Measuring Reading

Strategic Focus Group Report

How do we effectively measure reading?

The Office of Strategic Initiatives conducts focus groups dedicated to specific questions directed by the Superintendent for creative brainstorming and problem-solving by diverse stakeholders.

May 22, 2023

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Methodology

The Superintendent of Schools proffered a question to elevate our evaluation of reading at HCPS: “How do we effectively measure reading?”

In order to effectively explore the multifaceted interpretations, dependencies, and possible solutions to this question, the Office of Strategic Initiatives facilitated a deliberate process over the course of three months to expand thinking, have adequate time for research, and to engage stakeholders. A variety of education professionals comprised three groups to work through the question together, blend perspectives, find innovative ideas, and make recommendations for how HCPS can effectively measure reading.

<table>
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<th>Groups</th>
<th>Area of Expertise</th>
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<td>Accountability</td>
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<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>Reading Specialist</td>
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Principal
Inquiry

Each group dissected the question by broadening and narrowing the scope of the question, finding themes among the groups’ diverse reasoning, and prioritizing new questions that emerged from the exercise.

The themes that emerged reflect values, priorities, concerns, and restraints that impact how schools could provide methods and values for measuring reading.

Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation/ attitude towards Reading</th>
<th>Cultural relevance</th>
<th>College &amp; Career</th>
<th>Logistical considerations; procedures &amp; rules</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents and family</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>Professional learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>philosophy vs. tool</td>
<td>methods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic learning</td>
<td>Student lifelong</td>
<td>Interventions</td>
<td>Narrowing the gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and future needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Leading by example</td>
<td>Correlating skills</td>
<td>Data driven instruction</td>
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Participant Questions

After dissecting the question, each group identified critical data needed to inform their decision-making. Five substantive questions emerged:

1. *How many hours are we allotted to test students per grade level?*
2. *What assessments do we currently use?*
3. *What measures of success are we currently using?*
4. *What is the catalyst for the question, “How do we effectively measure reading?”*
5. *What are our legal parameters?*
Question 1: How many hours are we allotted to test students per grade level?

The State allows for 2.2% of total minutes of district assessment in a school year (1426 minutes) in elementary, and 2.3% (1490 minutes) in middle and high schools.

If we exceed this time allotment, we must negotiate with HCEA, our teacher’s union.

Teacher quizzes, unit tests, and personal choice in class assessments are not included in the minute calculation.

The [22-23 school year assessment](http://hcps.org) calendar is available on [hcps.org](http://hcps.org).
Question 2: *What assessments do we currently use?* In addition to State testing, assessments include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level(s)</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Type (diagnostic, formative, summative)</th>
<th>Frequency of Administration</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-3</td>
<td>DIBELS benchmark assessments, 8th edition</td>
<td>Diagnostic</td>
<td>3 times per year for benchmark</td>
<td>Universal screener to determine fluency measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-3</td>
<td>DIBELS progress monitoring assessments, 8th edition</td>
<td>Diagnostic, administered to students who score at risk on the DIBELS benchmark assessments</td>
<td>Every 30 days</td>
<td>Progress monitoring to determine student growth on the various subtests of early literacy skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-5</td>
<td>Fountas and Pinnell</td>
<td>Diagnostic</td>
<td>Optional assessment for students, based upon need</td>
<td>To identify a student’s reading level and progress along a gradient of text levels over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-8</td>
<td>Reading Inventory</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>3 times per year</td>
<td>To determine a student’s independent reading level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 3: *What measures of success are we currently using?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Grade Level(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)</td>
<td>Readiness tool to measure each student’s readiness across multiple domains, including mathematics.</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIBELS, 8th edition (benchmarks and progress monitoring)</td>
<td>Universal screener and progress monitoring components to identify early literacy skills</td>
<td>Grades K-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fountas and Pinnell</td>
<td>Identify a student’s reading level and progress along a gradient of text levels over time</td>
<td>Grades K-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Warning Indicators provided in Performance Matters</td>
<td>Monitor mobility, attendance, and student discipline referrals</td>
<td>Grades Pre-K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9 on-track early warning indicators</td>
<td>Criteria for adequate progress towards graduation and allows for early intervention and supports to be in place for student success.</td>
<td>Grade 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 4: *What is the catalyst for the question, “How do we effectively measure reading?”*

**Literacy is a core attribute and value at HCPS:**

- **Board of Education Strategic Plan: Goal 1:** Prepare every student for success in postsecondary education and career
- **Blueprint for Maryland’s Future: Pillar 3, Objective 1 (English Language Arts):** Students shall have equitable opportunities to become college and career ready (CCR) and shall meet the CCR standard at an equal rate
- **HCPS North Star Initiative Learner Attributes:** Readers, writers, problem-solvers, healthy, employable.

Question 5: *What are our legal parameters?*

**From the Maryland State Department of Education website March 1, 2023:**

The MCAP English Language Arts and Literacy assessments focus on the content outlined in the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards for each grade level.

**Grades K-2**
The MCAP K-2 English Language Arts and Literacy diagnostic assessments will be made available for administration in the fall of grade 1, grade 2, and grade 3 on content from the previous year of instruction. As an additional part of the MCAP K-2 assessment system, the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) is administered at the beginning of kindergarten.

**Grades 3-8, and 10**
For students in grades 3 through 8, the assessments are administered toward the end of the school year. Assessments in grade 10 are administered after a student has completed most of the required course.

**Content Standards:** Maryland College and Career Ready Standards
Ideas

Each group brainstormed solutions in each of their prioritized categories, discussed ideas together, and built off each other’s thoughts.

Next, the groups considered the scale of challenge each idea presented and the positive impact the idea could have if implemented. Groups placed their ideas on an impact-challenge chart to visualize what ideas may be the most viable or impactful.
Impact - Challenge

HIGH CHALLENGE

- Re-evaluation and alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessments, & interventions
- Clear assessment process
- A strong screening tool reduce assessment time
- Quick, specific, informal reading assessments conducted by teachers at all levels & content areas.
- Allow reading/phonics skills to determine instructional materials
- Efficient collection & reporting of relevant data to inform instruction and next steps.
- Culturally relevant for diverse groups & accessibility
- Reading report/data with quick turnaround that includes next steps to do at home for parents & family.
- Alignment of instructional framework & reading progression PreK-12
- Develop models of authentic reading assessments & provide models of authentic texts
- Develop a clear, concise philosophy of reading that will guide our decisions
- Select tools and design an assessment plan that are aligned to our HCPS beliefs and philosophy on reading development

LOW CHALLENGE

- Structure Professional Development for Analyzing & Utilizing Reading Data
- Professional development for Special Education & Reading Specialists
- Improve student/teacher ratio
- Student goal-setting, focus on what students “can do”. Develop & focus on “I can” statements.
- Assess verbal and non-verbal skills
- Use assessment tools that are engaging, resembles real life reading, centers around the interests of the age level, and mirrors instruction
- Strong, updated, early interventions that reflect the science of reading
- Continue utilizing Heggerty & DIBELS.
- Add Rapid Automatized Naming & dyslexia screener
- Allow for intentional time for teachers to interpret, analyze and research data to plan instruction
- Screen students prior to the start of Kindergarten

HIGH IMPACT

LOW IMPACT

LOW CHALLENGE

- Develop a clear, concise definition and philosophy of reading that will guide our decisions
- Promote reading as a shared process between home, school, and healthcare providers.

HIGH CHALLENGE

- Develop a portal for parents & families to access strategies for success and examples of how to support reading.
- Reevaluation of reading interventions
Group 1

**RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend that HCPS refines our definition of reading, develops a comprehensive framework for measurement, and enhances teacher capabilities to respond to the needs of every student.

*Reading is most effectively measured at the classroom level by professionals working directly with students.*

**REFINE READING**

- Beliefs
- Expectations
- Teacher

**DEVELOP COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK**

- Reading Development Continuum Pre-Kindergarten-Grade 12+
- Standards Alignment with Tiered Instructional Supports
- Specific and Measurable Success Mastery all Grades and Contents
- Multiple Measures including Curriculum-Embedded Formative Assessments
- Monitoring Tools for Daily Instructional Use

**ENHANCE TEACHER CAPACITY**

- Prioritize Time for Data Analysis and Instructional Planning
- Transition Professional Development from Program-driven to Literacy Skills and Processes
- Implement Systematic Phonics Progression
RECOMMENDATION

Reading can be effectively measured when there is an alignment between standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

GRADE LEVEL READING STANDARDS
Ensure instructors, through ongoing professional learning:

- have a deep understanding of the full intent of the standards
- understand what students need to know and do to achieve the work of the standard

READING CURRICULUM
Ensure that curriculum:

- aligns and fully addresses the grade-level English Language Arts/Literacy Standards
- includes a process that provides opportunities for students to demonstrate a deep understanding of the standards
- possesses a scope and sequence that incorporates engaging materials, lesson seeds, and performance tasks that clearly reflect the standards

DAILY READING INSTRUCTION
Ensure our teaching:

- reflects a cycle of fidelity to the HCPS approved ELA curriculum
- happens in an effective student-teacher ratio to allow opportunities for greater individualized instruction
- includes instructional planning cycles with a focus on increasing cognitive engagement to meet learners’ needs
- uses ongoing student achievement data to help address gaps within small groups and/or interventions

FORMATIVE AND CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT OF READING
To effectively measure reading, we recommend:

- selecting a reading screening tool that can be administered across grade bands at periodic intervals to monitor student progress
- providing teachers with an actionable road map for using the reading screening data to address standards-based skill gaps and to determine if further diagnostic assessments are needed
- developing a timely communication plan/portal for teachers, parents and students to include goal posts, examples and growth strategies
- including students in a goal setting process rooted in grade-level standards
RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, measuring reading effectively requires a comprehensive approach that considers multiple factors and provides ongoing feedback and support to students and teachers. Key takeaways:

1) Use a variety of assessment methods
2) Incorporate formative assessments
3) Ensure assessments are valid and reliable
4) Consider cultural and linguistic diversity
5) Measure both decoding and comprehension
6) Monitor progress over time
7) Use data to inform instruction

SHARED PURPOSE

Define and share considerations that strongly impact a successful model that effectively measures reading and encompasses the roles of all stakeholders to best prepare students to become life-long readers and learners. We believe the following matters:

- Motivation and Attitude Towards Reading
- Professional Learning
- Data Collection
- Assessment Format
- Cultural Relevance
- College and Career Ready
- Parent/Family Reports

CONSIDERATIONS

- Assessment that mirrors instruction
  - Maintains alignment between curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This sends a consistent message to teachers that ALL HCPS employees work together for the success of the student.
  - Gives newer teachers an exemplar so that they can more effectively learn to plan with the end in mind.
  - Re-emphasizes the importance of the standards that we teach.
  - Allows for consistency in the delivery of accommodations to students.

- Accessibility to all students
  - Different skills are encompassed in the big picture of accessibility, so it is important to include representatives from all disciplines when selecting reading assessment materials.
  - Assistive Technology
- Special Education
- Culturally Responsive/Culturally Neutral Assessment
- Considers English Language Learners who may have exited ESOL services, but who are still developing English language skills

- Promotes college and career readiness
  - Assessment data can be used for goal setting and/or pathway planning for students in high school looking at post-secondary options.
  - Aligned with the expectations for incoming students in HCC English courses.
  - Greater emphasis on literacy and numeracy as a need for careers that do not require college education.
  - Include more authentic informational texts that students are likely to encounter (tax forms, DMV literature, email correspondence for work, etc.)

- Timely assessment data
  - Data that can be used by the student, parent/guardian, school, teacher to increase achievement
  - Archived on an in-house system so once teachers learn it, they won’t have to relearn a new system if a contract, license, or user support runs out.
  - Data dashboards created and maintained internally for easy access and use
1. **SHARE GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS WITH:**
   a. The Board of Education of Harford County
   b. Instructional Leadership Team
   c. Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
   d. Office of Organizational Development
   e. General Curriculum Committee
   f. Blueprint North Star Early Warning Indicator Work Group
   g. Blueprint Career Ladder Work Group

2. **FORM AN ASSESSMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE WITH THE GOAL OF REPLACING READING INVENTORY.**

3. **BUILD TEACHER CAPACITY THROUGH:**
   a. systemic prioritization of professional development for literacy skills aligned to state standards, science of reading, and assessment recommendations within this report.
   b. an actionable roadmap for using standards-based reading screening data to address standards-based skills gaps.
   c. elevating the value of literacy expertise through compensation, incentives, and/or recognition. Literacy certifications or credentials that meet a level of expertise or mastery should be identified by the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, such as Orton-Gillingham Practitioner Certification or Lexia LETRS.

4. **INVEST IN:**
   a. developing assessment milestones in a continuum Pre-K through 12th grade. Tie measures into future expansion of the HCPS “Early Warning Indicators” for elementary school.
   b. literacy specialist positions in schools.
Special Thanks

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