A PROMISING TOOL FOR MORE MEANINGFUL AND EQUITABLE ASSESSMENT

ECP

Portfolios of Performance:
A promising tool for more meaningful and equitable assessment

Education Commonwealth Project

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About the Education Commonwealth Project

The Education Commonwealth Project (ECP) works to support assessment of student learning and school progress that is valid, democratic, and equitable. Pushing back against the overreliance on standardized testing, ECP offers free and open-source resources that all schools can use. And thanks to support from the Massachusetts State Legislature, ECP offers additional support for public schools and districts in Massachusetts.

Introduction

The Education Commonwealth Project (ECP), in partnership with the Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment (MCIEA), is proposing and supporting the development of a model for a new assessment and accountability system in Massachusetts. The School Quality Measures framework offers a new vision for a more valid, democratic, and equitable system of school accountability in the state. Portfolios of Performance (PoP) offer a vision for a new system of assessment that embraces the use of authentic performance assessments that meaningfully engage students in demonstrating what they know and can do. Portfolios of Performance can be used to inform local decisions about student proficiency, promotion, or graduation. Student results from the Portfolios of Performance can be reported at the school and student group levels within the academic learning component of the SQM.

Portfolios of Performance provide a more rigorous, authentic, and equitable alternative to the state's MCAS graduation requirement. Massachusetts is one of only eight states that has a test-based graduation requirement. As is detailed in ECP's Time for Change policy brief, this requirement perpetuates inequities for marginalized populations by disproportionately denying access to high school diplomas for students living in poverty, students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities.

Through its work with districts to develop and use Portfolios of Performance as part of local graduation determinations, ECP is providing a model for the state of Massachusetts to revise its state policy and allow for locally determined Portfolios of Performance as a legitimate pathway to graduation. ECP is in step with forward-thinking states around the country that have already pursued this opportunity. For example, see the ECP brief on Colorado's new performance-based assessment system that will be used to support graduation determinations.

Overview of Portfolios of Performance

ECP's Portfolios of Performance have four primary components: 1) identifying competencies, 2) selecting from the task bank, 3) curating student portfolios of work, and 4) evaluating portfolios.

1. Identifying Competencies

ECP uses the term competencies to encompass both state-adopted academic content standards and other, locally determined essential skills. One of the primary benefits of using performance tasks is that they can be better suited than other types of assessment items to measure the full depth and true intent of the competency expectations. High quality

performance tasks engage students in authentic, skill-based practices related to the field of study by requiring students to transfer their content knowledge to solve complex problems like those found in the real world. While performance assessment can be superior to more multiple-choice item types, a single performance task is not efficient for measuring the full breadth of standards for any given course. Portfolios of performance leverage the benefits of performance assessment while supporting greater content and skills coverage by capturing student work generated from multiple performance tasks assessing a range of skills across one or more academic years.

If a district intends to make grade-level proficiency determinations using a Portfolio of Performance, student portfolios should contain student work from performance assessments that measure the range of standards and skills associated with the particular course (e.g., grade 4 math). On the other hand, if a district is interested in using Portfolios of Performance to make competency determinations related to graduation, the portfolios should include student work generated from a range of tasks that are representative of the standards and skills the district expects for their graduates.

A growing number of districts across the state are engaging with their students, staff, and communities to develop portraits of a graduate. These portraits articulate the essential, overarching skills (e.g., problem solving, communication, collaboration) that the school district and its community most value for its students and graduates. Portraits of a graduate are intended to inform teaching, learning, and assessment to ensure all students have opportunities to cultivate and demonstrate the desired skills across all subjects. While not a necessary component of ECP's Portfolios of Performance, districts that have gone through the process of developing a district-wide profile of a graduate are ahead of the curve in articulating graduation competencies (inclusive of standards and skills) that could be demonstrated within a Portfolio of Performance.

2. Selecting from the Task Bank

Once the standards and skills have been identified as targets of assessment, performance tasks must be selected or developed to assess student achievement relative to those targets. Interested districts can turn to a number of freely available task banks that house vetted performance assessments that can be adopted or adapted. These task banks, including the [MCIEA Performance Task Bank](), are linked on the ECP website. Other sites hosting curated performance assessment tasks include the Stanford SCALE Performance Task Database, and the Michigan Arts Education Instruction and Assessment Catalog of Performance Tasks.

While these task banks and others are useful and always expanding, they are unlikely to fully serve the needs of every district seeking to implement Portfolios of Performance. To help

bridge the gap, ECP partners with districts to support educators in the design and use of performance assessments for the purposes of developing Portfolios of Performance.

3. Curating Student Portfolios of Work

The defining aspect of ECP's Portfolios of Performance is the curation of student work generated from performance tasks into a digital portfolio. The portfolio is intended to demonstrate the range of student achievement across the assessment targets in a way that speaks to students' strengths and areas for future growth.

Currently, ECP does not have its own technology solution to support the curation of student portfolios of work. This means we work with districts to leverage their existing learning management systems (e.g., Google Classroom, Seesaw, Opus) to host, view, and share portfolios of work.

4. Evaluating Portfolios

When the full set of performance assessments has been administered and scored, teams of educators will review the full portfolio of the work for each of their students and make holistic determinations. In the case of graduation portfolios, the determinations will be related to endorsing student graduation. In other cases, the decisions may support promotion to the next grade or grade span.

ECP partners with districts to provide training and guidance for making accurate and consistent portfolio evaluations. Our training includes scoring each task using a common rubric that anchors evaluation in evidence of learning relative to specified competencies. The rubric format supports the consistency in scoring and score interpretations and creates opportunities for educators to provide personalized student feedback relative to successes and areas for support.

Not only do we strive for consistency in scoring on individual tasks, but a key feature of the Portfolios of Performance system is supporting comparability in the portfolio evaluations. ECP partners with districts to facilitate a portfolio evaluation moderation process that generates double-blind scoring data to evaluate and improve consistency in portfolio evaluation determinations.

Districts that create Portfolios of Performance for their students may also be interested in supporting their students in preparing for a portfolio defense. A student-led portfolio defense is a good opportunity for students to reflect on and share their accomplishments and areas where they may need additional support from their educators and caregivers. Click here to view a video of student-led defenses in action from the [New York Performance Standards Consortium](#).

Interested in Getting Involved? Get in Touch!

If your district is interested in being part of the change in Massachusetts and wants to partner with us to learn more about developing Portfolios of Performance, please contact us! We are actively recruiting districts to be engaged with this work. For more information, reach out to our team.

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