

Piloting the Use of Learning Progressions within a Performance-Based Assessment System

in partnership with



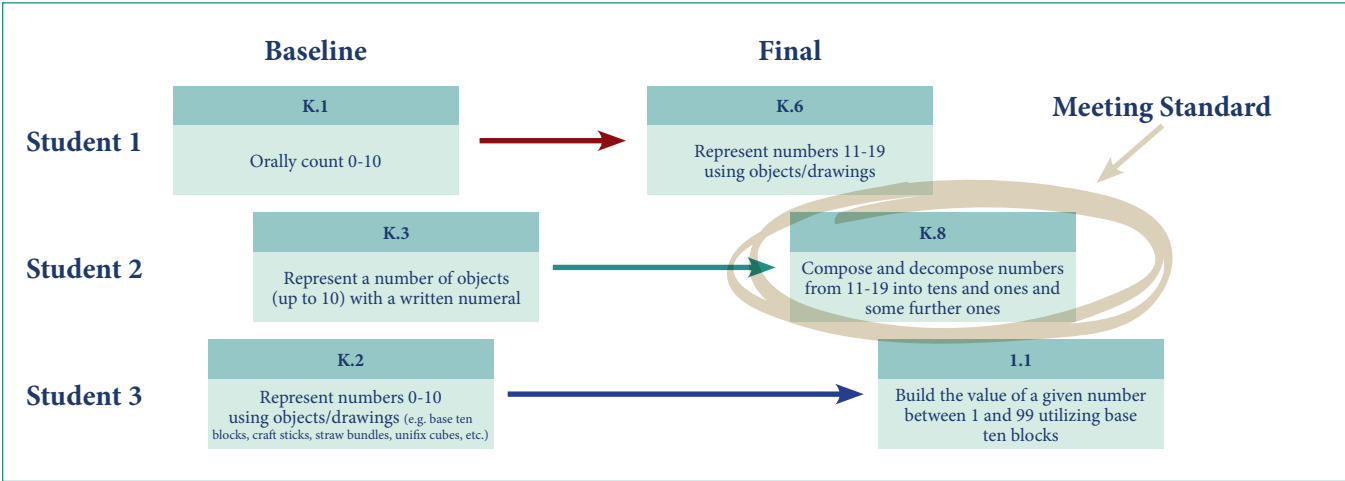
Since 2016 Susan Lyons has served as a technical adviser to the Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment (MCIEA). This consortium has been working on expanding the use of performance-based assessment within its schools as a way to gather and evaluate evidence of student learning. With the goal of creating a comprehensive performance-based assessment system that summarizes student learning to be reported within the [MCIEA School Quality Measures \(SQM\) dashboard](#), MCIEA has been exploring a number of potential assessment system models. Beginning in 2019, the Center for Collaborative Education partnered with Lyons Assessment Consulting to lead the design of a pilot study that explored potential for developing and using standards-based learning progressions to document student learning progress as demonstrated through performance assessments.

Timeline

Apr-Jun 2019	Developing Draft Learning Progressions and Aligned Performance Tasks
Sep 2019 - Jun 2020	Progression and Task Pilot Testing
Jul -Aug 2020	Revising Learning Progressions
Sep - Dec 2020	Designing Pre-Assessments and Collecting Baseline Data
Jan - Mar 2021	Performance Task Revision and Peer-Review
Apr - May 2021	Performance Task Administration and Final Learning Progress Determinations
Jun 2021	Scoring Validation and Focus Group

Though small, the findings from this pilot study provide support for the promise of using teacher-developed, multi-grade learning progressions to document student learning progress on the state standards. The June 2021 focus groups revealed that, overall, teachers felt that tracking student learning progress along learning progressions was a useful practice and provided added support for their conversations about student learning during their conferences with students and caregivers. Rather than relying on external instruments to provide growth determinations, the teachers reported that they were glad to have multiple examples of student work aligned to a content-based learning progression so they could talk specifically about student progress and areas for growth. Examples of the types of content-based growth interpretations that can be drawn from the learning progression data are illustrated using the data from three students in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Criterion-Referenced Growth Interpretations



Despite the utility of the learning progressions for tracking student learning progress throughout the course of the year, teachers did report that it is likely not feasible to do the same level of tracking and reporting for all of the key standards within each grade level and content area. At our June 2021 focus groups, the teachers spent time discussing the appropriate grain size of learning progressions in order to maximize their utility for supporting standards-aligned teaching and assessment.



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