *Performance Series* testing (\$8/student) is less than MAP (\$14/student). In addition, because Global Scholar is attempting to get a foothold in Minnesota we have been quoted a slightly lower price for 2013-14. The cost savings is so significant that we will be able to also purchase Global Scholar's *Achievement Series* for our secondary schools which is an innovative online local assessment platform. This program allows teams of teachers to create, administer either through paper or online, and disaggregate school and district common assessment data. We will be able to test the same number of students as 2012-13 and provide the necessary training for teachers in both the *Performance Series* and *Achievement Series* programs for less than the cost of MAP testing in 2012-13.

This annual testing fee is a part of the Teaching & Learning budget and requires no additional funds.

Evaluation:

We will survey staff at the conclusion of Performance Series testing in the spring. We feel strongly that staff will find value in the data and recommendation continued testing.

Next steps:

Training will begin in August for selected staff in the administration of *Performance Series* testing. All participating teachers will receive brief training prior to testing. Detailed training on data interpretation will occur during the October 16 staff development day.