

What's the Meaning of the State Test Results?

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Recently the Colorado Department of Education released the 2017 State Assessment results. In Platte Canyon School District we have much to celebrate and learn from the results of how our students demonstrated their learning. But what does the data really provide for teachers, administrators and community?

State level assessments are summative data, a snapshot in time, if you will, into how much a student has learned over the course of the school year. In our district, we use the State summative assessment as one component of our overall balanced assessment system. Teachers use formative assessment every day in the classroom to grab quick pieces of information on how students are learning. Last year, we introduced interim benchmark assessments, using NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAPs) to provide data on how students were learning the standard(s) and how they might, predicatively, perform when it is time to take the state test. The interim assessment is valuable in that teachers have an opportunity to make instructional adjustments periodically during the school year.

Our data indicates that the efforts our teachers are making to shift their thinking from 'what was taught' to 'are my students learning' is working. This is validating for our teachers and administrators. It also provides insight that our use of resources has been responsible.

Across the State of Colorado every school and school district is compared to State performance as a measure or 'comparative bar'. It is our reality. And, while it is always rewarding to demonstrate student achievement and growth that is above the State, it does not explicitly imply the goal of the District. It is essential that our students excel not only compared to other students in the state, but across the nation. Make no mistake that our goal is for all of our students to be college and career ready upon entering post-secondary college or work. We can accomplish our goal through continuous improvement: having a deep understanding of standards based instruction, using assessment to answer the question "*Are our students learning?*", making adjustments to instruction, and creating a culture of success.

When test data is released it is very normal to hear all types of opinions and thoughts about how our students are doing. Opinions and thoughts are a good thing as it makes for great discussion and often pushes our thinking beyond our own. However, research based on high performing organizational leadership supports a positive thoughtful approach to analyzing and learning from our data. Negativity and a focus solely on what is wrong or not working, just isn't the way to move a school district forward. That is why I will continue to celebrate the positives while maintaining a strong dedication behind the scenes to keep improving our school district by working on the areas that need improvement. The test data is just one piece of many that give us a glimpse into our progress toward our continuing pursuit of excellence.

For more details on how Platte Canyon School District performed on the 2017 State Assessments, please visit our website at www.plattecanyonschools.org.