

## Interesting National Report on PARCC and Smarter Balanced Assessment Development Status

This week my bedside reading is the report entitled *“On the Road to Assessing Deeper Learning: The Status of Smarter Balanced and PARCC Assessment Consortia”* by Joan Herman & Robert Linn from the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST). The purpose of the report is to monitor the extent to which the two consortia’s assessment development efforts are likely to produce tests that measure and support goals for deeper learning. This report summarizes CRESST findings thus far, describing the evidence centered design framework guiding assessment development for both Smarter Balanced and PARCC as well as each consortia’s plans for system development and validation.

I have gathered some of the major findings to share with you but you can access the entire report at <http://www.cse.ucla.edu/products/reports/R823.pdf>.

The most interesting comments and findings directly from the report include:

- These new assessment systems will send a powerful signal to schools about the meaning of the CCSS and what students should know and be able to do for college readiness and success in work.
- The report emphasizes the Our methodology for defining deeper learning draws on Norman Webb’s depth of knowledge (DOK) classification scheme (see Webb, Alt, Ely, & Vesperman, 2005; <http://wat.wceruw.org>) and it was chosen because it is:
  - commonly used in alignment studies of current state tests,
  - familiar to policymakers and practitioners across the country, and
  - has been used in prior Foundation studies to establish a baseline for current state tests.
- Webb’s system categorizes DOK into the following four levels, essentially:

- **DOK1: Recall of a fact, term, concept, or procedure which is basic comprehension.**
- **DOK2: Application of concepts and/or procedures involving some mental processing.**
- **DOK3: Applications requiring abstract thinking, reasoning, and/or more complex inferences.**
- **DOK4: Extended analysis or investigation that requires synthesis and analysis across multiple contexts and non-routine applications.**
- **The authors note that DOK 3 and 4 are missing from most state tests.**
- **This research was supported with a recent RAND study which analyzed the DOK of released test items 17 states, which prior research showed as the most likely to have cognitively demanding tests that addressed deeper learning. These were the states that used open-ended and writing tasks, in contrast to most states that relied solely on selected response and short constructed response items in their tests. (*As in Arkansas*)**
  - **The Rand researchers concluded that an estimated 0% of students were assessed on deeper learning in mathematics through state tests,**
  - **16% percent were assessed on deeper learning in reading, and**
  - **2-3% percent were assessed on deeper learning in writing.**
- **By RAND's metric, fully 100% of students in tested grades using consortia tests will be held accountable for deeper learning.**

In summary, we have a lot of work to do to prepare for the new assessment. Past assessment preparation will not prepare our students for the new rigor identified with Webb's DOK system and being written into the PARCC assessment. In our next newsletter I will share from the report some comparisons of the two assessment consortia and their plans for our assessment.

*Barbara Hunter Cox*  
*Director of Teaching and Learning*