Association of Metropolitan School Districts
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Position on Student-Centered State Accountability Assessments

The Governor and Legislature should establish a Blue Ribbon Commission to evaluate and make recommendations to improve the assessment system to support student-centered balanced assessment.

AMSD BELIEVES

A balanced and comprehensive assessment system must align with various educational needs, including:

- Measuring student achievement and growth over time.
- Demonstrating mastery of academic content knowledge, higher order thinking skills, and depth of understanding.
- Providing timely and meaningful data to be used for improving instruction and learning.
- Providing information to students and families on individual student performance.
- Evaluating the school's contribution to student learning.
- Identifying school strengths and growth areas.

The design, administration, number, and use of assessments contributes to student disengagement and anxiety, particularly at the high school level, where students often fail to see their relevance. We must develop assessments that align with their intended use while fostering educational improvement.

BACKGROUND

State accountability assessments should be structured to improve teaching and student learning. The current Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) were designed for system-level insights (as required by federal legislation in the 2015 Every Student Succeed Act, which is the reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act). They are also being used for individual decisions and misused by the media leading to misalignment in educational outcomes. A more balanced, student-centered assessment system is necessary to ensure meaningful measurement of learning and progress and actionable data for teachers, schools, and districts.

A single assessment cannot serve all needs. A balanced assessment system incorporates multiple assessments at multiple levels for their unique purposes, including national, state, district, and classroom assessments, and employing assessments for summative and formative purposes. With respect to the perspective of educators and students, balanced assessment necessarily puts more weight and focus on assessments that directly inform teaching and learning. A system of balanced assessments should be developed, incorporating:

- Performance-based assessments such as project-based learning tasks; and
- Competency-based learning measures.

This approach ensures that various education stakeholders — students, educators, districts, and policymakers — receive data tailored to their needs and aligned with academic standards and broader educational goals. The focus should be on what gets taught, ensuring that assessments measure real student learning of academic standards rather than just system-wide proficiency.

A shift towards a student-centered, balanced assessment system is essential for ensuring meaningful learning and accurate educational accountability. By taking an urgent and adaptive approach, Minnesota can lead the way in developing assessments that serve students,

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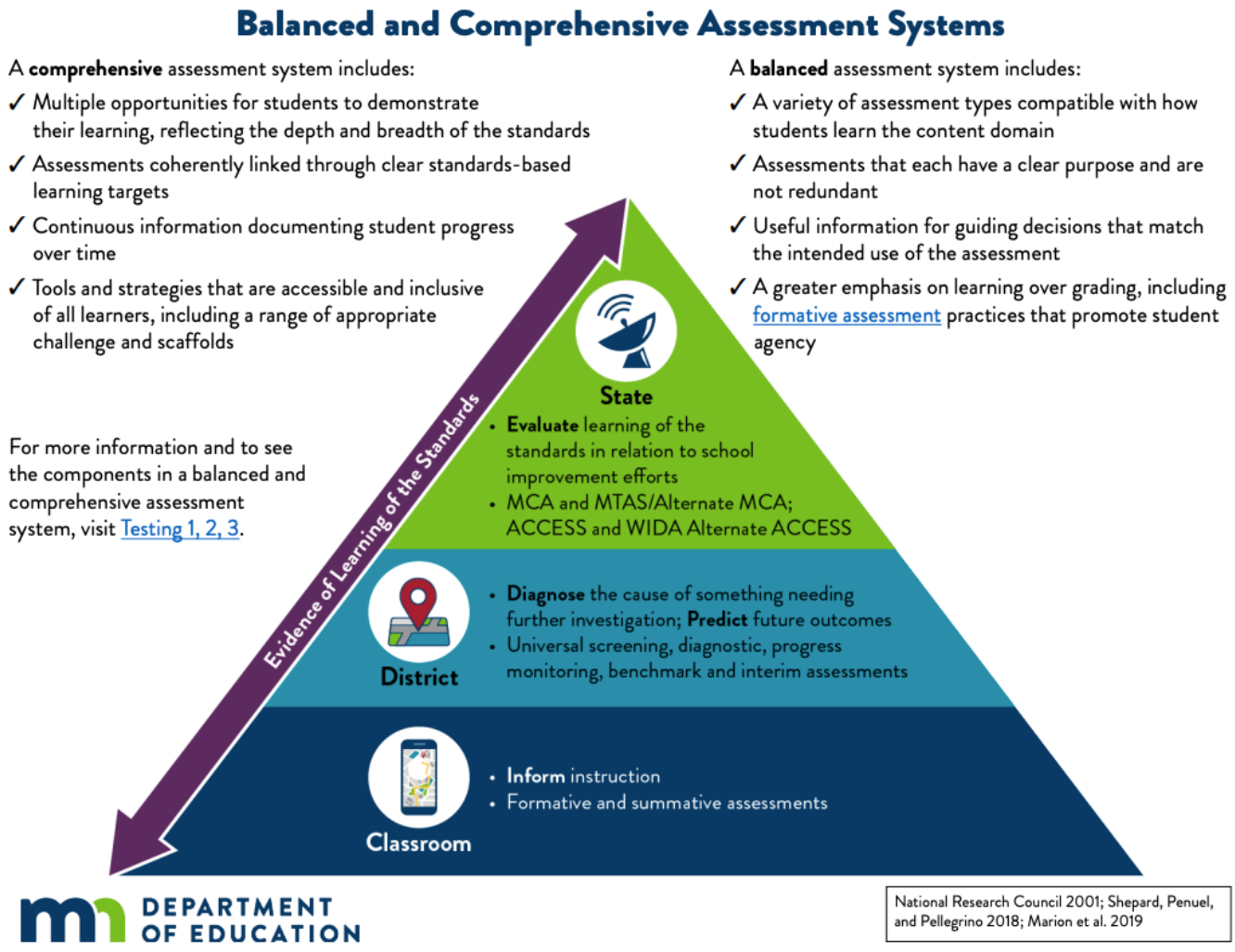
educators, families, and communities, and their unique needs and goals. Ensuring that actionable data is collected and used meaningfully and effectively will help drive improvements in instruction and student success.

At a minimum, the Blue Ribbon Commission should:

- Evaluate the use and effectiveness of current assessments.
- Explore assessment models in other states and national research to identify standardized assessments that more effectively measure student growth and inform school improvement than MCAs.
- Explore the feasibility of using a nationally recognized college entrance exam for high school accountability.
- Engage stakeholders including psychometricians, assessment and curriculum leaders, teachers, and other education leaders to provide expertise and guidance.



RESOURCES

https://www.educationevolving.org/resources/beacon-barometer-bridge
https://www.amsd.org/shared-files/12601/
https://sites.google.com/view/mn-mag/home?authuser=0
http://edmeasurement.net/
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