



# Lincoln Public Schools

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To: School Committee  
From: Patricia Kinsella  
Re: Update on Key Assessments and District Determined Measures  
Date: May 7, 2015

## Overview

This report provides information on two aspects of the district's assessment program: the district's identification of those few key assessments that will serve as yearly measures of academic achievement, and a brief update on the status of the District Determined Measures program (DDMs).

## I. KEY ASSESSMENTS

Lincoln Public Schools seeks to meet the academic needs of all its students. One key step in meeting those needs is our collective ability to identify the skills and knowledge that students already demonstrate. Without a clear sense of the cutting edge of a student's existing skills, it is impossible to prepare for instruction that moves the student along their continuum of learning. Appropriately, in other words, LPS educators conduct assessments in order to improve instruction.

In addition to improving instruction, assessments allow us to gain a more global sense of how our student population is faring. The district has sought to identify those academic measures which, we believe, when implemented and analyzed on a yearly basis, will allow us to determine levels of achievement on a broader scale and to compare those levels longitudinally over time.

The two areas in which we will use these key measures are literacy and mathematics. The graph below identifies the measures selected. A description of each measure follows on the next page.

Key Yearly Measures of Academic Achievement						
Literacy				Math		
Gr.	F&P	Common Writing Assessment	MCAS	Student Interview Model	MCAS	STAR
K	✓	✓		✓		
1	✓	✓		✓		
2	✓	✓	✓	✓		
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
5	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
6		✓	✓		✓	✓
7		✓	✓		✓	✓
8		✓	✓		✓	✓

## KEY LITERACY ASSESSMENTS

### 1. Fountas and Pinnell (F&P), twice per year

The Benchmark Assessment System, developed by Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) is designed to give insight not only into a student's current levels of reading achievement, but also into the specific reading strategies over which the student has control and does not yet have control.

There are two segments to the administration of F&P: oral reading and the comprehension conversation. The student first reads aloud from a short text the assessor has selected. As the student reads, the assessor records every vocalization made by the student. During the comprehension conversation, the assessor invites the student to comment on the text and then asks a series of prompts designed to elicit information about the student's understanding within, beyond, and about the text.

A typical administration of F&P may include the use of two to five texts. After administration of the first text, the assessor makes a determination as to which text should be read next: students who score well initially will read a slightly more difficult text, and students who struggle will read a slightly less challenging text. The assessment continues until the assessor has obtained clear information about reading levels that may be considered instructional, independent, and/or hard for the student. Every administration of F&P will include both fiction and non-fiction texts.  
[http://www.heinemann.com/fountasandpinnell/BAS2\\_Overview.aspx](http://www.heinemann.com/fountasandpinnell/BAS2_Overview.aspx)

### 2. Common Writing Assessment, twice per year

The common writing assessment is a measure designed by educators within the Lincoln Public Schools. For most grades, the writing prompts given in the fall and spring are identical. This similarity allows for a clear analysis of the student's growth within one writing genre. Classroom teachers implement the assessment in a group setting, and scoring takes place as a collaborative process. The scoring criteria derive from the Six-Trait Writing Rubric, a guide used widely across the country.

<http://educationnorthwest.org/traits/traits-rubrics>

### 3. MCAS, once per year

As the state's existing measure of academic achievement, MCAS provides a yearly snapshot of our students' abilities in both reading and writing in grades 3-8. The data services provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) allow the district to analyze results in numerous ways, including growth scores over time. The English Language Arts MCAS provides information about both reading and writing.

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/>

## KEY MATH ASSESSMENTS

### 1. Student Interview Model, 2-3 times per year

In grades K-3, teachers assess student understanding in math through a student interview model. In grades K-2, we use Assessing Math Concepts, a student interview protocol created by noted math educator Kathy Richardson, whose protocols allow assessors to probe for children's mathematical understandings via guided, standardized conversations. In grade 3, the district has

developed its own measure, one focused on multiplication, modeling it after the Assessment Math Concepts/Kathy Richardson protocols.

The student interviews yield in-depth and nuanced information about student skills and content knowledge. Similar to the Fountas and Pinnell assessment in reading, this model requires the assessor to adapt the protocol depending on the performance of the child during the interview. If a student completes one aspect of the math task with ease, for instance, the assessor may opt to skip steps in the assessment sequence in order to probe at a more sophisticated level. Scoring of the student interviews describe levels of facility with the assessed concepts, with descriptors such as “applies,” “practice,” and “instructional” used at multiple points.  
<http://www.didax.com/KathyRichardson/>

## **2. MCAS, once per year**

Use of MCAS as a measure of achievement in mathematics parallels its use previously described in literacy.

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/>

## **3. STAR Math, three times per year**

STAR Math assessments are a new entry into our portfolio of district-wide assessments. After an extensive review of options, LPS selected STAR Math as a measure that would provide information not only about individual student skills, but also an overall picture of achievement in mathematics longitudinally through time. 2015-2016 marks the first year of full implementation, with three cycles: at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. The third cycle of STAR will take place in the last week of May and first week of June.

STAR Math is a brief online measure of student growth and achievement. Each administration takes roughly thirty minutes for students to complete.

STAR Math is an adaptive assessment, meaning that the program adapts its level of challenge as a student progresses through the test. When a student answers a question in geometry correctly, for instance, the next question related to geometry will be slightly more difficult.

In order for the district to determine the full benefit of the STAR Math assessment, we will need to complete at least two years of assessment cycles. The online environment of the measure and its adaptive nature require that we make judgments only after the district has had significant experience with the measure.

<http://www.renaissance.com/Products/STAR-Assessments/STAR-Math>

In Fall 2015, we will provide the School committee with a first report on the results of the STAR Math assessments.

## II. UPDATE ON DISTRICT DETERMINED MEASURES (DDMs)

As part of its revised Educator Evaluation System, the state requires that districts implement District Determined Measures, assessments that gauge student growth and that could contribute to an understanding of educator impact on student achievement. During school year 2013-14, the district embarked on an impressive effort to identify DDMs for every educator. DDMs were piloted last year, with major work accomplished not only in the implementation of the assessments, but also in the creation of structures that would allow for data collection and analysis.

The district has solidified its system of DDMs during 2014-15. While most DDMs piloted last year remain in place, some have been refined, and some have been replaced. All educators are implementing DDMs, and data are being collected on all of these assessments.

Next steps include the following actions:

- continue holding conversations among educators and administrators in order to make the most effective use of DDM data to inform instruction and spur improvements to educator practice;
- refine or replace those DDMs whose utility is proving less than optimal, and
- continue clarifying data collection systems and processes for analyzing data.