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## **Parents and Educators Seek Greater Balance in Student Testing, with More Focus on Individual Learning and Growth**

### **New Survey Shows Demand for Timely, Actionable Assessments that Help Gauge Skills Needed for College and Career Readiness**

**Portland, Ore.** – Parents and teachers want timely, actionable assessments that monitor individual student performance and progress across a range of subjects and skills to help improve teaching and learning, according to a new study released by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) and Grunwald Associates LLC.

The study asked parents, teachers and district administrators which assessments they found most useful, tested the most relevant knowledge and were most cost-effective.

For successful teaching and learning, large majorities of educators and parents say monitoring individual student performance should be among the top priorities for education. While year-end, high-stakes tests provide a useful snapshot of overall student and school performance, educators prefer more timely formative assessments to track student progress and adjust instruction accordingly.

Parents say that formative, classroom assessments—like homework, quizzes, portfolios and end-of-unit tests—provide data about individual student growth and achievement. Additionally, parents believe that formative assessments help teachers focus on the content students need to learn, provide teachers with necessary information to pace instruction for individual students and ensure all students learn fundamental skills.

“As a mission-driven not-for-profit, we at NWEA are passionately engaged in gathering data to help inform the dialogue around teaching, learning and testing,” said Matt Chapman, president and CEO of NWEA. “That’s why we undertook this survey—the first to look at parent needs and attitudes—and offer it at a critical time in our national effort to help all kids learn.”

“These research findings should help inform the ongoing public dialogue about the role of assessment in education,” said Peter Grunwald, president of Grunwald Associates LLC. “The views of educators—and especially parents—need to be heard as part of the effort to develop comprehensive and meaningful assessment systems.”

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Findings from the in-depth surveys include:

- At least 90 percent of parents cite the following priorities as “extremely” or “very” important to them: monitoring their child’s general progress in school, knowing when to be concerned about their child’s progress, determining their child’s preparedness for the next stage of learning and knowing if they need to seek extra help.
- At least 60 percent of teachers cite the following student-centered aspects of teaching and learning as among the most important to them: monitoring individual student performance and monitoring growth in learning over time.
- A majority of parents say that formative assessments (84 percent) and interim assessments (67 percent) are useful for instructional purposes, and a substantial minority (44 percent) say that summative assessments are useful. (These findings are broken down to show which type of assessments parents find useful for monitoring student progress, knowing when to seek additional help, measuring teacher quality and other benefits.)
- 67 percent of teachers say formative and interim assessments are “extremely” or “very” valuable for determining whether students have a deep understanding of content, compared to 25 percent for summative assessments.
- 93 percent of administrators “completely” or “somewhat” agree that formative and interim assessments provide data about individual student growth and achievement, compared to 50 percent for summative assessments.
- While more than 90 percent of parents and educators say it is important to measure student performance in math and English/language arts, the majority of both groups also say it is important to measure performance in science; history; government and civics; economics; information, technology and media literacy and environmental literacy.
- Large majorities of parents and educators say it is important to measure higher-order thinking skills (e.g., problem solving, critical thinking, communication, creativity, innovation and collaboration).
- For many parents, assessment results begin losing their relevance within one month after assessments are administered. Sixty-seven percent of parents “completely” or “somewhat” agree that formative and interim assessment results are delivered in a timely manner, compared to 50 percent for summative assessment results.

“The research reinforces the notion that no one assessment can provide the breadth and depth of information needed to help students succeed. For every child, we need multiple measures of performance,” said Chapman.

The surveys also asked about who should make decisions about what students are learning, the time and money spent on assessments, interest in comparing student performance with that of students in other districts, the anticipated usefulness of assessments based on the Common Core State Standards and the use of adaptive assessments.

This study is based on the responses to three online surveys. The nationally representative sample populations included:

- 1,024 K–12 classroom teachers
- 1,009 parents of K–12 students
- 200 district administrators

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**About NWEA**

NWEA is a global not-for-profit educational services organization headquartered in Portland, Oregon. NWEA partners with educational organizations worldwide to provide computer-based assessment suites, professional development and research services. NWEA's Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®) adaptive assessments leverage more than 30 years of research into student growth that informs decision making at every level, from classrooms to boardrooms. NWEA's research center, The Kingsbury Center at NWEA, uses the Growth Research Database™ to drive original research with universities, foundations and policymakers.

Learn more at [nwea.org](http://nwea.org).

**About Grunwald Associates LLC**

Grunwald Associates is a full-service research and consulting firm whose work has informed the debate on a range of national policy issues. Grunwald offers an in-depth understanding of education and innovation, combined with mastery of state-of-the-art research methodologies. The firm specializes in challenging public and proprietary assignments for nonprofit, corporate and government clients. Services include sophisticated quantitative and qualitative research, including pricing simulation and product configuration, social media and community development, and messaging and strategic counsel.

Grunwald has a reputation for research integrity and creativity and has garnered the trust of key national education associations, policymakers and educators.

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