

New NWEA/Gallup Survey Shows Educators, Parents, Students Want Balanced Approach to Assessment in ESSA Landscape

Majority of Parents, Students Support Tests That Improve Learning

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 5, 2016) -- As the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) offers states and districts new flexibility around accountability and assessment requirements, a new Gallup report commissioned by the not-for-profit [Northwest Evaluation Association](#) (NWEA) reveals educators, parents and students want a balanced approach to K-12 testing, utilizing a variety of academic assessments with a strong preference for those that improve teaching and learning.

The new report -- [Make Assessment Work for All Students: Multiple Measures Matter](#) - includes findings from a survey of more than 4,200 students, parents, teachers, principals and superintendents. The study is a follow-up to NWEA's 2014 ([Make Assessment Matter: Students and Educators Want Tests that Support Learning](#)) and 2012 ([For Every Child, Multiple Measures](#)) surveys on assessment.

While national focus over the past 15 years has been on summative state accountability tests, educators, students and parents find value in a variety of formative and interim assessments purposefully designed to guide instruction and increase student learning. A plurality of teachers believe that formative assessments are best used to identify students who need additional support (40%), and that classroom tests and quizzes are best used to indicate what students are learning (34%), while state accountability tests are best used to determine if students are meeting critical benchmarks (36%). Students say classroom tests and quizzes (76%), interim assessments (76%) and formative assessments (74%) are helpful to their learning, but only 41% say the same about state assessments. Parents value assessments that they say support their children's learning, including formative assessments (74%) and interim assessments (69%). And while a majority of parents believe state accountability tests are being used to identify student learning needs (63%) and to inform instruction (60%), only 26% agree that these tests improve the quality of teaching.

"NWEA believes public opinion about public education matters, and we commissioned this study to illuminate the priorities and concerns of a diverse range of education stakeholders," said Matt Chapman, CEO of NWEA. "These perspectives are supportive of ESSA's move away from singular high-stakes tests and toward multiple measures. NWEA believes this will result in a richer teaching and learning experience and greater educational equity for all students."

The survey finds that school- and district-level administrators are still learning about the Every Student Succeeds Act, but are favorably disposed toward the new legislation. The majority of principals and nearly half of superintendents are not yet familiar with ESSA. Superintendents are significantly more likely than principals to

believe ESSA will have a positive impact on their schools, 53% vs. 32%. The majority of principals (62%) say the impact will be neutral.

Other key findings from *Make Assessment Work for All Students* include:

- Three in four students (75%) believe that they spend the right amount of time or too little time taking assessments, as do more than half of parents (52%). In contrast, teachers (83%), principals (71%) and superintendents (79%) say students spend too much time taking assessments.
- More than six in 10 parents, 61%, say they rarely or never have conversations with their child's teacher about assessment results.
- Principals in low-income schools (37%) are more likely than those in middle- and high-income schools (24%) to say they have a data coach to help educators use assessments to improve instruction and learning. Correspondingly, teachers in low-income schools are more likely than those in middle- and high-income schools to say they are very prepared to interpret assessment results (43% vs. 31%) and modify teaching based on assessment results (49% vs. 33%).
- Data coaches are available in a relatively small proportion of schools and districts, but principals and superintendents who have access to data coaches overwhelmingly say they improve student learning (71% and 85%) and the quality of teaching (82% and 89%).

About NWEA

[Northwest Evaluation Association](https://www.nwea.org/)™ (NWEA™) is a global not-for-profit educational services organization. To better inform instruction and maximize every learner's academic growth, educators currently use NWEA assessments with nearly eight million students. More than 7,600 partners including U.S. schools, school districts, education agencies, and international schools trust NWEA to offer pre-kindergarten through grade 12 assessments that accurately measure student growth and mastery. NWEA also provides professional development that fosters educators' ability to accelerate student learning and research that supports assessment validity and data interpretation. Learn more at [nwea.org](https://www.nwea.org/).

About Gallup

Gallup delivers forward-thinking research, analytics and advice to help leaders solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 75 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of the world's constituents, employees and customers than any other organization. Gallup consultants help private- and public-sector organizations boost organic growth through measurement tools, strategic advice and education. Gallup's 2,000 professionals deliver services to client organizations through the Web and in nearly 40 offices around the world.