



WASHINGTON EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

White Paper

**District Level Assessment Director Competencies
in Washington State**

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Adna
Battle Ground
Bellingham
Central Valley
Columbia
Deer Park
Edmonds
ESD 105
Everett
Evergreen
Federal Way
Franklin Pierce
Garfield-Palouse

Goldendale
Highline
Issaquah
Kelso
Lynden
Mercer Island
Meridian
Moses Lake
Mukilteo
Newport
Northshore
Oak Harbor
Olympia

Peninsula
Pullman
Quinalt
Riverview
Rochester
Sequim
Tukwila
Union Gap
University Place
Wenatchee
West Valley

District Level Assessment Director Competencies in Washington State

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Mercer Island School District

Geoff Praeger

Central Valley School District

Assessment Directors in Washington state have a great range of skills and knowledge, depending on many factors including the size and complexity of the district, prior professional and/or academic experiences, and the interests of the individual. As assessment becomes increasingly “high stakes” to students and staff, districts are finding that they need to look more closely at the skills and abilities of the individuals entrusted with the collection and reporting of data.

In the fall of 2001, the authors were asked by the Washington Educational Research Association (WERA) to conduct a study of what the current expectations of Assessment Directors are, and to make recommendations as to what public school districts should expect when filling such a position or planning to increase the skills of the incumbent. We sent an email message to all of the individuals in the state who are identified by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction as the coordinator of assessment for their district. Some of these individuals have this assignment as a full time job, but many, probably most, do it in addition to other duties. Of the 296 districts polled, 37 responded. Some sent detailed formal job descriptions; some just described what their responsibilities are.

In attempting to synthesize all the responses, rather than try to assign a rating to all of these skills as to their importance or desirability, we decided to create several levels of “job descriptions” depending on the need and resources of individual school districts. These levels are detailed on the following page.

This categorization is based on the judgment of the authors and hopefully captures the data we collected in the survey. It is not meant to be prescriptive in any way. Districts will find that the skills they require could come from several levels. Districts which do only the state required norm-referenced and WASL testing, and whose Assessment Director has another job which is her/his main responsibility (Superintendent, Principal, etc.) could get by with someone with Level 1 skills. However, as the time and resources allocated to this position increase, so should the expectations and responsibilities of the person in the position. While districts with fewer resources could through good luck find themselves with a person who can provide the services described in Level 4, such a person would most likely be found in a large, complex school district which has a full time Assessment Director with some support staff.

It is the hope of the authors and WERA that this information will be useful to districts preparing to fill, redefine, or create an assessment position, and want to know what other districts are doing, or want some help in creating a job description. The needs of the schools in the district, the scale of the work required, and the culture of the individual district will determine the exact model which is the best fit.

Levels of Skills and Responsibilities of District Assessment Directors in Washington State

Level 1 (The mechanics)

- Have the organizational skills to coordinate the complexities of the state assessment program including administration, analysis, and reporting
- Know proper testing protocols and procedures, including testing ethics
- Have basic understanding of technical characteristics of tests, especially types of scores (norm-referenced and criterion-referenced), validity, and reliability
- Maintain complete and accurate student records
- Be able to effectively manage the assessment budget
- Be committed to ongoing personal professional development
- Be able to organize complex tasks and establish and maintain schedules
- Be able to present assessment results to various audiences using clear and effective communication tools

Level 2 (Application)

- Demonstrate expertise about the technical characteristics of tests [validity, reliability, scaling, linking, development, scoring, standard setting, etc.]
- Maintain an accurate student record system for assessment
- Be able to use and interpret appropriate statistics
- Assist school improvement teams in data analysis and goal setting
- Have a working knowledge of laws, rules and regulations governing evaluation, research, curriculum, assessment, basic education
- Be able to use graphing and presentation software to present data

Level 3 (District-level development)

- Demonstrate expertise in the development of classroom assessment
- Conduct district needs assessments
- Design a student record system to meet district needs
- Design evaluation and research studies at the district level
- Have the ability to provide professional development training to principals and teachers on a variety of assessment topics [test preparation, using results to improve instruction, improving classroom assessment, etc.]
- Possess the personal characteristics to be a positive force in the decision-making process with skills in problem solving and consensus building
- Be a resource on current educational research
- Be able to develop school level assessments and surveys
- Possess the ability to use data to support curriculum, instruction, assessment, and curriculum adoptions
- Be able to make effective use of relevant technology including that used for scanning and scoring tests and surveys, sophisticated graphing and presentation software, database programs, statistical packages, etc.

Level 4 (Professional)

- Sophisticated knowledge of statistical models, e.g. multiple regression or factor analysis
- Able to design and implement new district assessments, e.g. district performance assessments
- Represent the district on state level committees and professional organizations
- Conduct research applicable to a statewide or national audience