

Message from the President



Phil Morse, Ph.D.
NATD President

As the Chinese proverb goes, we are definitely living in interesting times. In my 30+ years in education, I think I can safely say that I have never lived through such a time of economic austerity. We are a national organization, and as such, the economic downturn has probably affected school systems in various parts of the country differently. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, where I most recently worked, the district has cut billions of dollars from the budget, and they anticipate having to cut hundreds of millions more for next year. Interesting times.

Yet despite the economic tsunami that has buffeted the nation's school systems, every day children go to school and teachers teach. In spite of the aborted effort to rewrite "No Child Left Behind," the federal accountability system for the country remains in place. Under NCLB, we still anticipate that all of the children in public schools will have achieved at least "proficient" status by the end of the 2014 school year. Because of this unyielding system, more and more schools will be classified as "failing," and states will find more and more schools that they have to

remediate. The Obama administration has created "Race to the Top," a program that will provide competitive grant money to school districts whose states have adopted certain required policies. Many states (including my own-California) have been revising their laws to make them eligible to apply for Race to the Top grants.

So, as 2010 is ushered in, we see a landscape in which the members of NATD can have a critical impact. Our local, state, and federal accountability systems are still heavily dependent on large-scale summative student assessments.

As a group, our members are in perhaps the best position to offer solid, measured advice to decision makers regarding the appropriate use and misuse of student tests.

We are also keenly aware of the importance of using high quality formative assessments to shape instruction appropriately. As a group, our members are in perhaps the best position to offer solid, measured advice to decision makers regarding the correct use and misuse of student tests. And our members play the role of technical advisors in states throughout the country.

Despite the rocky financial situation that faced our country last April, our organization had a very successful series of meetings associated with the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and National Council for Measurement in Education (NCME) annual meeting in San Diego, California.

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At our breakfast business meeting at the Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel, Dr. James Popham, emeritus faculty from UCLA, initiated a focused conversation with our members regarding the importance of high quality formative assessments to help inform instruction. The NATD Dinner, sponsored by the Educational Testing Service, took place at Il Fornaio, a beautiful Italian restaurant on the Balboa Peninsula, a short ferry ride across the bay from downtown San Diego. Dr. Peter Hendrickson was awarded the NATD Lifetime Achievement Award for his contributions to the assessment field. Peter, as a past president of NATD, accompanied the other past presidents to administer the "Poops Oath" to outgoing NATD president Dr. Bonnie Strykowski. Later in the week, the NATD/NCME Joint Invited Symposium took place at the Hard Rock Hotel. The symposium titled, "NCLB at Year 8 in the Assessment of English Language Learners: Taking Stock of the Assessment and Accountability Systems," had as

panelists Jamal Abedi, UC Davis; David Francis, University of Houston; and Rebecca Kopriva, University of Wisconsin; while Gregory Cizek, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Robert Linqanti, WestEd served as discussants.

The upcoming year will provide its share of challenges and opportunities. Our members will continue to be involved in creating policy and advising educational leaders regarding assessment. Please join us at our annual meetings next April and May, 2010, in Denver, Colorado. We welcome you.

Dr. Phil Morse is NATD President and recently retired as Coordinator of the Student Testing Unit, Planning, Assessment & Research Division, Los Angeles Unified School District.



Nominate a Colleague for the "NATD Outstanding Contributions in Educational Assessment"

In 2003, the NATD Board of Directors established an award to recognize individuals who have made outstanding professional contributions in the area of applied educational assessment in schools. The Board of Directors, on behalf of the association, may recognize one or two individuals each year. Individual(s) recognized by this award are nominated from any of the myriad areas in the wide field of educational assessment including but not limited to measurement theory, promotion of best professional practices, teaching of measurement and assessment, and use of assessment information for curriculum, instruction, policy making and communication with stakeholders.

NATD members are encouraged to give serious consideration to nominating a worthy candidate for the 2010 award. Please include a brief letter outlining your reasons for recommending this person. Email your nomination and letter by March 26, 2010 to:

Dr. George H Olson
 Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership
 Appalachian State University
 Boone, NC 28608.
 EMAIL: olsongh@gmail.com .

Procedures:

- Nominations are solicited through an NATD newsletter article, the NATD Website, and/or other electronic means. Nominations must be made by NATD members.
- An awards committee, appointed by the Board, reviews nominees and recommends one or two candidates to the Board
- The awards are given at the annual meeting of the NATD, if the Board of Directors approves a worthy candidate.
- The recipient of the award is recognized at the annual meeting with a certificate.

Previous recipients of this award:

Carole Perlman (2003)	James Popham (2006)
Ed Drahozal (2003)	Joseph O'Reilly (2006)
Stephen Henry (2004)	Robert L. Linn (2007)
Jim Bray (2004)	G. Gage Kingsbury (2008)
Joe Hansen (2005)	Peter Hendrickson (2009)

2010 NATD/NCME Joint Invited Symposium: *Validity Issues for Interim Benchmark Assessment Systems*

In recent years, many school districts in the U.S. have implemented or are currently implementing systems of short-cycle, interim benchmark assessments which serve multiple purposes. Administrators, responding to accountability policies, need *summative* data to evaluate programs and to measure how many students are reaching achievement goals; teachers need timely, actionable *formative* information to make immediate instructional decisions about students. Some districts purchase interim benchmark assessments from a growing commercial marketplace while others choose to build their own formative instruments in-house.

This arena of multiple stakeholders and competing definitions of assessment *purpose* and *quality* raises important validity questions:

- How do we best deal with the multiple purposes of these assessments? Can the same instruments serve both formative and summative purposes, or are these purposes mutually exclusive?
- Is the formative/summative distinction the most useful way to think about assessment at the district level?
- How do we evaluate the quality, relevance, and utility of these assessments for this context?
- What is the most useful way to think about the alignment and empirical relationship between benchmark assessments, standards, and state assessments?
- Is instructional utility more important than technical quality?
- Do these assessments produce the intended positive results of improved teaching and learning?

This symposium will bring together measurement professionals from diverse perspectives to grapple with these questions.

NOTE: Time and place for the symposium is yet to be determined.

Session Organizer and Moderator:



Dr. Jack Monpas-Huber
NATD Vice President/President-Elect
Director of Assessment &
Student Information
Shoreline School District, WA

Panelists:



Dr. Lorrie Shepard
Professor of Education
University of Colorado
Boulder, CO



Dr. Marty McCall
Psychometrician
Northwest Evaluation Association
Portland, OR



Dr. Judith Arter
Assessment Expert
Assessment Training Institute
Educational Testing Service
Portland, OR

Discussants:



Dr. Catherine Taylor
Associate Professor of
Educational Psychology
University of Washington



Dr. Pamela Moss
Professor of Education
University of Michigan

Racing to the Top~But to the Top of What?



Connie Zumpf, Ph.D.
Cherry Creek Schools.



M. Kevin Matter, Ph.D.
Cherry Creek Schools.

The best hope for the U.S. Education Department's Race to the Top (R2T) initiative is that swift, strategic injection of money into the system will ignite surges of innovation and transformation. The timelines for the completion of state proposals is short, and there is a discernable rush to create or adjust laws to be eligible for the money. But what are the implications of a "competitive race" analogy in education? Could this become a frenzied dash for a fat prize with little regard for current budget realities and potential impact on ongoing initiatives? Transformational change takes careful thought, strategic planning, and time. How can "winning" states and their districts best prepare for and use these funds in thoughtful ways?

Assessment/measurement professionals can be key members of a team's successful race to the top. We are uniquely qualified to provide support and counsel as districts prepare to carry out and evaluate R2T initiatives with responsible, thorough intention. Our work here is no different than it has ever been; we pose essential questions that nudge decision makers to keep "best practices" at the forefront of their actions.

In this article, we present for your consideration questions for district leaders to consider before embarking on a course of action in any of the four R2T reform-oriented themes. We invite your continued conversation!

R2T Reform-Oriented Themes:

1. Quality Common Standards & Assessments
2. Data Systems & Using Data for Continuous Improvement
3. Highly Effective Teachers and Leaders
4. Chronically Low Performing Schools

(For summaries of each theme, see the Achieve papers at <http://www.achieve.org/Racetothetop> and the U.S. Department of Education "Race to the Top Program: Executive Summary")

Formative or Formless? District Assessments.

World class standards and quality state assessments provide the foundation for R2T reform. The challenge for

districts is to ensure that teachers and decision makers have access to interim assessments that inform their work year-round.

- Are our curricula and instructional programs clearly focused on state standards?
- Have we addressed systemic factors that impede student performance on standards (e.g., course offerings and schedules)?
- What are our honest expectations for different student groups? How do our expectations impact student learning and performance?
- How have we assured that our formative and interim assessments provide valid and reliable measures of student progress toward state standards and post-secondary college/workforce readiness?
 - Do we provide sufficient support to inform standards-based instruction throughout the year (e.g., training, planning resources, professional development)?
 - Do our standards and assessments allow us to identify students who are not on track to succeed? Do we have the resources to serve the needs of these students?
- Are we able to reliably assess important content areas that are not addressed on state tests?

"If anyone's just doing things to chase a few dollars, that's not the kind of transformational change we want, and it's frankly not the kind of place we're going to invest in." Secretary Arne Duncan

Innovation or Inundation? Purchasing New Systems.

The influx of R2T money may fund the purchase of systems that introduce new capabilities for tracking student achievement. Interim or benchmark *assessment systems* can help teachers monitor student progress while *data access systems* provide tools for organizing data, measuring effects, and communicating outcomes.

- In what specific ways will the new tool(s) focus, simplify, and otherwise improve instructional practice and data inquiry for our users?
- Can we provide sufficient infrastructure and support to implement and maintain these systems? Or, will we load additional machinery on top of already resource-stretched systems, programs, and staff without commensurate adjustments in priorities?
- Can we identify and collect the data elements essential to the ongoing work of our educators at the classroom, school, and district level?
- What are our plans for connecting the new system(s) to assessment and data systems currently in place?

Are We At "the Top" Yet? Evaluating Initiatives.

Improvement will not be systematic or systemic without a robust capacity to evaluate programs, practices, and

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Racing to the Top~ ...continued from page 4

eventual college and workplace success. We must be able to see beyond school and district level test scores as we seek to identify innovations, programs, and practices worthy of continued support after the initial R2T money is spent.

- Have we sufficiently planned for quality evaluations specific to the initiatives to be implemented?
- Can we allocate sufficient resources (e.g., time, money, staff) to properly evaluate these efforts?
- Are our data systems sufficiently robust to identify initiatives, programs, teachers, and leaders, that make a measurable difference in student learning and success in PreK-12 and beyond?
- If multiple initiatives are implemented simultaneously, what steps must we take to maximize our understanding of the effect of particular components of our change strategies?

Data Driven or Data Distracted? Strategic Reporting.

States and districts are rapidly becoming “data rich, but information poor” and knowledge starved. Our goal is to optimize the data-informed work of our educators and decision makers, not to bury them in nifty charts and confound them with data distractions.

- Are our data reports and displays strategically framed around clear purposes and aligned to key state and district goals?
- Have we defined essential data questions and related reports for each stakeholder user group?
- In what specific ways do existing and planned data reports inform and support the work of our educators? Have users had sufficient input in the development of our reports and tools?
- Do our existing and planned data reports support increased transparency about student progress?

Our work here is no different than it has ever been; we pose essential questions that nudge decision makers to keep “best practices” at the forefront of their actions.

Creating Data Capacity or Data Adversity? Professional Development.

Even the best data are meaningless without tools and processes that enable educators to translate data into useful information and effective instructional practice. Teachers, meet your new BFF*: *Data*.

- Do decision makers in our schools have ready, easy data access? How will we allocate time and resources to train staff to access the data necessary for their work?
- Have we specified a common data inquiry process that meets our needs for improvement? How do we plan to provide ongoing training for *data-informed* decision making?
- Can we create and support a defined structure and expectations for ongoing data-informed discussions (e.g., professional learning communities)?
- How do professional development activities necessary for R2T programs fit with existing professional development programs that are currently underway?

Growth: The Metric for Change.

The focus on student growth is a welcome change to the achievement discussion. The core principle of this focus is that teacher and principal quality *matters*, and that the most effective educators are those whose students demonstrate the most growth. However, some educators have understandable reservations about the push to evaluate educator effectiveness with growth metrics. As with any measurement, growth rates are only estimates of “truth.” It is essential to have a clear, consistent, measureable definition of effectiveness for teachers and principals.

- Over how many years should we examine student growth to determine “effective” teachers/leaders?
- What are the variables that impact student growth and teacher effectiveness? Can we adequately separate the impact of systemic, teacher, and student effects from “pure” instructional effects?
- Is it reasonable to expect that our most effective teachers can sustain effectiveness every year?
- Do our state assessments allow us to track students longitudinally in all areas and in all grade levels? How do we determine teacher effectiveness for music, economics, or art? How do we measure effective teaching in the primary grades?

*Best Friend Forever 😊

Racing to the Top~ ...continued from page 5

Do We REALLY Have the Will to Change?

Schools identified for “turnaround” using R2T funds are in for extraordinary changes in practices and policies. More than anything, this initiative demands the commitment—political, social, and psychological—to implement dramatic, but viable, change strategies.

- How do we garner support from affected groups to override traditional practices and policies for staff and students in persistently low performing schools?
- What incentives are most effective in persuading the “right people” to be “on the bus” (Jim Collins)?
- What level of fidelity of implementation is necessary to produce meaningful and sustained change in student achievement?
- What are the common features across effective change strategies for schools (see Marzano, 2003)? Which should we insist be adopted by our low performing schools?

Educators, legislators, and interest groups must become more nonpartisan and take actions in recognition of education as a *system*, beginning at pre-kindergarten and continuing through college. Individually, and as groups, we need to dramatically reduce limited self-interest thinking and planning and focus on strategies and processes that will produce sustainable, continuous improvement of the system.

We suggest that it is our responsibility as assessment/measurement professionals to advocate for sufficient linkages to existing resources and services that will support proposed changes in systems and processes. At the same time, we must also take care that new programs and systems complement and support one another, rather than compete for limited resources. R2T spending on new programs and services will unfold under the ever-looming reality of an economy that has seriously compromised education budgets and the ability to provide for basic services. Racing to invest R2T monies presents many challenges, but also many opportunities for important dialogue about best and aligned practices in our districts. And as we already know, the work of continuous improvement is ongoing and ever-changing; we never really make it to “the top.”

Connie Zumpf is the District Accountability Coordinator in Cherry Creek Schools Colorado (Denver-metro area), and current NATD Secretary. Kevin Matter is Director of the Office of Assessment & Evaluation in Cherry Creek Schools and Past President of NATD.

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Looking for New Members

a note from our Treasurer

As I looked around at the members present at the past NATD business meeting, I was struck by how long I have known most of the participants. These were *old* friends and colleagues—people I've known for *many* years. Several of these individuals were the very people who actively built NATD during its formative years, and many of these same individuals currently manage the association's activities. The NATD membership has decreased in recent years. Whether this is due to the economic turndown or the graying of the current membership is hard to tell. What is evident is that our association needs an infusion of new energy—individuals who will bring new vitality into the association. I think that it is time for the senior members of the association to pass the torch to newer and younger members. To do this, we

need to recruit newer and younger members. Those of us who have moved up and/or off the career ladders in our institutions should consider recruiting junior associates. We should also consider inviting colleagues from neighboring districts and institutions to join—and take an active role in—the association. We need to do this to keep the association vital.



A membership form is provided in this newsletter. Please pass it on to your professional colleagues and associates.



Dr. James Popham leading a discussion regarding the importance of high quality formative assessments to help inform instruction. NATD Breakfast Business Meeting, Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel, San Diego.

Nominations Sought for NATD Leadership Positions

NATD is proud to count you among our members. Having you as a colleague enriches us all. But simply being a member is a passive activity; we'd like to encourage you to take a more active role in NATD. You can do this by submitting your name or the name of a colleague to be considered as a candidate for one of the NATD offices that will become vacant in April 2010. These include:

- Vice President
- Treasurer
- Member-at-Large

Please consider the opportunity to take a leadership role in an important professional organization and to connect with other like-minded professionals. If you have the interest and time to give a little back to NATD (or if you know of someone who does), please send your name and a brief summary of your professional activities to the Chair of the Nominating Committee, Bonnie Strykowski at bonniestrykowski@yahoo.com.

Please do this while the idea is fresh in your mind. **Your NATD needs you!**

Annual dues are \$20.00; Please make checks payable to "NATD".

NATD Board, 2010

<p>President <i>Dr. Phil Morse</i></p> <p><i>Coordinator, Student Testing Unit (retired)</i></p> <p><i>Planning, Assessment & Research Division</i></p> <p><i>Los Angeles Unified School District</i></p> <p><i>Los Angeles, CA</i></p>	<p>Member At Large <i>Dr. Mary Yakimowski</i></p> <p><i>Director of Assessment</i></p> <p><i>Neag School of Education</i></p> <p><i>University of Connecticut</i></p> <p><i>Storrs, CT</i></p>
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<p>Past President <i>Dr. Bonnie Strykowski</i></p> <p><i>Chief Accountability Officer</i></p> <p><i>Community Consolidated School District 181</i></p> <p><i>Westmont, IL</i></p>	<p>Member-at-Large <i>Dr. Vicki Cartwright</i></p> <p><i>Senior Administrator</i></p> <p><i>Accountability, Research, and Assessment</i></p> <p><i>Orange County Public Schools</i></p> <p><i>Orlando, FL</i></p>
<p>Secretary and Newsletter Editor <i>Dr. Connie Zumpf</i></p> <p><i>District Accountability Coordinator</i></p> <p><i>Cherry Creek Schools</i></p> <p><i>Englewood, CO</i></p>	<p>Member-at-Large <i>Dr. Alex Duran</i></p> <p><i>Director of Research, Assessment & Evaluation</i></p> <p><i>Sunnyside Unified School District</i></p> <p><i>Tucson, AZ</i></p>
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NATD

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEST DIRECTORS NEWSLETTER WINTER 2010

Connie Zumpf, Editor

District Accountability Coordinator
 Cherry Creek School District
 4700 S Yosemite St



NATD is an association of professionals responsible for assessment programs in public educational settings. The membership is broadly representative of North America.

New Members Wanted!

The National Association of Test Directors (NATD) welcomes new members. Please use this form to register as a new member, to pay current dues, or to update current information

MEMBERSHIP FORM NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEST DIRECTORS

Print your name

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MI

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Annual dues are \$20.00; Please make checks payable to "NATD".

Membership Category: (please check one):

- Active Member: Responsible for educational testing programs in settings not primarily for profit.
 Emeritus Member: Active NATD member for at least five years; no longer employed on full time basis.
 Associate Member: All others.

Mail Form and Check to:

Dr. George H Olson, NATD Treasurer
Leadership & Educational Studies
Appalachian State University
Boone, NC 28608

Check here to request that your directory information **not** be published on the NATD web site.