

# Taking a Look at Achievement

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- **Your district's ESSA status, if applicable:** (5-12) Acceptable 52.57, (Elem.) Commendable 56.51
- **Comprehensive Status:** Met
- **Targeted Status:** Met
- **ESSA Support:** No Support Required
- Performance of subgroups on assessments compared to students that are not members of the subgroup. Examples include:
  - **Special education students compared to students that do not qualify for special education** - IEP: 10.1% N/A: 89.9%
  - **English Language Learners (ELL) compared to students that are not ELL students** - ELL: 0.5% N/A: 99.5%
  - **Low socio-economic students compared to students that are not low socio-economic students** - SES: 53.3% N/A: 46.7%
  - **Ethnic comparisons** - White: 93.7%, Hispanic: 5.3%, Native American: 0.0%, Multi-Racial: 0.8%, Black/African American: 0.3%, Hawaiian Pacific Islander: 0.0%, Asian: 0.0%  
(Iowa Department of Education, 2019)
- **Are students making at least a year's growth during a school year? (Review the resource in the required reading for the week):**
  - In Ligon's (2009) document, *Performing on Grade Level and Making a Year's Growth*, he writes, "Some may argue that a year's growth is relative to the prior achievement level of a student. Wrong. When a reasonable person talks about a year's growth, that person is thinking of growth for an average student. Yes, a low achiever can make growth equivalent to that of other low achievers, but try to defend that as being a full-year's growth when reporting assessment results to the public—or to that student's parents. Real growth can be any one of these. 1. Making more than a year's growth in a year's time. (A sign of success for low achievers, but not necessarily for high achievers.) 2. Growing enough to improve a low performance level or maintain a high-performance level. (Remaining proficient or advanced; or moving up to proficient or advanced.) Artifactual growth can be any one of these. (Artifactual growth is further illustrated by Colorado's student growth percentile model, which is discussed later.) 1. Growth under-represented—Growing less than other high achievers. (Still growing more than an average student or more than a year's growth.) 2. Growth over-represented—Growing more than other low achievers. (Still growing less than an average student or less than a year's growth.)"

When reading over Ligon's (2009) document I had a few students in mind. Students that I felt made so much growth, yet according to standardized assessments, were met with disappointment and discouragement. Are we discouraging these

students to believe they will never meet “proficiency”? Proficiency and growth that is measured by a means of peers, but not directly displaying the individual’s growth. As educators we are being asked to start providing students with pre-assessments of common formative assessments. This type of action, pre-assessment to post-assessment, to me should really be the display of the individual’s growth. We give district level assessments to students beginning, middle, and end to show growth. Why not at least give a standardized assessment at the beginning and end? Same assessment just given at different times of the year. Show stakeholders, especially students and parents, a truer measure of a year’s growth. In *Visible Learning*, John Hattie (2009, as cited in Ainsworth & Donovan, 2019, p.148) has written “that feedback, when used purposefully and in a timely manner – and when shared with students – can approximate a 0.75 effect size, meaning that students can nearly double their speed of learning within one academic school year.” I look at the statements made by Ligon and Hattie, and wonder, “are state assessments helping or hindering our students?” In any role that I take on in any school district (community member, parent, paraeducator, educator, principal, etc.) I have to believe that without the student knowing the standard outcome of the assessment would only hinder them. Additionally, the data from the assessment comes months after taking it. So, is the point of taking the assessment to help the educator know what is needed to help the students be successful, even when they are not in that grade-level anymore? Is the data to be better utilized to evaluate whether the teacher and/or the curriculum are sufficient? When looking at the second question, is this when we begin to get staff retentions issues? The data from state assessments must be important to someone. In my view, especially when/if I take on an administrative role, I can only see the data being a hindrance to students and staff.

- **Has your district seen achievement gains in a specific content area recently? (You'll need to review data from the last few years to answer this. Consider choosing a grade and subject level to narrow the amount of data you need to review).:**
  - With the new ISASP being given the first year, no data from the second year, and recent preliminary data from the third year, I’m not exactly sure how the data from this assessment can be useful. I’ve heard many comments about how this third year should become the new baseline/means moving forward. As someone who would be coming into the Curriculum Director role, I would agree that the first two years would become null and void. I would look to educators to find out how they felt the current curriculum aided in preparing their students for the ISASP. Were there any holes or gaps that they could immediately recognize?
  - Since I felt there was an inconsistency with the ISASP, I decided to take a look at our FASTBridge data instead (our district level assessment). I tracked the last four years of one grade-level of students in the content area of math. My reasoning for the last four years in math is because three years ago the district adopted a new math curriculum. Within the three years of adoption, our district has seen consistent achievement gains. From discussions and professional development with the teachers in the district, I can honestly say that we are still not using the curriculum

with full fidelity YET, but with owning our data from this assessment over time the benefits are becoming clearer and we are more aware of the importance of fidelity.

Other data should also be included, aside from summative assessment data. Examples of other data that could be included are:

- **District graduation rate** - 96.55%
  - **District dropout rate** - No information given
  - **Discipline information** - No information given
  - **Assessment data used in your district, such as FAST, DIBELS, AIMSWeb, or locally developed assessments** - Our local assessment is the FASTBridge (K-6). The state assessment is the ISASP (3-11).
  - **Testing data from other content areas (science, social studies, etc.)**
    - **Average Math Achievement:** 49.53
    - **Average ELA Achievement:** 50.97
    - **Growth in Reading:** 39
    - **Growth in Math:** 46
    - **Proficiency in Math:** 75.76
    - **Proficiency in ELA:** 75.76
    - **Proficiency in Science:** 58.89
- (Iowa Department of Education, 2019)

As a Curriculum Director looking at the data received through the ISASP report, a concern for me would be science. We have a proficiency of math and ELA that match at a percentage of 75.76. The proficiency level in science drops to an unsettling 58.89%. As the Curriculum Director I would first want to sit down with the teachers in the district to get their perspective of the curriculum. What parts of the curriculum are they using? What parts of the curriculum are they leaving out? Do they have to supplement? To what degree are they supplementing, if there are supplementary materials being used? Where are they finding the supplementary materials? The district has been using the current curriculum for over four years. Many teachers have shared that the curriculum is confusing for the students and the teachers. To even try and teach the material in a different/better way has become a planning hassle. Teachers in the district have quietly decided to ditch the curriculum this past year. They have been using materials and websites such as Mystery Science, Supercharged Science, and whatever the teacher can find on Teachers-Pay-Teachers. This is a scary realization as a Curriculum Director. No two grade-levels are using the same materials or websites. On top of that, neither class at each grade-level is using the same materials or websites either. In this regard, I would feel that the teachers were teaching science just to say they did, and not necessarily for achievement gain. My hope would be that the teachers would have come forward sooner to discuss the ineffectiveness of the curriculum and the downward spiral of addressing the science standards effectively in a vertical alignment. If teachers do not feel like they can come forth with their views, I as the Curriculum Director would need to make the initiative to observe the work being done in the classrooms. This would not be as an evaluative piece about the teacher in

any aspect, but an informal look at the correlation of the curriculum to the NGSS. Teachers can do amazing work. As the Curriculum Director it will be my job to give the teachers the essential tools to assure that the work they are doing is developing our students throughout their educational career.

## References:

Ainsworth, L., Donovan, K. (2019). Rigorous Curriculum Design: *How to create curricular units of study that align standards, instruction, and assessment*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. International Center for Leadership in Education.

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