



BALANCED
assessment
PROJECT

Goochland County Public Schools

MAY 2013

Why Assessment is Important

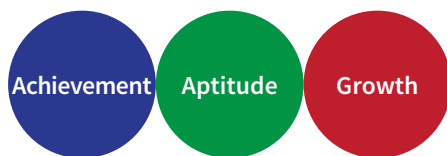
What It Means to Assess

Learning is a continuous process that starts before children come to school and continues after they graduate.

Assessments are tools we use to see what a student knows, so that **we can plan the next learning experience** in addition to reporting what progress has been made in school. Assessments come in a variety of forms: from classroom tests and quizzes to college entrance exams. They can also include informal questioning prior to or following instruction. Some assessments turn into a grade for a student, but many more are designed to course-correct instruction.

When we prepare for strong instruction, educators want to know what students already know before new learning begins. This is one of the primary purposes of assessment: *to establish a baseline of knowledge*.

Three Major Assessment Types



Traditionally, schools focus the majority of their time and energy on **achievement tests**. Virginia's SOL (Standards of Learning) tests are a measure of achievement; in this case, a prescribed minimum proficiency based on common grade level and course standards. Generally, classroom tests and quizzes and



division marking period assessments are achievement measures. These tests can be *formative* or *summative* in nature. Schools typically dedicate a small portion of time and resources to **aptitude testing**. These tests are designed to predict future success, rather than measuring a student's understanding about a body of knowledge. The SAT is an example of an aptitude test, predicting college success.

Finally, there are **growth assessments**. These kinds of tests are designed to measure *individual student progress* and can show learning trends over time. (It may be helpful to think about the growth chart (for height) in a pediatrician's office.) What growth assessments provide that other tests do not is a *student-specific measure of progress between points in time*. Growth assessments compare a student's current performance to his own prior performance, while providing teachers and parents with a clear picture of the value added by instruction, practice, and the overall school experience.

What is Balanced Assessment?

The Importance of Assessment

Teachers want to maximize instructional time. Long stretches of sustained test administration steal a significant amount of that valued time for teaching and learning each school year. This is why we are reconsidering. It's why we have developed the **Balanced Assessment Project**.

Our goals are to (1) reduce significantly the amount of traditional benchmark testing (achievement), to (2) adopt more efficient assessments that measure individual student growth in the areas of literacy and mathematics, to (3) introduce performance assessments that measure depth of knowledge and application, and to (4) provide our teachers and students with a net gain in instructional time. Back to the medical analogy: We can think of educational testing like a visit to the doctor. The right assessment profile and the resulting data (diagnosis) will help ensure achievement and individual academic progress (health) for all learners.



Balancing Assessment for a Better Picture of Progress

Achievement measures alone will always provide an incomplete picture of student learning. We support common standards and their associated measures of student achievement, but recognize the shortsighted view of learning they provide if taken to represent the complete profile of a student's learning. **A thoughtful balance of growth measures and achievement measures provides a more complete view.**

What is the real benefit of using both kinds of assessment? We believe that standards and the corresponding state assessments are an important part of achievement and accountability. However, on their own they provide an incomplete picture of student learning. The addition of progress measures aimed at capturing student growth will allow us, for the first time, *to focus on maximizing the individual potential of every child.*

Expanding on 21st Century Skills

Goochland has been working on the development of so-called twenty-first century skills with students through its **G21™ framework**. But what does a twenty-first century assessment look like?

Our Balanced Assessment Project has to look beyond traditional achievement tests to **performance-**

based assessments. Beginning in Summer 2013, we will be developing classroom assessments that give students tasks where the application of knowledge is measured, using important skills such as communication, creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration. We believe this type of assessment has great potential—it will mimic real life situations just as our G21 projects have encouraged the creation of products using real world technologies.



Assessments at a Glance

Test	PREK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	type	timeframe	purpose
Developmental Spelling Analysis		•	•	•	•	•	•								diagnostic	fall, winter, spring	to inform spelling (word work) instruction
Division Writing Prompt		•	•	•	•	•	•								achievement	fall, winter, spring	to measure writing development
Elementary & Middle Division Benchmark Tests	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•					achievement	winter, spring	reduction of over 80% of MP tests from SY 2012-13
High School Benchmark Tests											•	•	•	•	achievement	fall, winter, spring	reduction of ~50% of MP tests from SY 2012-13
Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•					growth	fall, winter, spring	to measure academic progress in literacy and math
Naglieri Non-Verbal Ability Test	•														aptitude	spring	universal screening for gifted consideration for all students
Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT)		•					•			•					aptitude	spring (winter)	universal screening for gifted consideration for all students; 8th grade for Governor's Schools applications
Performance Assessments	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	performance	winter	in development; to measure application of content and skills
Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)	•	•	•	•											diagnostic	fall, (winter), spring	to inform early literacy instruction; given in the winter for Title I
Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT)											•		•		aptitude	spring	college readiness
Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT)													•		aptitude	fall, spring	college readiness
Standards of Learning (SOL) Tests					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	achievement	spring (end of course)	to measure achievement against Virginia standards
Stanford 10										•					aptitude	winter	for admittance to Governors Schools; given in 8th grade
WISE Financial Literacy Test											•	•			achievement	spring	to measure state personal finance literacy standards

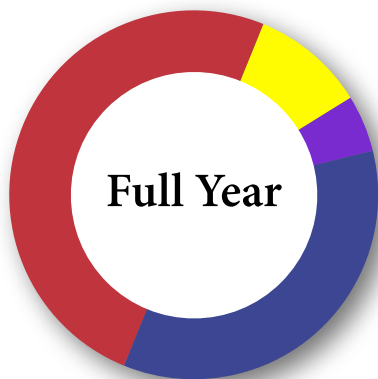
Assessments have the potential to do so much more than prepare for high stakes, required testing at the end of the year. A balanced approach can inform instructional decisions, help to foster creativity, diagnose learning styles, measure achievement, provide a platform for application of skills, and measure growth.

Comparing Our Strategy

Classic Classroom Assessments (SY 2012-13)



Proposed Changes (SY 2013-14)

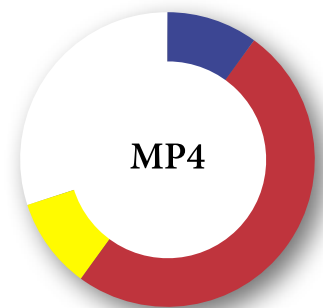
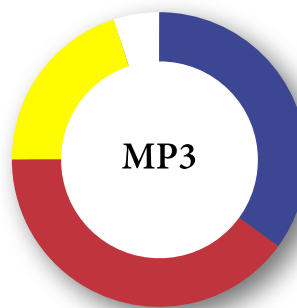
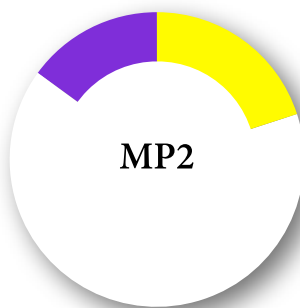
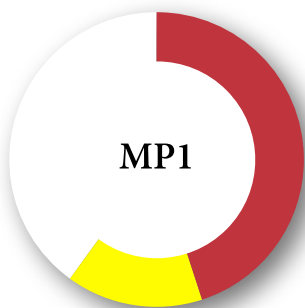


Balanced Assessment Approach (SY 2013-14)

During the 2013-14 school year, Goochland will begin adopting the use of common formative assessments in lieu of benchmark tests at the high school and in some middle school courses. Progress or growth measures will be added, while the overall number of assessments given to all children will decline.

Marking period 2 (MP2) would be an opportune time to introduce performance-based assessments that give students the opportunity to apply both skills and knowledge towards the completion of a task. These will be in development beginning in Summer 2013 in limited numbers.

Both benchmark tests and common formative achievement tests would be delivered using an online system to add to each student's growing data profile.



benchmark achievement



growth measure



common formative achievement



performance task

Spring 2013 Committee on Growth Measures

Goochland's Committee Formed

We established our Committee on Growth Measures, comprised of representatives from all five schools to address the issue of creating more balanced assessments. The team's charge was twofold:

- (1) identify and recommend the best growth measure for Goochland County Public Schools,
- (2) consider a PK-12 assessment profile that balances achievement and growth, one that more completely captures student learning.

Process

Our nine-person team met throughout the spring semester, during which time we explored the following state-approved (March 2013) vendors: *Curriculum Associates*, *Global Scholars*, *Interactive Achievement*, *Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)*, *Renaissance Learning*, and *Scholastic, Inc.* Pairs of committee members researched each assessment, identified pros and cons, and summarized findings. Finally, the team participated in on-site vendor presentations and demonstrations before reaching consensus on recommendations.

Committee Membership

Stephen Geyer, CO
Alison Gooding, GES
Preston Gordon, GHS
John Hendron, CO Technology
Michael Jarvis, GMS
Tina McCay, GES Principal
Bridget Parker, GHS SPED
Jamie-Ellen Spessard, RES
Christina Thompson, BES

Committee Recommendations

- (1) Adopt NWEA's *Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)* as our growth measure to begin implementation in Fall 2013: K-8 literacy and math; 9-12 special populations; fall/winter/spring administration,
- (2) Replace *Schoolnet* with *Interactive Achievement* as our tool for common assessments, limit division benchmark testing, and SOL test simulation,
- (3) Discontinue the following formal assessments:
 - (a) Grades K-8 MP1 benchmark testing,
 - (b) Grades K-8 MP2 benchmark testing,
 - (c) Grades K-8 math and English MP3 benchmark testing,
 - (d) Grades K-1 MP4 benchmark testing,
 - (e) Grade 2 math and English MP4 benchmark testing,
 - (f) QRI testing,
 - (g) formal math pretesting, and
 - (h) PALS non-mandated screening.

Benefits

Virginia's SOL tests measure a prescribed standard at a fixed point in time: < 400 is considered failing; 400-600 is considered passing. Does this mean that every 395 is a failure and every 600 is a success? What if the student who scored a 395 on the spring SOL test also progressed three reading levels during the school year? What if the student who scored a 600 also scored a 600 on the practice test nine months earlier?

NWEA's *Measures of Academic Progress* is a computerized adaptive assessment that tests differently, allowing teachers to see children as individuals. Each child has her own base of knowledge, with her own "starting point." The MAP test presents students with engaging, age-appropriate content. As the student responds to questions, the test responds to the student, increasing or decreasing the difficulty level. The result is a rewarding experience for the student, and a wealth of detailed information for teachers, parents, and administrators.

Interactive Achievement is a Virginia-based company that has created technology-enhanced questions in an environment that mimics the *TestNAV* system used for the SOL. Teachers can integrate this easy-to-use tool for an unlimited number of short, formative assessments throughout the year.

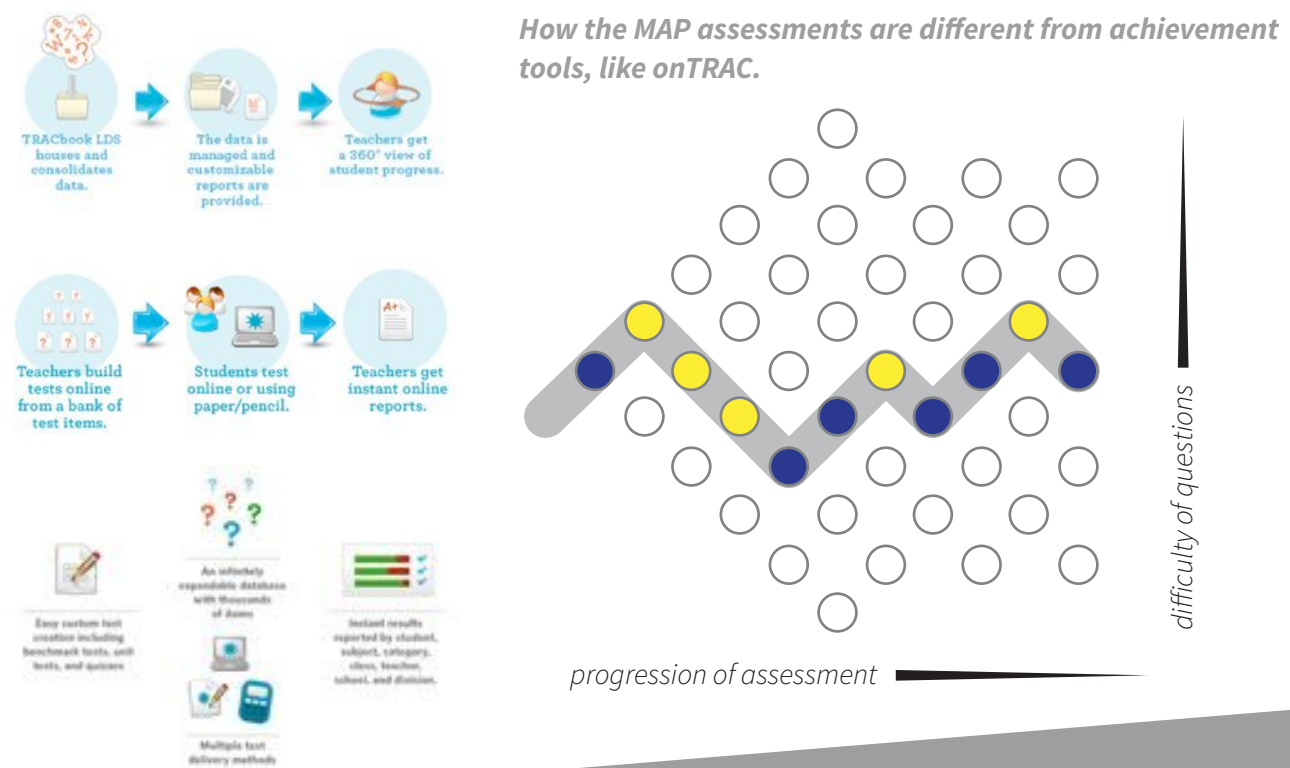
Making Assessment Easy

TRACbook and onTRAC

Technology plays a big role in being able to collect, analyze, and present the data that are collected through assessments. One tool Goochland has begun using to simplify the interpretation of assessment analysis is **TRACbook**. This product houses and consolidates data, produces customized reports for use by teachers and principals, and provides a 360° picture of student progress.

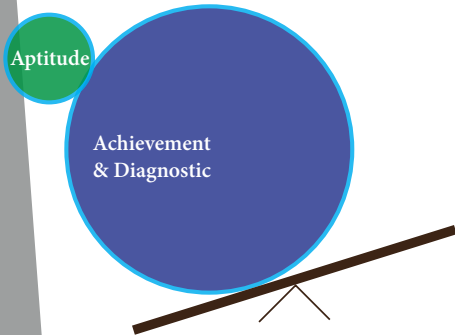
TRACbook works with other products, including the **onTRAC** testing system. This system allows teachers to easily create formative- and summative-style assessments using SOL-aligned banks of test questions. It also includes the new Virginia technology-enhanced item (TEI) style questions that appeared on the 2012 Standards of Learning assessments.

In the coming year, Goochland will be working with Interactive Achievement to bring all of its data sources together into *TRACbook* to create a one-stop area that will inform teachers and administrators about every student's progress. Furthermore, the *TRACbook* system will allow teachers to document remediation interventions and enrichment opportunities, and record student success with the receipt of extra help. With *TRACbook*, Goochland will be able to leverage the balance of student growth measures with MAP with achievement measures using data from *onTRAC*, Standards of Learning, PALS, and other assessment data.



On an achievement test like a final exam, students answer questions (usually with multiple choice answers) that are set before the assessment begins. With growth measure assessments like *MAP*, the questions get easier or harder based on the student's success at the last question. In this way, the assessment adapts in real time, and students never see the same questions, even between assessments. *TRACbook* will combine results from both styles of assessment.

Seeing the Big Picture

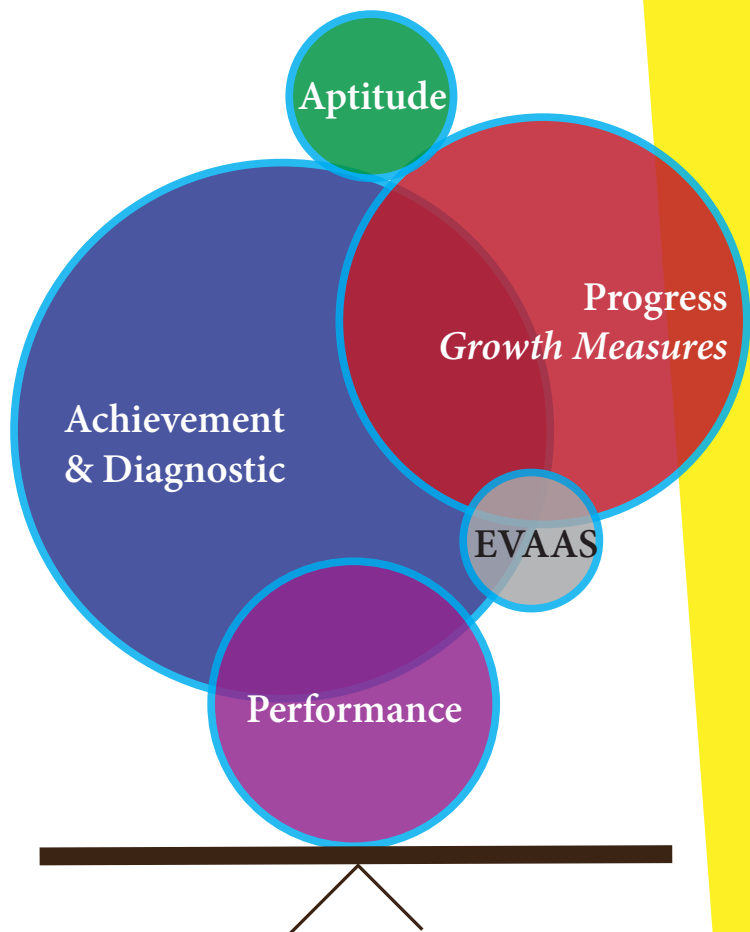


A more balanced approach combines assessments that show student progress in literacy and mathematics, using computerized, adaptive testing techniques. In addition, the use of **project-based learning** and **performance assessments** give students simulations of more real-world scenarios, where they can apply what they have learned through the completion of a task.

In our long-term strategy, we are also interested in leveraging statistical analysis to testing data with **EVAAS: Education Value-Added Assessment System**. This tool helps predict student aptitude with statistical models which will be used by administrators to improve division-wide instructional practices, and to help identify students who need specific, targeted help.

In all, we believe using the balance of the right tools and approaches can help improve instruction across the school division.

We have previously relied heavily upon achievement testing to know what students have learned, but as we have illustrated, achievement testing alone does not adequately show student progress. Likewise, multiple-choice tests are not the best way for students to demonstrate the application of their learning and skills that go beyond content acquisition.



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