

Intradistrict Communication

DATE: Thursday, August 22, 2019

TO: High School Principals

FROM: Dr. Anthony Godfrey, Superintendent of Schools
Ben Jameson, Director of Evaluation, Research and Accountability

SUBJECT: Testing Updates and Reminders

Much has happened over the summer in the assessment world. Here are a few updates and reminders:

Utah Aspire Plus:

- 80 educators participated in a standard setting and validation process last week at USBE. After the state goes through a quality and assurance process, the results will be presented to the state board during their September board meeting. We can expect to see the data by the end of September or early October.
- This group of educators also determined the cut scores for proficiency, which will be used for future Utah Aspire Plus test administrations.
- This group of educators determined the bands, or confidence intervals, for a predictive ACT score. These bands will be re-evaluated over the next three years as we have students who have previously taken the Utah Aspire Plus as 9th and 10th graders take the ACT as 11th graders. We expect the bands to narrow significantly after three years.
- Benchmarks for grades 9-10 students will be available on Pearson Access Next later this fall. There will be no ACT question items on these benchmarks. Items will come from the former SAGE benchmarks for ELA 9, 10, secondary math I, II, earth science, biology, chemistry and physics benchmarks. The state is also working to develop new question items for the high school science benchmarks as the cores are changing. Students will be rostered by course code and teacher. This means that students in grades other than 9th and 10th grade will not show up in the system and they will not be able to take a benchmark.

School Accountability Report Cards:

- School Accountability Report Cards are tentatively scheduled for release on December 1, 2019.
- Like last year, self-reported indicators will be an option for schools. Please be thinking of 2018-19 data not normally reported as part of the report card that you can use to celebrate your school or highlight a successful program. More information on how to submit your data will be available in the near future.

HB 118 and R277-404-6:

- To align with HB 118 that was passed in the most recent legislative session, the state board has just approved a revision of their board rule governing the use of teacher-driven incentives on state assessments. Teachers can make student performance on the Utah Aspire Plus as one data element on a student's grade. Here are a few things to remember if your school or some of your teachers choose to implement this tool:
 - Teachers may use a student's score from a state assessment to improve the student's grade in a relevant course aligned with the test. *A student's grade may not be lowered because of their score on a state assessment.* In other words, if a student is proficient on the Utah Aspire Plus (earning a score of 3 or 4), he/she earns 100% of the points available for that specific data element on their grade.
 - Students' performance on a state assessment should not determine an overall course grade. It should just be one of the data elements of many that determine the overall course grade.
 - No other incentives are available to incentivize performance on a state assessment. Teachers cannot assign participation points nor give out treats or prizes or any other rewards for participation on a state assessment. In addition, schools cannot implement other rewards for participation on a state assessment such as assemblies, dances, ice cream parties, etc.
 - Students who have been opted out of state assessments should not be penalized. While it is appropriate to assign an alternate assessment, it should be of comparable rigor and length to other assessments administered throughout the year. Principals are encouraged to work with Ben Jameson to determine best practice and answer questions regarding this statutory requirement. Our ability to offer a grade-based incentive for performance on state assessments will be based on our ability to hold parent-excluded students harmless in the process.

The assessment world is still very much evolving and changing. Please direct questions and concerns to Ben Jameson, Director of Evaluation, Research & Accountability, and stay tuned for more information to come.