

Memorandum

To: CTE Directors and Test Coordinators

From: Mike Mulvihill, Ashley Brown, Sean Owen

Date: 7.19.2017

Subject: Changes to Performance-Based Assessment for SY17-18

This memo serves to notify you of changes to the performance-based assessment for CTE in SY17-18. Major changes include the following:

- Sunset current PBAs for the following programs:
 - Early Childhood Education
 - Energy Technology
 - Polymer Science
 - Teacher Academy
- Revise PBAs to fit new format (described below) for the following programs:
 - Architecture and Drafting
 - Digital Media Technology
 - Simulation and Animation Design
 - Transportation Logistics
 - Welding

The initial revision to the format of PBA will be a year-long process including training and writing. The goal is to change the test format from a stand-alone, end-of-course assessment to a curriculum-embedded, instructor-led process that takes place throughout the school year. Implementation will begin in SY18-19 once we have created all materials and trained all participating instructors.

In the fall of 2018, instructors will begin guiding their students through a set of projects that are aligned with what they are already teaching in the curriculum. Instructors will score these projects using an online tool, allowing for immediate score collection as well as validity and scoring calibration, and then give feedback to the students and discuss the scores with them. Students will have an opportunity to revise their work based on this feedback before the work becomes part of their work samples. At the end of the year, industry professionals will evaluate the student work samples and interview the students about the work. We will also include a résumé and job application component in keeping with our past format.

Planning and implementing this new format will require much from everyone involved at the beginning, but it will pay off as a benefit to instructors and most importantly, students. The changes to PBA are based on the current literature about what makes a quality performance assessment system. The literature assumes that PBAs are taking place as part of a system of assessment as opposed to a stand-alone event, which is why we have proposed that Mississippi's PBA take place during the school year instead of at the end. In *Quality Performance Assessment: A Guide for Schools and Districts* (2013), Jay McTighe, one of the authors of *Understanding by Design*, writes about the importance of embedding performance tasks into the curriculum, stating that "teaching to rich performance tasks should occur without apology, just as effective coaches practice with the game in mind" (p. ii). Dan French, the Executive Director for the Center for Collaborative Education, says that:

Embedding high-quality performance assessments throughout the core academic curriculum will result in an increased use of curriculum aligned to [state standards], robust assessment data, and enhanced student learning. We believe these outcomes will lead to higher student achievement, the closing of achievement gaps, higher graduation and lower dropout rates, and higher college-going and persistence rates. (p. iv)

Both authors are thinking of PBA in terms of academic subjects, but how much more can PBA benefit students in CTE, where the curricula are already project-based (Brown & Mednick, 2013).

Embedding the tasks into the curriculum instead of saving them for the end can aid in improving instruction. Suzanne Lane writes that PBAs "serve as motivators in improving student achievement and learning and ... encourage instructional strategies that foster reasoning, problem solving, and communication (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014, p. 135). The benefits do not stop at the students, but extend to the instructors as well, as PBAs can be a powerful tool for professional development that is yet untapped in Mississippi. Darling-Hammond and Falk (2013) tell us that

As teachers become more expert in their practice through involvement and engagement with performance assessments, the outcomes for students can be expected to improve... Not only will overall pedagogical capacity be enhanced, but also teaching and assessing will remain focused on its central purpose: the support of learning for all involved. (p. 6)

If you are interested in reading more on the topic, there is a list of references at the end of this memo.

As always, feel free to send an email with any questions to helpdesk@rcu.msstate.edu.

References

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- Darling-Hammond, L., & Falk, B. (2013). Teacher Learning Through Assessment: How Student-Performance Assessments Can Support Teacher Learning, (September), 44. Retrieved from <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2013/09/12/73978/teacher-learning-through-assessment/>
- Jaquith, A., Martin, D., & Johnston, J. (2014). *Developing a Performance Assessment System From the Ground Up: Lessons Learned from Three Linked Learning Pathways*.
- Parsi, A., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2015). Performance assessments: How state policy can advance assessments for 21st century learning, (October 2014), 1–18. Retrieved from <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/performance-assessments-how-state-policy-can-advance-assessments-21st-century-learning.pdf>
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