

Significant Reduction in Testing Resulting from Changes to Syosset's Educator Evaluation System (APPR)

September 8, 2016

Summary

For the 2016-17 school year and beyond, the Syosset school district has adopted a new teacher/principal evaluation system (commonly referred to as APPR), replacing the one previously in place. As a result of these changes, Syosset will be able to significantly reduce the amount of student assessment (testing) as well as the use of those assessments in teacher evaluation.

Background

Since 2010, state law has required school districts to adopt teacher/principal evaluation systems that conform to state rules called Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). The law has undergone several revisions over the last 4 years. School districts were required to comply with the most recent revision, called §3012-d, for the 2016-17 school year.

The Syosset Board of Education and administration have expressed in both resolutions and letters consistent opposition to the overemphasis on student testing, and to the inappropriate reliance on these measures for educator evaluation purposes. Fortunately, compliance with §3012-d created an opportunity to significantly reduce both the volume and the emphasis on student testing.

Detail

To take advantage of this opportunity, a team of teachers, administrators, and central office staff worked together this past year to revise Syosset's APPR plan. One important feature of this new plan is a shift (where permissible) from individual classroom measures to a "district-wide measure" (DWM) of overall success on high school Regents exams for the student growth score component.

The most noticeable impacts of this change will be:

- 1) "Baseline" Exams Eliminated
 - a) The DWM will replace individual classroom scores, eliminating the need for "baseline" exams to generate individual growth scores.
 - b) The district will no longer need to use additional local assessments (like Acuity) to generate growth scores in the elementary and middle school grade levels.
- 2) AIMSWeb Used Programmatically – AIMSWeb will be used for its intended purpose – to inform instruction, not to generate educator evaluation scores.
- 3) State Growth Scores Inconsequential – The State will still calculate growth scores based on state tests, but they will be merely "advisory" – only the locally-calculated DWM score will matter.

These changes should significantly reduce the time and emphasis devoted to assessment – returning more time to the teacher for instruction, and reducing testing's influence in the classroom.