

Assessments as learning tools, not accountability measures



A little less than a year ago, I shared a message here and with educators around the state, encouraging them not to delay the implementation of new college and career ready standards simply because we did not yet have assessments aligned to the new standards. The concern expressed then, and still today, is that schools will not fare well on accountability measures if instruction is focused on standards that are not aligned to state assessments.

My message then and now is that it would be a disservice to our students if we were to wait on implementation of our new standards until a new assessment was available. While many school districts set aside accountability concerns and have begun implementing the new college and career ready standards, the question I still hear is why they should bother putting time and effort into taking assessments that are not aligned to our current standards.

My answer is simple, and is laid out in a [video](#) recently recorded and distributed to public schools around the state. In the video I explain how the assessments remain relevant as a learning tool to show us which instructional strategies are working well and which may need to be reviewed. Because new assessment items aligned to the college and career ready standards have been embedded in the existing assessments, there is also an opportunity for schools to get an early look at how students may fare when new assessments are implemented.

In short, our current assessments still provide significant instructional value and should be viewed as an opportunity to gain insights into how well our students are learning. It is difficult after more than a decade of strict accountability guidelines to move away from that model and begin seeing assessments as instructional tools, but that is what we need to do. That is what I urge educators across the state to do, for the good of our schools and for the good of our students.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Diane DeBacker
Kansas Commissioner of Education