

8 tips for successful online assessment in education

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Whatever the budget or maturity level of a given educational institution, there is a trend toward putting assessments online. With this comes new opportunities, but also new challenges. In [a recent webinar](#) hosted by edWeb.net, administrators from the Hampton Township School District in Pennsylvania point out that there is a wrong way to do online assessments. Here are a few of their top tips for making sure you do them the right way.

1. Develop an instructional framework centered around curriculum design before talking about assessment

Educators must first have a deep and cohesive understanding of what they're trying to accomplish in the classroom and how they're trying to do it. Then they can look at which assessment tools can measure instruction efficacy. The technology team also needs to understand how assessment and instructional needs fit together. Otherwise, they might go off in a different strategic direction that conflicts with classroom needs.

2. Educate your budgeting team on the importance of edtech

Educational technology needs sustained funding over time because once they are started, people come to rely on them and they will require continued or even additional funding. Funding needs can change, however, and those in charge of setting expense lines need to be kept in the conversation.

3. Account for learning goals

Learning goals should heavily influence the tools and resources used for assessment. Teachers use classroom technology to support learning goals outside of the assessments, so whatever is used for testing should flow naturally from what the students have already encountered in their lessons. An assessment should not be the first time students use a piece of technology.

4. Use multiple assessment sources to gather feedback

First, teachers need time to create feedback for their students. Second, they need to use a variety of resources: individual evaluations, work over the course of a school year, input from other teachers, etc. The key is not to rely only on technology. A balanced approach that includes paper and pencil assessments can provide additional insights into students' progress.

5. Apply professional development to non-teaching staff

The IT staff support teachers in the classroom, and as such, they need to work closely with the teachers to better understand how they are using the assessments and how they can create concrete, actionable reports that the teachers can use. Since assessment reports will change what's happening in the classroom, they need to work well for the teachers.

6. Conduct important communication face-to-face

The whole staff needs to be on the same page regarding the goals of online assessments. When issues arise, in-person meetings are best. Email threads often create confusion.

7. Remember the importance of student data privacy

Whenever students are entering usernames, passwords and other personal information, the administration needs to have extra security protections. The goal is to minimize risk as much as possible without reducing the effectiveness of the assessments.

8. Encourage autonomy in your team

While superintendents should be a part of the technology oversight team, the team should also be able to function without their leadership, said Michael Loughead, superintendent of Hampton Township School District.

“That’s giving up some control and you have to build trust amongst your team, and that takes time. It’s invaluable down the road,” Loughead said. “It’s impossible to do it yourself, and it can be much better, actually, when you leverage your teams. You can’t be prepared for what’s going to happen over the horizon with instructional technology, so you have to have a team that can do it and can function at times without you directing them.”

About the presenters

Dr. Michael R. Loughead, Superintendent of the award-winning Hampton Township School District, is an accomplished educational leader with extensive experience in the development and implementation of innovative initiatives integral to excellence-driven educational programs. He was honored with the 2019 National CoSN Team Leadership Award and 2014 PASCD Supervision and Curriculum Development award and has participated as a lead instructor and curriculum coordinator with the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Program. With expertise in visionary school leadership, he is responsible for the direction and supervision of the District. Dr. Loughead further participates in the Forum for Western Pennsylvania School Superintendents, which consists of school leaders throughout the greater Pittsburgh area, and advocates for children and youth. He was selected to join Secretary Rivera’s Pennsylvania’s Superintendent Academy which is designed to drive

innovation in the commonwealth. He participates in the Pennsylvania Superintendent Advisory Council to the College Board and recently joined the National CoSN Superintendent Advisory Panel.

Dr. Jacquelyn Removcik serves as the director of curriculum, instruction and assessment of the Hampton Township School District. With 20 years as an educator, Dr. Removcik's experiences include teaching mathematics, leadership at both the school and district level, and working for a Pennsylvania Intermediate Unit. During her administrative tenure, Dr. Removcik has led professional development trainings on several state initiatives including Common Core Standards, educator effectiveness, and data analysis. Having substantial experience in curriculum design, Dr. Removcik oversees the district's K-12 curriculum and assessment programming. Within her role, Dr. Removcik has extensive experience utilizing the Understanding by Design framework and advocates for the design of meaningful and purposeful learning experiences. She has presented at several statewide conferences on the district's curriculum and assessment work. Recently, Dr. Removcik was honored as a member of the 2019 National CoSN Team Leadership Award and is also a member of both ASCD and PASCD.

Dr. Edward McKaveney, CETL has worked with educational technologies, media and security in higher education and K-12 for 25 years. Dr. McKaveney has been continuously focused on the advancement of student learning, faculty development and operational success through innovative use of technologies. In addition to being Technology Director at the award-winning Hampton Township School District, he has participated in CoSN delegations to Singapore, Ireland, Norway and Finland and serves as chair of the PA CTO Council of the PAECT (The PA CoSN state chapter). His recognitions include 2013 national CoSN Withrow CTO of the Year, 2013 PAECT Outstanding Leader of the Year (Pennsylvania's ISTE award), 2012 Pittsburgh FBI/InfraGard Champion of Change, and 2019 National CoSN Team Leadership Award winner.

About the host

Ann McMullan is Project Director for CoSN's Empowered Superintendents Initiative. Ann served as Executive Director, Educational Technology in the Klein Independent School District, near Houston, Texas until September 2013, when she and her family moved to Los Angeles, California. For 16 years Ann led the district team that provided professional development on technology and 21st century instructional strategies to 4,000 professional educators serving 50,000 students. Ann served as co-chair of Texas Education Technology Advisory Committee which developed the Texas Long Range Plan for Technology, 2006-2020. Today, Ann is based in Los Angeles working as a public speaker, writer, and education consultant focused on leadership and planning to meet the needs of today's students. Ann serves on the Project Tomorrow advisory council and is a leadership consultant with Executive Service Corps of Southern California, serving non-profit associations. Ann co-authored Life Lessons in Leadership, a guide for leaders ages eight to 88.

Join the community

Super-Connected is a free professional learning community on edWeb.net for school superintendents, district leadership, and aspiring district leaders. School district leaders face many challenges leading schools and driving school improvement.

The edWeb webinar referenced above, sponsored by ClassLink and co-hosted by CoSN and edWeb.net, can be found here.