



Achievement vs. Growth

Division leadership has spent a great deal of time over the past few months discussing the importance of maximizing every student's potential. While that's a big picture concept, it is made much more realistic when we are able to focus on individual progress (or growth) rather than achievement alone. For decades, most educators have predominately measured only achievement: a student's performance at a single point in time. SOL tests measure achievement; more to the point, they measure proficiency (a minimum standard of achievement). Benchmark (marking period) tests measure achievement ... and so on.

Progress (or growth) is measured by how much gain students make over time (i.e. year-to-year, semester-to-semester, etc.).

Schools ... and students ... need both: growth measures and achievement measures.

I expect we will begin measuring our students' growth in very concrete and meaningful ways as we move forward. In order to begin this deliberate transition to a K-12 program that includes an appropriate and balanced mix of both achievement and growth measures, we need a comprehensive, vertical view of what we're already asking of students and teachers from a testing standpoint.

Over time we will remove some of the existing achievement assessments from everyone's plates, so that growth measures are introduced in a way that balances out the picture of a student's progress rather than adding to it. We will not be simply piling testing on top of testing.

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Steve