District Assessment System Protocol

In order to ensure an educational program is in compliance with W.S. 21-3-110(a)(xv), each school district must design and implement an assessment system aligned to the state standards in all content areas. A district's assessment system (DAS) comprises curriculum components, including state and local assessments. It is important to note that an assessment system includes more than just tests or exams. Evidence may come in the form of hands-on projects, classroom speeches or demonstrations, essays, informal observations, homework assignments, and other academic tasks. Consistent with W.S. (21-3-11 0(a)(xxiv)), the DAS is intended to "determine the various levels of student performance in all content areas of the uniform student content and performance standards relative to the common core of knowledge and skills." It is in this context that a district's assessment system is reviewed by the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) to ensure that the district has a systematic way to assess and evaluate how a student is doing relative to the standards in a given content area.

In the ever-evolving educational landscape, an organization's assessment system is not a static tool but a living framework that requires continuous review. This ongoing process is vital to ensure the system remains efficient, providing valuable data without overburdening students and educators. It also guarantees effectiveness, as assessments must accurately measure student mastery of the Wyoming standards. WDE presents this District Assessment Protocol to help districts take a deep look at their systems to find efficiencies and improve their data to make the most impactful changes.

Stage 0: Theory of Action

Before beginning the work of creating or reviewing the assessment system, organizations must first ensure that its goals and objectives are clear, aligned with requirements, and reflective of a growth-oriented assessment culture. This includes conversations about not only what you hope to gain from the assessment system, but also what necessary resources, infrastructure, and supports are needed for the system to function effectively. Additionally, considerations must be made for the outside requirements forced upon the system—including internal policies, required data, and the specific federal and state statutes that mandate protections and accommodations for special populations.

WDE provides the following resources to assist in this discussion:

- **Theory of Action Workshop:** Built for individual use during a meeting to capture all thoughts, discussions, and reflections, as well as capturing the final DAS Theory of Action Statement.
- **Theory of Action Facilitation Guide:** Built for a principal, content lead, team lead, curriculum director, etc., to facilitate conversations to complete the Theory of Action Workshop.
- **DAS Creation Guide:** Built to help guide a district through the creation of an assessment system.
- **DAS Create Tool:** Built to assist districts with data gathering to create a systemic system for assessments.
- **DAS Guidebook:** Built for district leadership, to ensure that the entire district assessment system is in compliance with statute and accreditation requirements while working through the Creation Workshop template.
- **DAS Assurances Checklist:** Built for district leadership, to ensure that the entire district assessment system is in compliance with statute and accreditation requirements.

Stage 1: Assessment Inventory

An assessment inventory serves as the critical first step in building a balanced and effective assessment system. It is a comprehensive catalog of every assessment—formal and informal, formative and summative—used across a district. The purpose of this inventory is to provide a clear, evidence-based picture of current assessment practices. By taking a complete inventory, organizations can identify areas of redundancy, uncover gaps in measuring student mastery of standards, and pinpoint assessments that may not be serving their intended purpose. This foundational work allows an organization to make informed, strategic decisions about how to streamline and refine its assessment system to ensure every assessment contributes meaningfully to student learning and progress.

WDE provides the following resources to assist in this discussion:

- **Assessment Inventory Spreadsheet Template**: Built to help gather all of the important information about what assessments are being given in an organization.
- **Assessment Inventory Facilitation Guide:** Built for a principal, content lead, team lead, curriculum director, etc., to facilitate conversations to complete the inventory spreadsheet.
- **Assessment Inventory Slide Deck:** Built for a principal, content lead, team lead, curriculum director, etc., to facilitate conversations to complete the inventory spreadsheet through a slideshow-style presentation.
- **Assessment Inventory Individual Thinking Handout:** Built for individual use during a meeting to capture all thoughts.
- **Individual Assessment Creation/Review:** Built to help you review an assessment or create a new assessment.

Stage 2: Data Review Protocol

A robust data review is the essential next step in transforming assessment data from a collection of numbers into a powerful tool for continuous improvement. The purpose of this review is to analyze the information gleaned from the assessment inventory, examining the trends and patterns revealed by student performance data. A robust data review is the essential next step in transforming assessment data from a collection of numbers into the engine that drives a responsive Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). The purpose of this review is to analyze the information gleaned from the assessment inventory, examining the trends and patterns revealed by student performance data across all learner profiles. By systematically reviewing this data, organizations can evaluate the effectiveness of Tier 1 core instruction for the whole class, identify specific learning gaps, and accurately pinpoint students who require targeted Tier 2 or intensive Tier 3 interventions. This critical analysis allows educators to move beyond simply administering tests to truly understand student needs. By aligning the assessment inventory processes directly with your MTSS structures, redundant data meetings are eliminated, and it ensures the assessment system yields actionable information to guide evidence-based instructional responses, allocate intervention resources (such as time and personnel) efficiently, and foster a culture of continuous progress monitoring.

WDE provides the following resources to assist in this discussion:

- **Data Review Spreadsheet Template:** Built to help gather all of the important information about what data exists in an organization.

- **Data Review Facilitation Guide:** Built for a principal, content lead, team lead, curriculum director, etc., to facilitate conversations to complete the data review spreadsheet.
  - State Data Review Protocol
  - District Data Review Protocol
  - Building Data Review Protocol
  - PLC Data Review Protocol
  - Accountability Data Protocol
    - **Accountability Spreadsheet Template:** Built to help gather all of the critical accountability information about what accountability data exists in an organization.
- **Data Review Slide Deck:** Built for a principal, content lead, team lead, curriculum director, etc., to facilitate conversations to complete the data review spreadsheet through a slideshow-style presentation.
- **Data Review Individual Thinking Handout:** Built for individual use during a meeting to capture all thoughts.

Stage 3: Planning for the Future

Moving beyond a simple review of existing practices, the final stage of this protocol is to plan for the future. This involves looking outward to analyze emerging trends and innovative approaches in assessment and education as a whole. The purpose of this forward-thinking step is to intentionally and strategically adapt, ensuring the district's assessment system remains relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of students and the broader educational landscape. By dedicating time to brainstorm and consider how new ways of thinking—from technology-enhanced assessments to more authentic, performance-based tasks—can be incorporated, an educational organization can proactively strengthen its system and prepare students for the demands of the 21st century.

WDE provides the following resources to assist in this discussion:

- **Planning Facilitation Guide:** Built for a principal, content lead, team lead, curriculum director, etc., to facilitate conversations with a group.
- **Individual Assessment Creation/Review:** Built to help you review an assessment or create a new assessment.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Assessment Decision-Making Matrix
- Appendix B: District Assessment System Guidebook
- Appendix C: District Assessment System Assurances Checklist
- Appendix D: Research and Resources