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Educators and Community Leaders Gather to Discuss the Future of Assessment in Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment (MCIEA) presents a forum on the new assessment model they are building that better reflects the breadth and depth of student learning and school quality.

Boston, MA — On February 27, educators, community leaders, and policy makers gathered at the Omni Parker House in Boston to discuss performance assessments, school quality measures, and the future of school accountability in Massachusetts. The forum was co-hosted by the [Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy](#) and the [Center for Collaborative Education \(CCE\)](#) to share the work the [Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment \(MCIEA\)](#) has been undertaking over the past two years to promote innovative assessment reform in Massachusetts. MCIEA is a partnership of six public school districts: Attleboro, Boston, Lowell, Revere, Somerville, and Winchester.

A poster session kicked off the event, putting on display several performance assessments that have been implemented in MCIEA schools across the state. The assessments featured floor plan designs that assessed students on math, science, and language arts, as well as podcasts that gauged student knowledge of geography, South African history, and issues of equity.

“Our team has taken up creating more tasks in an authentic way this year as a result of MCIEA, and it is impacting a lot of the planning teachers are doing around assessment,” said Ashley Cinelli, a teacher at Rumney Marsh Academy in Revere, MA, who participated in the poster session. “I can see a shift in myself and other teachers’ thinking about assessment as an engaging classroom opportunity. The relationships that were strengthened in my classroom because of this particular project were invaluable.”

Chad d’Entremont, Executive Director of the Rennie Center, served as the emcee for the event. “Current definitions of student success don’t always capture the full range of skills needed for today’s students and tomorrow’s workforce,” he introduced. “This event is an opportunity to bring policy-makers and practitioners together to discuss innovative ways to measure student and school progress.”

Senator Patricia Jehlen, Massachusetts State Senator, presented the opening remarks, sharing how MCIEA hopes to make Massachusetts a leader in student assessments that are both innovative and equitable. “Though Massachusetts has been an innovator in many aspects of education, it has yet to innovate in the way it measures the progress of students and the quality of schools due to the one-size fits all accountability required under NCLB and Race to the Top,” observed Senator Jehlen. “Now that those

restrictions have been lifted at the federal level, the Commonwealth has an opportunity to explore creating and utilizing broader and more accurate measures rather than high-stakes multiple choice tests.”

The floor then opened to MCIEA board members, CCE leadership, and school educators. Dan French, Executive Director at CCE, explained MCIEA's innovative approach to student assessment, which focuses on teacher-designed performance assessments. “Performance assessments,” he explained, “are activities that allow students to show what they know and can do through real-world application. Students are given the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in ways that will be expected of them later in college, career, and life.”

Jack Schneider, Director of Research for MCIEA, showed how the consortium's School Quality Measures, a new data framework and dashboard that examines school quality based on multiple criteria determined by educators and the community, are better equipped to fairly demonstrate school quality than standardized tests. “Data can do a great deal to inform a school’s stakeholders and to strengthen educational outcomes, but only if those data are valid, comprehensive, and clear,” he said.

Revere Public Schools Superintendent Dianne Kelly elaborated, “In order for our schools to be successful, it is critical that our priorities reflect those of our community and our stakeholders. The data dashboard allows us to focus in these areas rather than just seeing where we rank compared to other districts.”

The forum concluded with a panel discussion featuring teachers, principals, superintendents, and union presidents participating in MCIEA. They shared their experiences as consortium members and answered audience questions.

During the forum, MCIEA and CCE launched their most recent white paper, [*Beyond Standardized Tests: A New Vision for Assessing Student Learning and School Quality*](#). The paper shares how MCIEA is using engaging professional development through CCE's Quality Performance Assessment program, and evidence-based research via the School Quality Measures initiative, to create innovative assessment reform from the ground up. The paper features teacher interviews and exclusive case studies.

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About the Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment

The Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment (MCIEA) is a partnership of six public school districts and their local teacher unions working together to redefine assessment and accountability in Massachusetts. MCIEA seeks to create a fair and comprehensive picture of school and student performance that leads to an increase in achievement for all students and a narrowing of prevailing achievement gaps among subgroups. The MCIEA governing board is comprised of superintendents and teacher union presidents from Attleboro, Boston, Lowell, Revere, Somerville, and Winchester. MCIEA is partnering with the Center for Collaborative Education and the Beyond Test Scores Research Team.

About the Center for Collaborative Education

The Center for Collaborative Education (CCE), established in 1994, works to transform schools to ensure that all students succeed in the classroom and beyond. CCE partners with educators and other professionals in schools, districts, and states to increase educational access and opportunity for every student, with particular attention to groups that have historically been underserved. Through its Quality Performance Assessment (QPA) program, CCE assists schools, districts, and states to adopt high quality performance assessment systems that drive deeper student learning.

About the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy

The Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy's mission is to improve public education through well-informed decision-making based on deep knowledge and evidence of effective policymaking and practice. As Massachusetts' preeminent voice in public education reform, we create open spaces for educators and policymakers to consider evidence, discuss cutting-edge issues, and develop new approaches to advance student learning and achievement. Through our staunch commitment to independent, non-partisan research and constructive conversations, we work to promote an education system that provides every child with the opportunity to be successful in school and in life.