



NATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE CENTER
FOR TEACHER QUALITY



Summary of
**“Using Student Growth to Evaluate
Educators of Students With Disabilities:
Issues, Challenges, and Next Steps”**

A Forum of State Special Education and
Teacher Effectiveness Experts and Researchers

This Forum Summary provides the following:

- An account of the September forum
- Factors that states should consider when designing teacher evaluation systems that measure the growth of students with disabilities
- The identification of needed areas of research

JANUARY 2012

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Teacher Effectiveness Experts and Researchers

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BACKGROUND

With the current emphasis in educational policy on improving teacher effectiveness, states and school districts are quickly developing and implementing new models of teacher evaluation. However, few models address the unique challenges in accurately measuring achievement growth of students with disabilities (including those participating in general assessments or alternate assessments) and connecting that growth to teacher effects. To improve teacher practices and academic outcomes for students with disabilities, it is critical that we design evaluation systems that account for diverse teacher roles, student learning goals and trajectories, and assessment means (e.g., standardized, alternative, and formative). Unfortunately, little is known—in terms of research and practice—about whether student growth can be adequately measured for students with disabilities and appropriately attributed to teachers for the purpose of teacher evaluation. Therefore, it is crucial that the field come together to develop a strategic agenda that can be used to guide the development and/or the use of measures to assess student growth while also collecting research to validate state and school district efforts.

In an effort to inform state and district practices, the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center), the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Assessing Special Education Students State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (ASES SCASS), and ETS collaboratively convened a two-day forum (September 26–27, 2011) for select stakeholders to discuss the challenges and help inform policy, practice, and research regarding the use of the growth of students with disabilities for measuring teacher effectiveness. The specific topics discussed included individual and school-level value-added models, student learning objectives (SLOs), classroom-based measures, and alternate assessments (descriptions are included later in the report). For each topic, this brief outlines the benefits, the challenges, state and district considerations, implementation implications, and needed research. Also included are the results of a survey conducted prior to the forum on state efforts and the available research.

Forum Participants

The invited forum participants were strategically selected to include representatives with knowledge in special education service delivery and teacher effectiveness at the state level. In most cases, this included the attendance of state teams representing special education (SPED) and teacher evaluation (TE). Eight states were represented at the forum: Arizona (SPED and TE), Colorado (SPED and TE), Georgia (SPED and TE), Maryland (SPED), North Carolina (SPED and TE), Pennsylvania (SPED and TE), Tennessee (TE) and Wisconsin (TE). Additionally, the forum included 9 technical assistance providers, 11 researchers, and 4 representatives from the U.S. Department of Education. Over 35 participants attended this forum, representing a broad range of experience in special education and teacher evaluation. The forum participant list can be found in Appendix A.

Forum Goals

The anticipated forum outcomes were as follows:

- To identify the challenges in using the growth of students with disabilities to evaluate educators within commonly used teacher evaluation measures (e.g., value-added models, alternative measures, and SLOs).
 - To develop considerations for states when designing systems that include the academic growth of students with disabilities to measure teacher effectiveness.
 - To identify needed areas of research within each measure and provide recommendations for research to validate these efforts.
 - To develop initial recommendations to inform policy and practice, where feasible.
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CURRENT PRACTICES

To assist in planning and preparing for the forum, the state-level participants were asked to complete a survey about their current use of the academic growth of students with disabilities in measuring teacher effectiveness. Each state completed a survey, and the results were disseminated at the forum (South Carolina completed a survey but did not participate in the forum). As noted in the survey results, many states have not yet determined or finalized a process for measuring the growth of students with disabilities.

Survey Results

Within your state's teacher evaluation framework or model, does the state allow for any type of differentiation for the measurement of academic growth of students with disabilities?

	AZ	CO	GA	MD	NC	PA	TN	SC	WI
Yes							✓	✓	
No			✓			✓			
Not fully determined	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓

Does your state include standardized assessment results for students with disabilities in value-added growth modeling for determining teacher effectiveness?

	AZ	CO	GA	MD	NC	PA	TN	SC	WI
Don't know								✓	
Not using value-added/growth modeling as part of teacher evaluation					✓				
Consider doing so but concerned about measurement issues	✓	✓				✓	✓		
Yes			✓	✓					✓

Is your state considering providing schoolwide or group value-added scores for teachers in nontested subjects and grades?

	AZ	CO	GA	MD	NC	PA	TN	SC	WI
Yes	✓				✓		✓		✓
No			✓						
Has not been fully determined		✓		✓		✓		✓	

How does your state plan to measure the growth of students with disabilities in nontested subjects?

	AZ	CO	GA	MD	NC	PA	TN	SC	WI
Has not been fully determined	✓				✓	✓	✓		
Combination of SLOs and “other measures”		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓

How does your state intend to measure the growth of students with disabilities who participate in the alternate assessment?

	AZ	CO	GA	MD	NC	PA	TN	SC	WI
Alternate assessment results								✓	
Other measures			✓		✓				
Has not been fully determined	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓

Has your state determined how student growth will be attributed to teachers in coteaching situations?

	AZ	CO	GA	MD	NC	PA	TN	SC	WI
Yes			✓				✓		
No	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
Don't know								✓	

Forum Agenda

The forum highlighted five topics related to measuring student academic growth and evaluating teachers: individual and school-level value-added measures, SLOs, classroom-based measures, and alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS). Forum attendees were assigned to workgroups to discuss current state and district methods to measure student growth for the purposes of teacher evaluation. The forum’s agenda is included in Appendix B.

Within each of the five topics, the workgroups were asked to do the following:

- Review the approach to develop a common understanding of the measure.
 - Identify the benefits and the challenges specific to students with disabilities. (Challenges may well exist for all students; however, this brief highlights only those challenges specific to students with disabilities.)
 - Identify existing research to help guide potential use for students with disabilities. (The research is included in Appendix C.)
 - Generate considerations for states and school districts when contemplating the use of the approach in teacher evaluation.
 - Identify any potential implications.
 - Identify needed research to help validate the approach for use with students with disabilities.
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VALUE-ADDED MODELING

Value-added modeling is a statistical approach that uses student achievement data (e.g., student performance on standardized assessments) to estimate the contributions of various sources (e.g., schools, peers, families, and teachers) to student academic growth, taking into account student academic achievement in previous years. This approach may be used to measure student growth at the individual teacher level and/or the school level.

Benefits

The benefits of value-added models are as follows:

- Provide an objective, quantitative measure of the contributions of teachers to student learning gains over time.
- Do not require students to meet policy-driven proficiency levels; therefore, teachers are not penalized for working with students below proficiency levels.
- Estimate the contributions of a school or a teacher to student academic growth with the ability to isolate teacher effects from other contributing factors, such as family background, socioeconomic status, and school characteristics.
- Growth is captured for all students—even those performing below proficiency levels.
- Results are comparable across classrooms, buildings, and school districts.

Challenges Specific to Students With Disabilities

The challenges of value-added models for students with disabilities are as follows:

- The small number of students in many special education teachers' classrooms is likely to result in less reliable estimates of teachers' effects on student performance.
- The technical properties of alternate assessments preclude the use of value-added modeling for some teachers who educate students with significant cognitive disabilities.
- The inconsistent use of accommodations across years on state standardized tests can impact the measurement of growth and, consequently, the accuracy and meaning of value-added scores if they are not accounted for in the model.
- The mobility of some students with disabilities—and the subsequent omission of their test scores in value-added models—may preclude efforts to provide value-added scores for some teachers.
- Standardized assessments that are not multistage or item-level adaptive may not capture or accurately measure the growth of students with low performance.
- Service delivery for students with disabilities varies greatly according to student needs. Therefore, attributing student gains accurately (and fairly) to both general and special education teachers is a challenge.
- Though nonrandom assignment is the case for all students, highly effective teachers may be more likely to be assigned struggling students, resulting in low value-added scores for highly effective teachers if not controlled for in the model.

State and District Considerations

What do states and school districts need to consider when using value-added models?

- Encourage the use of multiple measures to increase the confidence in and the validity of teacher evaluation results.
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- Validate the use of value-added scores, particularly when including the growth of students with disabilities, prior to using the results in high-stakes decisions.
- Collect and analyze data on the use of accommodations by students on standardized assessments. Determine if accommodation type, frequency, or change across years influences value-added results.
- Encourage the use of student achievement data sets that account for the nesting of students within multiple teachers and instructional settings and data sets that allow states to track student mobility between schools.
- Ensure tests are adequately scaled to ensure that growth can be measured for all students—including students performing below grade level.
- Collect and analyze data on teacher value-added scores when a higher proportion of students with disabilities receive services in one teacher's classroom.
- To promote inclusive models, consider shared attribution between general education teachers and special education teachers.

Implementation Implications

What implications exist in implementing value-added models?

- Electing to exclude the scores of students with disabilities within value-added modeling could greatly limit teacher accountability. For instance, if test scores from students with disabilities are not included in value-added models, would teachers be as concerned about the growth of students with disabilities?
- When growth is not accurately measured for students with disabilities or performance expectations are not aligned with possible learning outcomes, teachers may be less likely to accept students with disabilities in their classrooms. It is important to consider the development of student growth objectives that support inclusive classrooms.
- Including students' disability type in value-added models may inadvertently lower the expectations for students with disabilities. Monitoring to ensure that data are interpreted correctly to establish rigorous yet achievable learning targets is important.

Needed Research

What research is needed in value-added modeling?

- What is the impact of adding students' disability type to the list of demographic and other variables used in value-added models? Would controlling for the variance in expected growth according to disability classification provide for more accurate value-added scores?
 - What types of accommodations are used, and how do the accommodations impact the measurement of student growth?
 - What is the fewest number of students for which a teacher-level value-added score is technically defensible?
 - What is the sensitivity of teacher value-added scores when the proportion of students with disabilities in a classroom is and is not controlled?
 - Will including test scores from students with disabilities in value-added modeling for general education teachers change a teacher's value-added scores?
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STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Due to the limited applicability of value-added scores for all teachers (including general education teachers in nontested grades and subjects), student learning objectives (SLOs) are being considered in numerous state teaching evaluation systems for all students in which standardized test scores are unavailable or not used (e.g., Rhode Island, Maryland, and New York). Through the SLO process, a teacher or a group of teachers identifies the expected learning outcomes for a group of students (either within a school district, a school, a single classroom, or across classrooms) over a period of time. The use of SLOs often requires a process whereby teachers conduct a thorough analysis of students' present levels of performance and determine appropriate classroom, school, or skill-based goals to be accomplished within the year. (Typically, this is in agreement with the principal.) The goals are expected to be rigorous, aligned to the state standards, measured using reliable and valid summative and formative assessments, and monitored regularly throughout the academic year. Achievement toward SLOs is often used to determine the level of teacher effectiveness within the teacher evaluation framework.

Benefits

What are the benefits of SLOs?

- The development of SLOs is applicable to all teachers in all teaching contexts.
- Though SLOs are not based on individual students, the goal establishment and monitoring process is similar to the development of individualized education programs (IEPs), although they are not necessarily developed through the multidisciplinary approach found in the IEP process and definitely do not include the safeguards associated with IEP development and implementation. This may, however, foster increased collaboration among general and special educators.
- The SLO process requires a significant level of teacher investment, which entails a thorough analysis of student data to establish rigorous objectives.
- SLOs can capitalize on existing classroom assessments, in which monitoring SLO progress can be an integral component of instruction.
- SLOs can be aligned to district and school improvement goals.
- Team-based SLOs can foster increased collaboration.

Challenges Specific to Students With Disabilities

What challenges exist for SLO use for students with disabilities?

- Students with disabilities could be overlooked in the SLO process. For example, if the third-grade mathematics team established an SLO in which 80 percent of the students will increase their computation skills to some defined level of mastery, would some students with disabilities have an increased probability of falling into the 20 percent where growth has not been documented? Therefore, the growth (or lack thereof) for students with disabilities could go unnoticed.
 - SLOs necessitate an increased teacher capacity to collect, interpret, and monitor student performance data against standards-aligned, rigorous goals. Teacher capacity to interpret data and understand student growth may be limited.
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- Unlike value-added modeling, the SLO process cannot control for variables outside a school's or a teacher's control (e.g., disability status and socioeconomic status). Therefore, would teachers resist the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms?
- The comparability of measurement and student growth is compromised because the process may not be standardized or objective.
- Unlike value-added or growth modeling, SLO development is not an individual student-based goal; therefore, an anticipated learning trajectory may not be individualized.
- Associated high stakes could prompt a desire to establish easily attainable student learning goals. This may be the case for all student populations, but there may be an increased probability for students with disabilities.
- SLO efficacy is based on reliable, valid, fair, and accurate measurements of student performance. Establishing a process to ensure validity across schools and teachers is difficult but imperative.

State and District Considerations

What should states and school districts consider before using SLOs?

- Training, training, and more training! The success of SLOs is largely dependent on the quality of the SLO process—from interpreting data accurately to establishing rigorous measures to identifying, implementing, and measuring growth using fair, reliable, and valid assessments. To ensure fidelity, considerable attention must be paid to the training of teachers on the SLO process and the monitoring of SLO implementation in practice.
- Ensure growth for all students, including students with disabilities, is accounted for in the SLO process.
- General education teachers should work with special education teachers to construct SLOs that align with the established standards for the targeted grade but also accommodate the specific learning needs and appropriate learning trajectories for students with disabilities.
- Ensure a process in which no subgroup is disproportionately excluded from the SLO process.
- Encourage that SLOs can be tiered so that student targets can be differentiated according to the present levels of student performance.
- Common assessments should be used to provide meaningful and comparable information to track and evaluate progress. Common assessments should be reviewed to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access and opportunities to demonstrate growth.
- Monitoring to ensure that data are interpreted correctly to establish rigorous yet achievable learning targets is important.

Implementation Implications

What implications exist in implementing SLOs?

- SLOs for students with disabilities may become a responsibility of special education teachers only. In situations in which students with disabilities are participating in the general education classroom, having separate SLOs would minimize the need for all teachers to be accountable to all student populations.
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- In situations where common assessments do not exist, allowing for the development of teacher-made assessments requires training and a process to ensure that the assessments are accessible, valid, and comparable.
- Teachers with little training in special education may struggle to establish rigorous yet achievable goals for students with disabilities and others with learning challenges. Processes need to be established to either train general education teachers or require collaboration with special education teachers in goal development and performance monitoring.
- SLOs for students with disabilities could be separated from those for general education students, potentially resulting in a lower level of expectations for students with disabilities—one that may not result in college and career readiness.

Needed Research

What research is needed for SLO use?

- What is the relationship between SLOs and value-added scores for teachers in tested subjects, with a specific focus on students with disabilities?
 - What impacts do quality SLOs, which are developed with a strong alignment to state standards using a standardized measurement process, have on student achievement? Do high-quality SLOs have a greater impact on student achievement than those that are no standards aligned?
 - How can the growth of students with disabilities be documented using the SLO process compared to their general education peers?
 - Does the SLO process ensure that the learning trajectory is appropriately established and growth is adequately measured for students with disabilities?
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CLASSROOM-BASED MEASURES

Classroom-based measures are typically used by teachers to determine student progress toward state standards. These measures can be both formative and summative in nature and may or may not be standardized (e.g., Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, curriculum-based measures, and progress monitoring measures). Classroom-based measures are considered in grades and classrooms in which standardized test scores are not available (e.g., nontested grades and subjects). Content area specialists and local practitioners often work collaboratively to identify existing assessments and/or develop new assessments for the purpose of measuring student growth.

Benefits

What are the benefits of classroom-based measures?

- Existing assessments often can be used, whereby teachers have increased familiarity with using assessments results to guide instruction. These types of assessments can be formative in nature, are often highly reliable and closely related to proficiency, and provide multiple data points—thus providing valuable “just-in-time” feedback.
- Classroom-based measures are strongest in Grades K–3 where state standardized assessment data are unavailable.
- The use of existing assessments eliminates the need for additional assessments.
- If aligned with standards, these assessments may add to the analysis of student progress toward college and career readiness.
- Creating a structure to collect and monitor student growth using classroom-based assessments for the purposes of teacher evaluation may be a natural extension of classroom practice—particularly where professional learning communities and data analysis groups already exist.
- Classroom-based measures provide more real-time student progress data for teachers that can be used immediately to guide instruction.
- Students can be more involved in monitoring their progress toward college and career readiness.

Challenges Specific to Students With Disabilities

What are the challenges of classroom-based measures for students with disabilities?

- The use of classroom-based measures necessitates an increased teacher capacity to collect, interpret, and monitor student performance data against standards-aligned, rigorous goals. Teacher capacity to interpret data and understand student growth may be limited.
 - Unlike value-added or growth modeling, classroom-based assessments cannot necessarily control for variables outside a school’s or a teacher’s control (e.g., disability status and socioeconomic status). Therefore, would teachers resist the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms?
 - The comparability of measurement and student growth may be compromised because the process may not be standardized or objective.
 - Most often, classroom-based measures are formative in nature. A systematic data collection process may be limited, preventing the formation of a summative rating.
 - Efficacy is based on reliable, valid, fair, and accurate measurements of student performance. Establishing a process to ensure validity across schools and teachers is difficult but imperative.
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State and District Considerations

What should states and school districts consider before using classroom-based measures?

- Training, training, and more training! The success of classroom-based measures is largely dependent on the quality of the assessments—their alignment to the standards, the fidelity of implementation, and the interpretation of the results. Therefore, considerable attention needs to be paid to training and monitoring to ensure fidelity.
- Ensure that growth for all students, including students with disabilities, is equally accessible and can be accurately measured through classroom-based measures.
- Ensure that classroom-based measures account for students working below or above grade-level standards.
- Plan and provide continual training for teachers and administrators in how to interpret data and use data to inform subsequent instructional design.
- Common assessments should be used to provide meaningful and comparable information to track and evaluate progress. Common assessments should be reviewed to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access and opportunities to demonstrate growth.
- Monitoring to ensure that data are interpreted correctly to establish rigorous yet achievable learning targets is important.

Implementation Implications

- In situations where common assessments do not exist, allowing for the development of teacher-made assessments requires training and a process to ensure that the assessments are accessible, valid, and comparable.
- Teachers with little training in special education may struggle to establish appropriate learning targets for students. General education teachers may require training and/or should consult with special education personnel to ensure progress is accurately measured.

Needed Research

What research is needed?

- What is the relationship between classroom-based measures and value-added scores for teachers in tested subjects—most specifically for students with disabilities?
 - What is the relationship between classroom-based measures and observation instruments?
 - What is the quality of classroom-based measures—alignment to the standards, assessing student knowledge, and reporting valid and reliable results—and are they equally accessible for students with disabilities?
 - Do curriculum-based measures capture growth for students with disabilities performing at a lower level?
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SCHOOLWIDE AND/OR GROUP VALUE-ADDED SCORES

Schoolwide and/or group value-added scores are scores provided to teachers in nontested subjects and grades that are used as a student growth component in teacher performance ratings. When standardized test scores are not available, teachers are provided a schoolwide or a group score based on student performance on standardized assessments in the tested subject areas. For example, in schools where foreign language is not included on the state standardized assessment, foreign language teachers are provided a “score” relative to the schoolwide performance on the reading/language arts assessment and/or the mathematics assessment. Teachers (in nontested subjects and grades) may also receive a performance rating according to the performance of students in a particular grade. For example, third-grade science teachers get a performance rating according to the third-grade mathematics results.

Benefits

What are the benefits of schoolwide or group value-added scores?

- The technological infrastructure and methodology is, in many cases, already available through value-added modeling for teachers in tested subjects.
- Such scores may promote schoolwide ownership of all students. All teachers are held accountable for the growth of all students.
- Such scores may promote collaborative practices. Teachers are more inclined to work together to improve performance if all teachers are held accountable for all students.
- Such scores may promote the integration of content standards across the curriculum, such as teaching and monitoring reading standards within a social studies class or teaching mathematics standards within the context of science instruction.

Challenges Specific to Students With Disabilities

What are the challenges to schoolwide or group value-added scores for students with disabilities?

- Teachers may be held accountable for students they have never taught or had the opportunity to influence.
- Accountability for the growth (or lack thereof) of students with disabilities may not be captured or monitored if students with disabilities are not included in the value-added scores.
- Teachers may not be as motivated to improve student mastery of state standards if there is no direct accountability for their content areas.

State and District Considerations

What should states and school districts consider when contemplating value-added scores?

- Other measures should be used to ensure growth in all content areas, including the monitoring of growth for all student populations (e.g., students with disabilities and English language learners).
 - To promote inclusive models, consider shared attribution between general education teachers and special education teachers.
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Implementation Implications

Are there any implications for implementing schoolwide or group value-added scores?

- Nontested subjects and grades may not be given as much attention if progress in the content area(s) is not monitored.
- Could devalue the work in other content areas or grades.

Needed Research

What research is needed with regard to schoolwide and/or group value-added scores?

- Do schoolwide or group value-added scores promote advancement in student learning for all students?
 - Do schoolwide or group value-added scores promote increased collaboration and teacher capacity?
 - Do schoolwide or group value-added scores promote the integration of standards across content areas?
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STUDENTS ASSESSED WITH AN ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

States and school districts typically determine the progress toward state standards of students with significant cognitive disabilities using alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS) that are based on grade-level content at reduced levels of complexity, breadth, and depth. While they may take a variety of forms, the most common AA-AAS formats include portfolios, rating scales, and item-based tests (Quenemoen, Quenemoen, Kearns, & Kennedy, 2010) and may be a state-developed assessment or a teacher/student-developed portfolio based on a state framework. These assessments describe achievement based on what a state determines is high expectations for these students.

Benefits

What are the benefits of measuring student academic growth with alternate assessments?

- The participation of students with significant cognitive disabilities in AA-AAS provides an additional avenue for student participation in state education agency and local education agency accountability systems, thus holding educators responsible for the growth of all students.
- The use of alternate assessments facilitates the evaluation of student growth aligned with state goals. The results of AA-AAS performance coupled with an evaluation of student growth aligned to the individual student's IEP goals and objectives provides a more comprehensive overview of student growth, abilities, and needs.
- Alternate assessment results can be formative in nature.
- AA-AAS can be structured to document student progress through multiple formats (e.g., videos, sample products, performances, and demonstrations) and the use of assistive technology to facilitate access to and completion of the assessment.

Challenges Specific to Students With Significant Cognitive Disabilities

What are the challenges to measuring growth using an alternate assessment?

- State alternate assessments are often portfolio based; therefore, comparability between measures is a significant challenge.
- State alternate assessments may vary in their technical quality; therefore, using alternate assessment results for the purpose of measuring student growth may not be a viable option.
- Subjectivity may be more prevalent in portfolio reviews.
- The heterogeneity of students with significant cognitive disabilities makes it difficult to identify and/or develop a standardized measure that takes into account the variance in learning trajectories.

State and District Considerations

What should states and school districts consider with alternate assessments?

- Consider the methods (e.g., discrete responses, chained responses, and permanent products) used in research to capture student learning for students with significant cognitive disabilities.
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- Consider using the content-plus model and/or performance-based assessments (e.g., academic content plus student progress on life skills or therapy goals).
- Recognize the heterogeneous nature of this group of students and that the expected learning trajectory will vary from student to student.
- Ensure students with significant cognitive disabilities are provided a range of opportunities for accessing the assessment and providing responses.
- Ensure students with disabilities have equal access to the curriculum, instruction, and opportunities to learn.
- Guard against diminishing expectations for the work of students with significant cognitive disabilities. Regardless of the assessment format, this should be at the forefront of the review.
- Take into consideration that static growth for some students with significant cognitive disabilities may be considered growth. This is particularly true for students with degenerative conditions.
- Consider whether or how student scores can be attributed to educators other than the special educator (e.g., general educators, other licensed educators, and related service providers).

Implementation Implications

Are there any implications for using AA-AAS for evaluating educators?

- Guard against diminishing expectations in student work, whether using a state-developed performance-based assessment or a teacher-developed portfolio.
- Given the technical difficulty and wide variation in state approaches to alternate assessments, states may be inclined to exclude the growth of students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Needed Research

What research is needed?

- An analysis of alternate assessment and student results to determine if assessments are designed with enough sensitivity to adequately measure growth. (A review of studies in Georgia, Pennsylvania, and the Project for Learning From Educators at the Peak of Their Profession may facilitate this analysis.)
 - Determine if the use of IEPs can reliably and validly be used to document growth for students with significant cognitive disabilities.
 - An analysis of alternate assessments to determine if the assessments contain the technical capacity to report growth scores.
 - An analysis of portfolio reviews to determine if the results reflect a valid and reliable measure of student growth.
 - A study to determine if other types of student growth measures (e.g., SLOs) can be used to evaluate teacher effectiveness for teachers of students with significant cognitive disabilities.
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CONCLUSION

Little is known about using student growth as a component in teacher evaluation. This is the case for all students, but it is even more so for students with disabilities. Teachers are generally not opposed to this level of accountability; however, contention arises in the manner that growth will be determined. Teachers want to be confident that the measures used are a fair and accurate representation of both student growth and their contribution to that growth. Because of the limited research and the challenges involved with measuring the academic growth of students with disabilities, we caution against using results for high-stakes decisions until further research and practical experience support the validity of claims made from the various measures.

This forum was the beginning of a very timely and essential discussion to help guide states and school districts as they design teacher evaluation models. Subsequent conversations/forums should address implications of new measures of teacher effectiveness (e.g., observations, artifacts, and teacher knowledge measures) for teachers of students with disabilities participating in general and alternate assessments.

As demonstrated in this report, measuring student growth and attributing that growth accurately for the purpose of teacher evaluation is not an easy task. Much work remains—in terms of practice and research—to determine the most effective, accurate, and fair way to measure the growth of students with disabilities. It is therefore crucial that policymakers, practitioners, and researchers come together to align their efforts to develop a strategic agenda that can be used to guide the development and/or use of measures to assess the growth of students with disabilities.

The momentum created in this forum creates an opportune time to align efforts within the field. In a follow-up survey, 91 percent of the respondents indicated that reconvening this forum (with some potential new membership) would be useful in providing guidance to states and school districts, with 95 percent hoping to participate. A sampling of the respondent comments is as follows:

- *“Yes—most definitely. We also need forums like this for other Group B teachers: arts, PE, social studies, science, etc. The sooner, the better.”*
 - *“I think it would be good to have other RTT [Race to the Top] winners, as they are moving this forward most quickly.”*
 - *“ABSOLUTELY, in our state I know that there are specific questions and having more information and guidance (or at least more details) to help roll out more information on teacher evaluations. We already have very anxious educators.”*
 - *“Absolutely, these regular forums are critical.”*
 - *“I would strongly recommend this. Many states are working to develop the overall system. Many times, because IEP students (and those with the most significant needs) are the most challenging to determine growth for, these students and consequently their teachers are not considered or only considered at the end of the process. Then, this group is ‘retro-fitted’ into something that may not be meaningful.”*
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Not much is known about the quality of academic growth measures for students with disabilities, yet due to impending deadlines, states and school districts need to move forward with selecting and implementing their approach to teacher evaluation. Therefore, this group recommends that forums such as this continue so that a structure is established to facilitate a continual process to

- Review state policy and practice.
- Provide considerations for implementation.
- Recommend a calculated and deliberate plan of research.

A process such as this will create a thoughtful approach that, as research is conducted, can be validated.

APPENDIX A

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Using Student Growth to Evaluate Educators of Students With Disabilities: Issues, Challenges, and Next Steps

A Forum of State Special Education and Teacher Effectiveness Experts and Researchers

September 26–27, 2011

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APPENDIX B

Agenda

Monday, September 26, 2011

- 2:00 p.m.–2:20 p.m. **Welcome/Opening Team-Building Activity**
Lynn Holdheide, TQ Center; Sandra Warren, ASES SCASS CCSSO
- 2:20 p.m.–2:35 p.m. **Review Meeting Goals and Purpose**
Sandra Warren, ASES SCASS CCSSO
- 2:35 p.m.–3:00 p.m. **Overview of National Efforts in Teacher Evaluation**
Lisa Lachlan-Haché, AIR/TQ Center/RTTT Reform Network
- 3:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m. **Critical Issues in Using the Growth of Students With Disabilities for the Purpose of Determining Teacher Effectiveness**
- 3:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m. **Overview of Current Practice in Using Student Growth to Determine Teacher Effectiveness** (Value-Added/Growth, Schoolwide Value-Added, Group Value-Added, and SLO models)
Lynn Holdheide, TQ Center
- 3:30 p.m.–4:00 p.m. **Value-Added/Growth Models**
Panelists: Heather Buzick, ETS; Ann Schulte, North Carolina State University/NCAASE; Laura Goe, ETS/TQ Center
- Panelists answer the following questions as part of their presentation (each panelist provided 10 minutes)
- What are the challenges of including standardized assessment scores for students with disabilities in value-added or growth modeling?
 - What have we learned from practice?
 - Where is there research to guide us?
 - What research is needed to inform practice and policy?
- 4:00 p.m.–4:30 p.m. **Facilitated Group Discussion**
Lynn Holdheide, TQ Center
- Review survey results—are states including scores of students with disabilities in value-added or growth modeling and are they considering the use of group or schoolwide value-added scores as a growth measure?
 - From a state perspective, what challenges or barriers have developed in the decision-making process for measuring the growth of students with disabilities—specific to using value-added and growth modeling?
 - From a state perspective, what type of guidance and research would help guide and validate efforts related to the use of growth of students with disabilities in growth and value-added modeling?
 - From a researcher perspective, what type of data and assistance do you need from states to conduct research to assist in validating state and district efforts?
-

- 4:30 p.m.–4:40 p.m. **Prioritizing Challenges and Needs**
- 4:40 p.m.–4:50 p.m. **Break**
- 4:50 p.m.–5:20 p.m. **Measuring Growth Using Other Measures**
Panelists: Steve Elliott, Arizona State University/NCAASE; Laura Goe, ETS/TQ Center
- What do we know about measuring the growth of students with disabilities?
 - Considering both models, what do you foresee as the opportunities and challenges in measuring the growth of students with disabilities?
 - Do we have valid and reliable measures that can be used for the purposes of teacher evaluation?
 - Where is there research to guide us?
 - What research would be needed to inform practice and policy?
- 5:20 p.m.–5:50 p.m. **Facilitated Group Discussion**
Lynn Holdheide, TQ Center
- Review survey results—are states using the “ask the teacher” model or the SLO model?
 - From a state perspective, what challenges or barriers have developed in the decision-making process of measuring the growth of students with disabilities using other measures or SLOs?
 - Considering both models, what do you foresee as the opportunities and challenges in measuring the growth of students with disabilities?
 - From a state perspective, what type of guidance and research would help guide and validate efforts related to the use of growth of students with disabilities using other measures or SLOs?
 - From a researcher perspective, what type of data and assistance do you need from states to conduct research to assist in validating state and district efforts?
- 5:50 p.m.–6:00 p.m. **Prioritizing Challenges and Needs**
- 6:00 p.m.–6:20 p.m. **Break/Gather for Dinner**
- 6:20 p.m.–7:00 p.m. **Key Policy Issues in Measuring Teacher Effectiveness**
Kathy Paliokas, CCSSO/InTASC
- A brief overview of key policy issues facing states and school districts in developing teacher evaluation systems, including the role of new standards (Common Core State Standards and InTASC), legal defensibility, and individual versus team-based accountability
- 7:00 p.m.–7:30 p.m. **Questions/Closing/Review of Tomorrow’s Agenda**
-

Tuesday, September 27, 2011

- 7:30 a.m.–8:00 a.m. **Breakfast**
- 8:00 a.m.–8:15 a.m. **Welcome**
- 8:15 a.m.–8:30 a.m. **Q & A**
- 8:30 a.m.–9:00 a.m. **Considerations for Evaluating Educators of Students in Alternate Assessments Based on Alternate Achievement Standards (AA-AAS)**
Diane Browder, University of North Carolina–Charlotte
- 9:00 a.m.–9:30 a.m. **Facilitated Group Discussion**
Sandra Warren, ASES SCASS CCSSO
- Review results from survey of states’ plans to measure student growth of students participating in the alternate assessment.
 - From a state perspective, what challenges or barriers have developed in the decision-making process of measuring the growth of students with disabilities participating in the alternate assessment?
 - From a state perspective, what type of guidance and research would help guide and validate efforts related to measuring the growth of students on alternate standards?
 - From a researcher perspective, what type of data and assistance do you need from states to conduct research to assist in validating state and district efforts?
- 9:30 a.m.–9:40 a.m. **Prioritizing Challenges and Needs**
- 9:40 a.m.–10:00 a.m. **Break**
- 10:00 a.m.–10:45 a.m. **Discussion: Challenges in Attributing Student Growth Accurately to Teachers**
- When using student growth, how are states attributing student growth to teachers in a coteaching or a resource model?
 - What are the pros and cons?
 - Is there any research to guide policy and practice?
 - What research is needed?
- 10:45 a.m.–11:00 a.m. **Review of Afternoon Objectives**
- The rest of the day will be broken up into two workgroups:
1. **Considerations for Evaluating Educators of Students in General Assessments**
Facilitators: Heather Buzick and Cara Laitusis, ETS; Lynn Holdheide, TQ Center
 2. **Considerations for Evaluating Educators of Students in AA-AAS**
Facilitators: Diane Browder, University of North Carolina–Charlotte; Sandra Warren, ASES SCASS CCSSO
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11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. **Session 1 Goal:** Narrow and prioritize key challenges/issues (5–7 maximum); begin to complete the facilitation chart.

12:00 p.m.–12:30 p.m. Lunch

12:30 p.m.–1:30 p.m. **Session 2 Goal:** Finalize the facilitation chart.

1:30 p.m.–1:45 p.m. **Group Reports**

1:45 p.m.–2:00 p.m. **Wrap-Up and Next Steps**

APPENDIX C

Available Research

Value-Added Models

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- Wei, X., Blackorby, J., & Schiller, E. (2011). Growth in reading achievement of students with disabilities, ages 7 to 17. *Exceptional Children*, 78, 89–106.

School Value-Added Models

Because the use of schoolwide or group value-added models is relatively new within the context of teacher evaluation, the availability of research is limited.

- Brodsky, A., Decesare, D., & Kramer-Wine, J. (2010). Design and implementation considerations for alternative teacher compensation systems. *Theory Into Practice*, 49, 213–222.
- Lussier, D. F., & Forgione, P. D., Jr. (2010). Supporting and rewarding accomplished teaching: Insights from Austin, Texas. *Theory Into Practice*, 49(3), 233–242.

Student Learning Objectives

Because SLOs are relatively new within the context of teacher evaluation, the availability of research is limited. Much of the research is related to using SLOs in the context of pay for performance. This research is included here. Additionally, because the goal-setting process is similar to IEP development (even though IEP goals are individually based), research related to IEP goal establishment and student achievement may also inform SLO implementation.

- Browder, D. M., Wakeman, S., Ahlgrim-Delzell, L., & Hudson, M. (2011). *Utilization of formative assessments within educational programs for students with significant cognitive disabilities: Current practice, current research, and next steps*. Washington, DC: Council of State School Officers, Assessing Special Education Students, State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards.
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Curriculum-Based Measures

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ABOUT THE NATIONAL COMPREHENSIVE CENTER FOR TEACHER QUALITY

The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center) was created to serve as the national resource to which the regional comprehensive centers, states, and other education stakeholders turn for strengthening the quality of teaching—especially in high-poverty, low-performing, and hard-to-staff schools—and for finding guidance in addressing specific needs, thereby ensuring that highly qualified teachers are serving students with special needs.

The TQ Center is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and is a collaborative effort of ETS, Learning Point Associates, and Vanderbilt University. Integral to the TQ Center's charge is the provision of timely and relevant resources to build the capacity of regional comprehensive centers and states to effectively implement state policy and practice by ensuring that all teachers meet the federal teacher requirements of the current provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act.

The TQ Center is part of the U.S. Department of Education's Comprehensive Centers program, which includes 16 regional comprehensive centers that provide technical assistance to states within a specified boundary and five content centers that provide expert assistance to benefit states and districts nationwide on key issues related to current provisions of ESEA.



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