HOW TO CHOOSE AN ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM THAT SUPPORTS STUDENT GROWTH

5 Key Considerations for AMS Evaluations

The shift to remote learning—although challenging—gave way to a more thoughtful approach to online teaching and learning that remains today. The development of blended learning materials to support face-to-face activities beyond the classroom has allowed students and teachers to connect in ways that weren't possible before. Although learning can now take place almost anywhere—whether in-person, remote, or hybrid—the need for determining what students know and how much learning they have retained will only grow in importance.

As you look to address individual student needs, key questions that inform instruction will remain top of mind, such as:

- "What do my students know and don't know?"

- "What do I do next based on their current mastery levels?"

- "How can I improve my own teaching to help students learn?"

To personalize learning, schools should look to develop a strong assessment strategy—and have an assessment management system (AMS) that fully supports it.

> [The right AMS] is a catalyst for those collegial conversations about student achievement, about instructional strategies... It offers that consistency throughout the district. We know the When, What is going to be taught, and What is going to be assessed.
>
> **LEEVETTE MALLOY**
> **Director, Fairfield County Schools,**
> **South Carolina**

5 Key Considerations for AMS Evaluation ➡

When evaluating your options for formative and benchmark assessment tools, there is a lot to consider. There are also several non-negotiables when it comes to introducing an AMS to your students.

To guide you through this process, we've highlighted five key considerations along with how Mastery Connect, Instructure's assessment management system, can help.

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How to Choose an Assessment Management System that Supports Student Growth

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Instant and Actionable Data ➡

Data is only valuable if you can immediately use it to positively impact teaching and learning. There are countless ways to collect student performance data, but it can be challenging to get real-time data presented in an intuitive way that makes it easy to use.

Teachers need to determine where students are in their learning through assessment. An AMS should make it easy to quickly access any standard set in order to gather formative data. Once students have completed an assessment, the resulting standards-based data should make it easy to do three things:

- See which students need targeted interventions for one or more standards.

- Identify which standards should be revisited for the entire class.

- Determine the standards that have been mastered by all students, indicating that it's time to move on to another concept.

Delivering a personalized learning experience starts with knowing each student's level of understanding standard-by-standard, and adjusting instruction to meet individual needs.

Teachers can then group students by mastery levels, revisit certain skills, or conduct one-on-one conferences to close any learning gaps. Frequent formative check-ins will allow students to continue to master a skill or concept before moving on to new content.

HOW MASTERY CONNECT MAKES DATA USABLE

The Mastery Tracker is an interactive dashboard that offers quick access to standards, assessments, supplementary resources, tracking of student understanding, and reporting tools. With a few simple mouse clicks, educators can obtain in-depth information about student progress and immediately inform their instruction to meet classroom needs.

> "We're looking at data differently, we're gathering data differently, we're separating groups based on data, and giving them the support they need.

MIKOL ALDER
Teacher, Majestic Elementary, Utah

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Powerhouse Collaboration Tools

No teacher should be an island. As teachers continue to manage performance gaps and differentiate instruction to address individual student needs, they will need standards-aligned resources to support these practices.

Supercharging collaborative teams should be a primary goal of all administrators as school resumes. Teachers should regularly meet with their grade-level teams, as well as the above-and below-grade-level teams, to address learning gaps. With real-time data on individual student progress and comparative classroom data, teachers can hold deeper more meaningful conversations about standards alignment, assessment effectiveness, and instructional best practices.

Evaluate prospective AMS systems for teacher-centric tools that make nearly every aspect of collaboration easier and more effective:

- Integrated reporting features to compare standards-based data at the student, class, and grade level

- Easy-to-use tools for sharing and discovering standards-aligned resources and assessments

- Integrated authoring tools for creating items, both simple and technology-enhanced items, for creating common formative assessments at the team, school, and district level

HOW MASTERY CONNECT MAKES PLCS MORE POWERFUL

The flexible teacher-centric assessment and data analysis features in Mastery Connect drive more meaningful instructional practice and PLC collaboration while providing teachers with the insight they need to deliver a personalized learning experience for every student.

Integrated reporting makes it simple for collaborative teams to get the data they need, when and how they need it to make the most of their limited time together. For example, the Teacher Comparison Report shows student mastery levels of common formative assessments, so teachers can self-evaluate their own instruction in relation to their peers. Teachers can also use messaging features to collaborate with their colleagues. Teachers can also search the Mastery Connect online community to find thousands of standards-aligned resources and assessments from teachers in their state or across the country.

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Our PLCs were kinda flat, to be honest. We couldn't focus on a central data source because we didn't have anything that was common across the grade level on a routine regular basis... Now, [our PLCs] are more heavily embedded in their standards and open to talking about how they're teaching and how that teaching is changing outcomes.

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STEFANIE SPENCER
Principal, Spring Branch ISD, Texas

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3

Flexible Assessment Options

Teaching and learning are unique for everyone. There is no one right way to assess students, and tech tools must be flexible and provide multiple modalities for interacting with students.
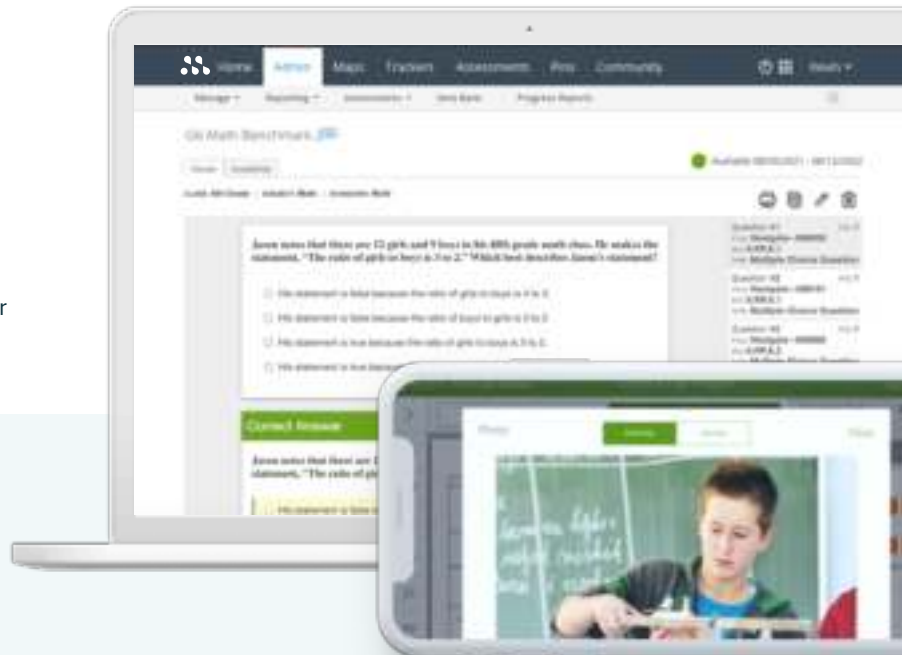
Encourage your teachers to create assessments in various formats. Not all assessments should be paper-and-pencil. Additionally, rubric grading allows students to demonstrate their knowledge through performance-based assessments, which can be conducted in person or by submitting artifacts online. When considering an AMS, consider the flexibility and breadth of the assessment options, so teachers can administer assessments to adapt to their teaching style, course content, and student needs, while also saving time.

Below is a list of must-have assessment modalities when choosing an AMS.

Online: An intuitive experience for students to complete their formative or interim assessments online using any desktop, laptop, or mobile device through a variety of methods.

Scanning / Paper and Pencil: Easy process to print plain-paper bubble sheets that are quickly scored with instant-grading technology using a webcam/document camera or mobile device.

Performance-Based: Ability to score a variety of performance-based and rubric-based assessments with an intuitive integrated grader.

Mastery Connect makes it easier for teachers to get the in-the-moment data they need and a wealth of ways to capture it. Learning is an active process that takes a variety of paths, assessment tools should be just as flexible. Teachers can use Mastery Connect to quickly add assessment data in several ways: using a rubric, scanning paper bubble sheets, capturing performance-based evidence of learning, or entering mastery scores. Assessments can also be administered online using teacher-created content, items from a district item bank, or one of Instructure's standards-aligned assessment offerings. Teachers can also author and share their own items, selecting from over 100 item types including a wide variety of technology-enhanced items, to create custom assessments to meet their unique needs.

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If you want to see great results, you have to have specific, targeted, and quick feedback. Before we had Mastery Connect it could take me up to a week to correct 32 math tests and do the item analysis. Now when the students submit their answers, 'boom!' that data is right there and I can start an intervention the next day.

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SONYA WHALEY
5th Grade Teacher, California

4

Benchmark and Curriculum-Mapping Tools

Benchmarking plays an important role in ensuring students meet learning outcomes. While teachers are busy collecting formative data, administrators also need a line of sight into how students across the district are progressing. Additionally, developing curriculum maps will help teachers deliver vetted content at an appropriate scope and sequence across the district.

When evaluating your assessment program or curriculum planning for the upcoming school year, make necessary adjustments to help you address current challenges. Remember that benchmarking will help you keep a pulse on student performance throughout the year.

When planning, consider the following high-level questions:

- Are you providing a guaranteed, viable curriculum to all students?

- What additional resources do your teachers need?

- How can you incorporate quick, low-stakes progress monitoring?

- Does your benchmarking approach address the current environment?

Mastery Connect makes it easy to build and administer benchmark assessments. Benchmark assessments are delivered directly to the teacher's Tracker for students to take in the specified window. Once the benchmark is scored, the data is shown in the Tracker to become part of the formative cycle.

The Formative/Benchmark Compare feature allows teachers to seamlessly analyze the results of their completed district interim assessments against their formative assessment data to better evaluate the alignment and rigor of their own formative assessments.

Planning tools streamline the development of curriculum or assessment maps at the district, school, or teacher level. The maps may be shared with selected users or automatically distributed throughout the district. Teachers are then able to create a Mastery Tracker from a common set of guaranteed and reliable curriculum and assessment resources. And, because curriculum maps are synchronized, any updates are immediately available to teachers.

- How can you best determine if students are mastering content at the same pace at all schools?

- How, as a district leader, are you using benchmark data to provide additional supports where they are needed most?

- Are your teachers using benchmark data to make informed instructional decisions and evaluate their own efficacy?

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If I have a teacher at one of the schools who finds a really neat resource that we think would be wonderful for all of our teachers to have, we can load it into the Curriculum Map so they can all have that resource.

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NEELY KELLY
Elementary Curriculum Coordinator,
Fairfield County Schools, South Carolina

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Scalable, Interoperable and Secure

You need your tools to work. A platform can have all the bells and whistles, but those don't matter if the system doesn't perform when you need it. An AMS should also connect with your existing tools, saving time fumbling with logins and requiring hours of double entry. And, of course, your student data should always be protected.

When rolling out your new AMS to your teachers, be sure that you are confident in its reliability. AMS adoption may be negatively affected if teachers and students perceive that the platform is unreliable, fearing outages, slow response times, or the loss of critical data. An AMS should be able to grow with you, and it shouldn't interfere with other tools that your teachers are required to use.

As you evaluate AMS vendors, be sure to ask these three questions:

- Does the AMS vendor guarantee an uptime of 99.9% and have they maintained that uptime over the past three years?

- Are there surcharges for connecting to an SIS or LMS by another vendor?

- Does the vendor strictly adhere to both FERPA and COPPA regulations?

HOW MASTERY CONNECT FITS INTO YOUR TECH ECOSYSTEM

Mastery Connect scales with you as your usage grows and guarantees 99% uptime. As an integral part of the Instructure Learning Platform, Mastery Connect was built to integrate with other tools and systems, ensuring a streamline, integrated experience for teachers and students. Because Mastery Connect is fully committed to privacy regulations, you don't need to worry about keeping your students' data safe.

> " Assessments developed by the Instructure team have "provided our administrators and teachers with timely and precise data to guide instructional decisions. "
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> **GREG PACZAK, PH.D.**
> Director of Research and Development,
> Madison County Schools, MSSoluptas maionse

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Mastery by Instructure brings together the assessment tools and quality content educators need to implement a successful assessment program.

Learn more about how our assessment offerings—including the Mastery Connect assessment management system—drive learning forward and positively impact student success.

Powering the World's Smartest Classrooms.

Instructure is an education technology company dedicated to helping everyone learn together. We amplify the power of teaching and elevate the learning process, leading to improved student outcomes. Today, Instructure supports more than 30 million educators and learners at more than 6,000 organizations around the world.

The Instructure Learning Platform makes learning more personal and student success more equitable by delivering the solutions you need to support, enrich, and connect every aspect of teaching and learning.

The Instructure Learning Platform includes:

Canvas by Instructure: providing a robust foundation for teaching and learning—both in and out of the classroom—for all students, while seamlessly integrating with other learning tools.

Mastery by Instructure: bringing together the assessment tools and quality content educators need to implement a successful assessment program that drives learning forward.

Elevate by Instructure: improving the use of data and technology to help solve district challenges and give educators the information they need to make impactful decisions.

Impact by Instructure: helping teachers and students adopt educational technology to promote deeper engagement with learning.

Learn more at **https://www.instructure.com/k-12**.