Assessments in Math and ELA Study

K-12 Practitioner Panel
Detailed Findings
Winter 2023

ENGAGEMENT

STUDY PURPOSE & CONTEXT

?

What are the current motivations and goals of teachers and leaders in their use/purchase of assessments? What are obstacles and factors that allow them to achieve their goals?

Currently, there are a lot of challenges in the assessment space, including too much time spent testing, assessments not being designed with the needs of underserved students in mind, and results not always being useful to drive instruction and/or to inform school and district decisions. By tapping perspectives of the Community Insights Network, our goal is to elevate the perspectives of grades 3-8, math and/or ELA teachers and coaches as assessment users, and school/district assessment leaders as buyers of assessment products to drive innovation in the assessment space.

Findings from this study may be used to think beyond the bounds of how we see and use assessments today to help uncover what future possibilities for assessments could look like.

Study Goals:

- Assessment Users: Elevate the needs, wishes and experiences of grades 3-8, math and/or ELA teachers as assessment users
- Assessment Buyers: Elevate the needs, wishes and experiences of district assessment leaders (decision-makers of assessment selection) especially those serving underserved students, as buyers of assessment products.

PHASE	APPROACH
Pre-Study Work: October 2023	Slack Pulse Check Questions
Online Journal: November 2023	Online journal distributed to math and ELA practitioners and instructional coaches.
Interviews: November to December 2023	Interviews with district leaders and school principals.

STUDY APPROACH | Participant Demographics

Respondents by Grade Band
(n=65 educators)

51%	49%

■ Elementary School ■ Middle School

Respondents by School Type
(n=65 educators)

6%	94%

■ Charter ■ Public

Respondents by Subject Area
(n=65 educators)

51%	25%	25%

■ Elementary School ■ Middle School Math ■ Middle School ELA

Respondents by Role
(n=66 educators)

85%	15%

■ Teacher ■ Instructional Coach

STUDY APPROACH | Participant Demographics

Grade Levels of Students Most Frequently Worked With (n=66 educators)

Grade	Percentage
3rd	32%
4th	35%
5th	45%
6th	27%
7th	20%
8th	30%

Years in Current Role
(n=66 educators)

Years	Percentage
0-3 years	3%
4-7 years	8%
8-11 years	24%
12-15 years	14%
16-19 years	18%
20+ years	33%

Assessments Study Participants by State (n=66)

2 — 11

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STUDY APPROACH | Participant Demographics

Participants Working With Student Populations at or Above 50% in the Following Demographic Groups:

Demographic Group	49% or Lower	50% or Higher
Black or African American (n=65)	74%	26%
Hispanic or Latinx (n=65)	65%	35%
English Language Learners (ELL) (n=62)	65%	35%
Eligible for free or reduced lunch (n=62)	8%	92%
In Special Education programs or have IEPs (n=66)	80%	20%

■ 49% or Lower   ■ 50% or Higher

Across study findings, math and ELA practitioners elevated that assessments should be representative, accessible, come with easy-to-use reports, and center focus on student experience.

Key Takeaways

Overall, an improved digital assessment should:

- Be **representative** of student sub-group identities and cultural backgrounds
- Be **accessible** for all students including English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and students/schools with limited tech proficiency
- Have **easy to use reports** and/or dashboards providing teachers and school/district leaders the data they need to inform instruction or other decisions in a timely manner
- Center focus on **student experience** by ensuring that content is relevant and engaging, friendlier and more appealing, easy to understand, and fun such as through gamification
- Ensure **assessments are aligned** to the standards, curriculums, and pacing guides to ensure data is useful
- Improve mechanisms so the tests are **easier to administer**, automated, and scored automatically
- Be **reported out by sub-groups** and includes resources to help teachers close learning gaps
- **Test only what has been covered** to not overwhelm or demoralize students.

"Digital assessments are excellent tools to use to gain insight into student performance. However, unless used correctly and in a **timely manner**, these assessments will yield no promising results. Digital assessments must be **user friendly** (all stakeholders), **compliment the standards**, and **provide timely authentic data** to use to guide instruction and provide a deeper glimpse into individual students, as well as a class, snapshot regarding needs and strengths."

- Middle School ELA Instructional Coach, New Jersey

DETAILED FINDINGS

Section 1: Pulse of Current Digital Assessment Use, Culture, and Experiences

The Following Section Features:

- Current Culture around Digital Assessments
- Perceptions of Use and Implementation
- Highlight of Top 5 Digital Assessments
- Digital Assessments and Identity
- Highlight of Interim and Benchmark Assessments Use

CURRENT CULTURE AROUND DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

Please describe the culture around digital assessments at your school or district.

Overall, many teachers (47%) described having **mixed feelings** about digital assessments. Some teachers feel **optimistic** about the potential for digital assessments to improve student learning, others think they are a **"necessary evil"** that, though useful, have drawbacks worth addressing.

Benefits of Digital Assessments:
- Can be **efficient** and less time intensive than paper assessments due to immediate scoring
- Can provide valuable **data that can inform instruction**

Drawbacks of Digital Assessments:
- **Mistrust of the data** that digital assessments provide and thus reduced usability of the data
- Can be time intensive and **take away from valuable class instruction**
- Sometimes aren't aligned with **content being taught** in the classroom and therefore aren't measuring "the right" things

"Digital assessments themselves are not considered to be negative by teachers. **It is the implementation, frequency, and support that is perceived negatively by teachers.** If digital assessments are being used, students should have consistent access to the same digital tools for practice. Testing on the digital assessments should not be intrusive into the school day or schedule. We should also have enough technology that works properly to utilize the digital assessment without frustration."

- Elementary School Teacher, Florida

"The data is only as good as the **efforts put forth by the students**"

- Middle School Math Teacher, Montana

When asked how they refer to assessments, many teachers used language expected: formative, benchmark, and summative (n=66 educators). Below is some additional nuance that helps shed light on how they talk/think about digital assessments.

Nuances

- Some teachers refer to **digital assessments** as computer-based assessments (CBA).
- The way a few teachers described the use and cadence of **diagnostics** was nearly identical to how other teachers refer to benchmark/interim assessments – occurring about three times a year (BOY – MOY – EOY).
- Some teachers suggest that **benchmark** assessments can be used more regularly than three times a year, as much as a weekly way to look for growth.
- Teachers report that they often use benchmark data **triangulated** with 1:1 screener data to more accurately understand where students may need intervention.
- Several teachers also referenced assessment data from other classrooms, schools, and districts to show how students **compare to their peers**.

Expected Framework

Formative	*Benchmark*	*Summative*
• Used frequently, even daily • Used by teachers useful for identifying students who need acceleration or intervention • Helps inform for a teacher what they should be teaching and reteaching • Data is used by teachers	• Used BOY – MOY – EOY • Used to measure student progress over time in content areas • Identifies students strengths and gaps, which informs or directly sorts students into groups • Data is used by teachers	• Used at the end of a unit or semester to assess knowledge gained • Shows if student is at grade level • Data used by school and beyond for accountability and to determine funding

Is it possible for a digital assessment to be formative, interim/benchmark, and summative? (n=58 educators)

36%	38%	19%	7%

→ This lack of consensus suggests further exploration might be valuable here.
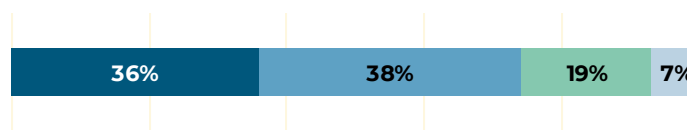
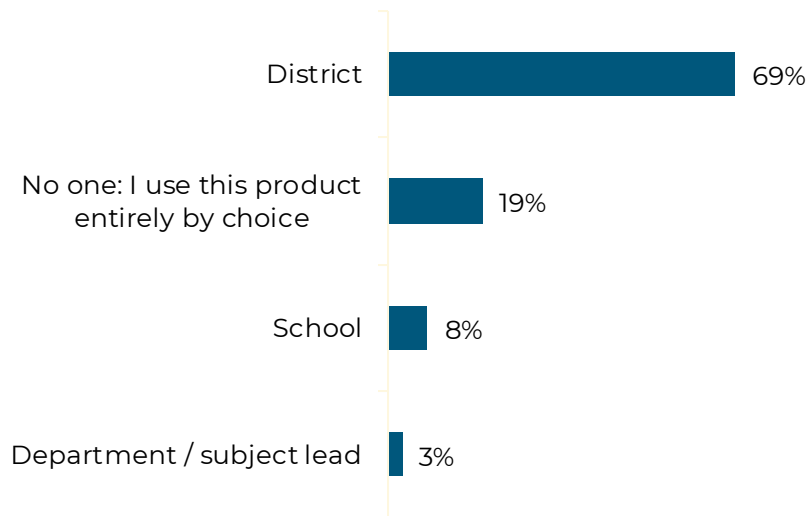■ Agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Disagree

Practitioners also illuminated several other ways they think about and talk about assessments, based on factors like assessment purpose, cadence, and method (n=66 educators).

Formative or Cumulative	Progress Monitoring or Curriculum-Based	Standards-Based or Leveled	Formal or Informal	Digital, Paper, or Project-Based
Formative: Frequent data collection **Cumulative**: Roll up of benchmark + summative	**Progress Monitoring**: Shows growth over time, looks for if student is at grade level **Curriculum-Based**: Shows how a student is performing on recently taught content	**Standards-Based**: Focuses on assessing if student is at grade level **Leveled**: Centers on identifying where a student is regardless of what grade level they're in; useful to look for gains throughout the year	**Formal**: Measures over time to see if student is reaching toward grade level goals **Informal**: Measures daily progress on grasping the day's lessons (exit tickets, anecdotal notes, teacher-made assessments)	**Digital**: Provides time savings for grading and grouping students; offers extended opportunity for completion outside of class **Paper**: Students can demonstrate their "work", showing their intent and thought process **Project-Based**: Alternative way for students to demonstrate concept mastery

Many teachers report the assessments they use are required by their district, but they have varying experiences regarding the level of support and messaging they receive from their administrators with regard to digital assessments.

When asked who requires them to use the assessment products they use, teachers said they are required by: (n=180 products)

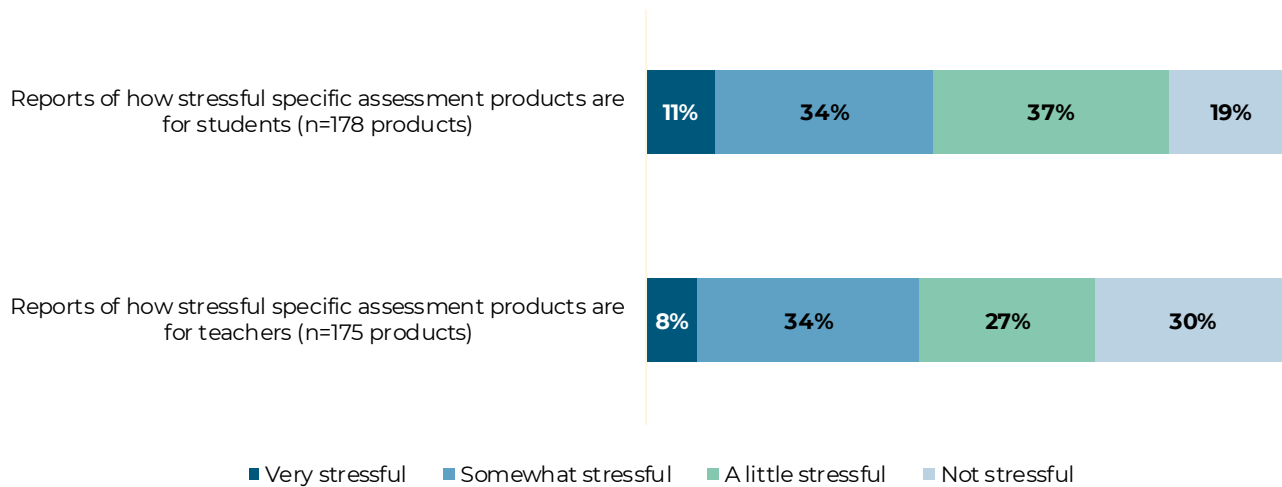| Category	Percentage
District	69%
No one: I use this product entirely by choice	19%
School	8%
Department / subject lead	3%

Teachers report **mixed experiences** in terms of the messaging, guidance, and support they receive from admin in implementing the assessments districts require them to use:

- In some cases, teachers report their admin as **deeply involved** in assessments – helping teachers review and use the data or helping establish ways to get students familiarized with an assessment to be more comfortable and ultimately perform better.

- In other cases, teachers felt that their admin just handed them assessments **without sufficient guidance or support** on roll out, implementation, or data use.

Note: Many teachers use a variety of assessments that are required by different entities. Teachers were able to select multiple responses for this question and therefore % does not equal 100%.

Charts below provide insight into how educators view the assessments they use. Understanding level of stress teachers and students experience illuminates opportunities to innovate assessments and find ways to make them less stressful for both groups.

Teachers perceive many assessment experiences (34%) as somewhat stressful for them as educators; in contrast, teachers view the many assessment experiences (37%) as only a little stressful for many students.

	Very stressful	Somewhat stressful	A little stressful	Not stressful
Reports of how stressful specific assessment products are for students (n=178 products)	11%	34%	37%	19%
Reports of how stressful specific assessment products are for teachers (n=175 products)	8%	34%	27%	30%

■ Very stressful ■ Somewhat stressful ■ A little stressful ■ Not stressful

"Taking a digital assessment can be **very stressful**, cause **anxiety** and **fear** in the students. The assessment process can be a bit overwhelming, and sometimes the academic language difficult to decipher."

– Middle School Math Teacher, California

Note: For specific data on stress by most frequently used assessment products, see slides 24 and 25.

# PERCEPTIONS OF USE AND IMPLEMENTATION

Few teachers (20%) strongly like the assessments they use. This points at an opportunity to further explore what levers might result in teachers liking an assessment more. There is also opportunity to improve assessments in being more useful in helping educators meet their goals.

When reflecting on specific assessment products...

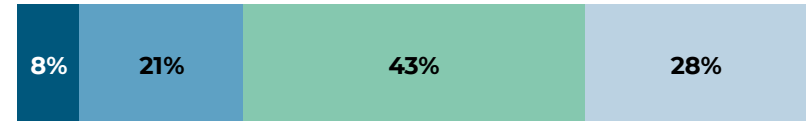**A majority (62%) of teachers somewhat like their assessment products.**
(n=143 products)

6%	13%	62%	20%
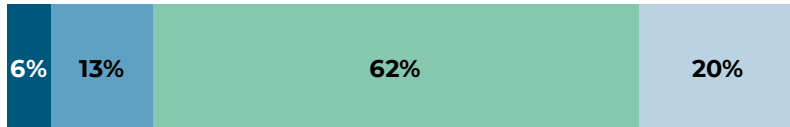
■ Strongly dislike ■ Somewhat dislike ■ Somewhat like ■ Strongly like

Most (43%) teachers report that assessment products are somewhat helpful in meeting their goals.
(n=175 products)

8%	21%	43%	28%

■ Not at all helpful ■ Slightly helpful ■ Somewhat helpful ■ Extremely helpful

Note: For specific data on product preference and usefulness in meeting goals by most frequently used assessment products, see slides 24 and 25.

Across the assessments they discussed, teachers generally find their assessments very or somewhat easy to implement and the data to be very or somewhat easy to use.

When reflecting on specific assessment products, practitioners hold the following beliefs on ease of implementation versus use:

Reports of how easy they are to implement (n=177 products)

53%	**41%**	**6%**

1%

■ Very easy ■ Somewhat easy ■ Somewhat difficult ■ Very difficult

Reports on how easy their data is to use (n=172 products)

45%	**43%**	**10%**

2%

■ Very easy ■ Somewhat easy ■ Somewhat difficult ■ Very difficult

Spotlight: A Principal Perspective

"We're looking for ease of use. The easier things are for my staff to use and in terms of ease of use like. I mean, they can open up an online program and very quickly see where to pull questions from. How they map to the standards, how easy it is to print the answer keys or to do different versions of the same test."

- Middle School Principal, New York

Note: For specific data on ease of implementation and data use by most frequently used assessment products, see slides 24 and 25.

When reflecting on data use, practitioners cite time as a key input. Timely results from assessments and access to data that is up to date are essential, as is having time to review the data and use it to inform planning time. Use is also dependent on whether the data is captured and presented in a way that prioritizes action and informed decision-making.

What are the main factors that impact how you <u>use the data </u>from digital assessments? What makes it more likely for you to use the data? (n=58 educators)

Time	Actionable	Accessibility & Ease of Use	Accuracy	Consistency	Direction and Systems
· Practitioners cite that data use requires timely results from the assessment platforms to ensure that information is up to date. Time also appears in how math and ELA teachers say they need space to use the data and inform planning.	· Data use is most feasible when results are tied to specific skills or standards and provide guidance on where to reteach or how to focus their time moving forward	· Data is most useful when it is easy to find and is presented in charts and formats that teachers can easily understand. A key part about ease of use is training for practitioners on how to find reports, interpret, and use them in their instructional planning time. Easy to use data is also presented as broken out by student subgroups	· Key to being able to use findings is knowing that the data is accurate. Here practitioners want assurance that questions align with skills they have taught and to review the quality of data. Math and ELA teachers cite that some students don't take the tests seriously, which renders the data useless.	· Data becomes more useful when it is consistently captured from the same students over time and a tool is used across all classrooms. A rolling up of data over time and across groups seems most important for instructional coaches.	· Strong data use practices come from the top down with admin and school leadership setting direction for when and how to use the data as well as training and systems being in place to help teachers learn processes.

Time: "The main factor is the time to analyze the data for each student. This is not built into a teacher's day. (no time is currently given to do so)."
– Middle School Math Teacher, Wisconsin

Actionable: "The data is actionable, teachers know what they can do to improve scores. Parents and even students can understand where the student is performing and where work needs to be done."
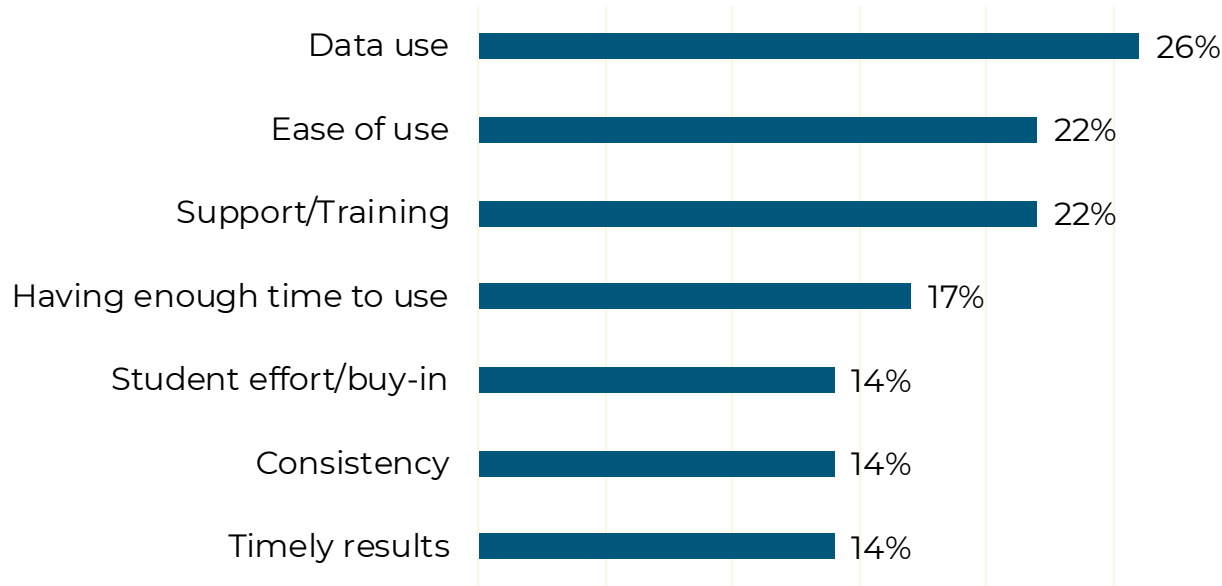– Elementary School Teacher, Florida

Note: These themes also emerged in principal and district interviews.

Teachers and coaches reported that digital assessments are most successful when the data is easy to use, when the platform is user-friendly for teachers and students, and when students and teachers receive support and training in how to use the tool.

What makes the implementation of digital assessments successful? (n=58 educators)
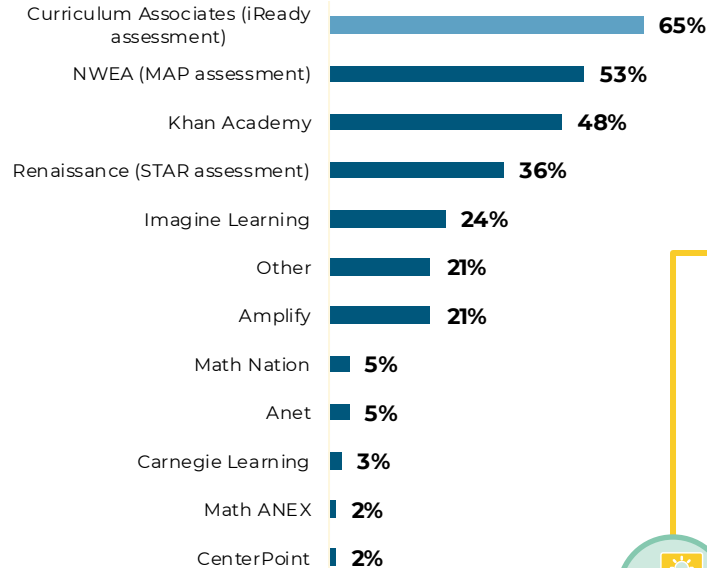
Category	Percentage
Data use	26%
Ease of use	22%
Support/Training	22%
Having enough time to use	17%
Student effort/buy-in	14%
Consistency	14%
Timely results	14%

Other: Teachers and coaches shared other factors that make the implementation of digital assessments successful, such as:
1. Consistency
2. Student effort and buy-in
3. Access to devices such as laptops and tablets
4. Products that support growth and/or a growth mindset
5. Students being adequately prepared to take assessments, for example through practice tests.
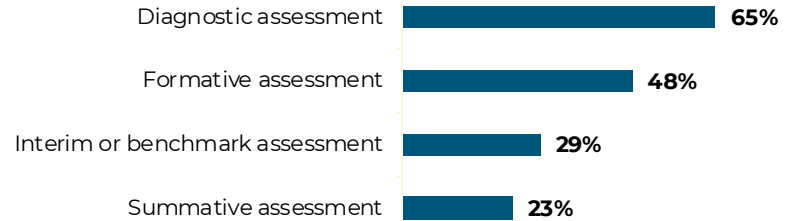
Most (83%) educators report having used 2-4 digital assessment products. The most frequently mentioned products were from Curriculum Associates (iReady assessment), NWEA (MAP assessment), and Khan Academy.

Assessments Used by Math and ELA educators
(n=66 educators)

Product	Percentage
Curriculum Associates (iReady assessment)	65%
NWEA (MAP assessment)	53%
Khan Academy	48%
Renaissance (STAR assessment)	36%
Imagine Learning	24%
Other	21%
Amplify	21%
Math Nation	5%
Anet	5%
Carnegie Learning	3%
Math ANEX	2%
CenterPoint	2%

When asked to reflect on specific assessment products used, 65% of products were used for diagnostic purposes. (n=104 products)

Assessment type	Percentage
Diagnostic assessment	65%
Formative assessment	48%
Interim or benchmark assessment	29%
Summative assessment	23%

Spotlight: A District Leader Perspective

All interviewees also reflected their school(s) use more than one assessment as one can't address all their needs. Instead, assessments are thought of as a comprehensive suite.

"We currently do not have a single assessment that does everything we need. So, we do use multiple assessments, and that is a problem....Well, when you put them all together, I think we get most of them [their needs met]."

- District Leader, California, uses iReady (Curriculum Associates) and MAP (NWEA)

HIGHLIGHT OF TOP 5 USED DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

Educators provided deeper reflections about a few key digital assessments. The following slides present an overview of the top five assessment products most frequently selected by respondents. The first two slides provide an overview summary for each product.

i-Ready® (n=43 educators)	Most educators are required to use **iReady** by their district. They use iReady primarily as a diagnostic assessment and find it very easy to implement and use data. They report iReady is a little stressful for students and somewhat stressful for them as teachers. They find iReady somewhat helpful for meeting their instructional goals and somewhat like the product overall.
nwea map® (n=33 educators)	Most educators are required to use **NWEA's MAP assessment** by their district. They use this tool primarily as a diagnostic assessment, though some use it as a formative or benchmark assessment. educators find it somewhat easy to implement the tool and use its data. educators report the tool is somewhat stressful for their students and for them as teachers. They find the MAP assessment somewhat helpful for meeting their instructional goals and somewhat like the product overall.
Khan Academy (n=43 educators)	Most educators use **Khan Academy** entirely by choice. They use this tool as a formative or summative assessment, and they find it very easy to implement Khan Academy and use its data. educators report that the tool is not stressful for their students or them as teachers. They find Khan Academy somewhat helpful for meeting their instructional goals and somewhat like the product overall.

Educators provided deeper reflections about a few key digital assessments. The following slides present an overview of the top five assessment products most frequently selected by respondents. The first two slides provide an overview summary for each product. Cont.

STAR™ Assessments (n=23 educators)	Most educators are required to use **Renaissance's STAR assessment** by their district. They use this tool as a diagnostic or benchmark assessment. educators find it very easy to implement the tool and use its data. educators report the tool is somewhat stressful for their students; however, they report the tool is not stressful for them as teachers. educators find the STAR Assessment to be somewhat helpful for meeting their instructional goals and somewhat like the product overall.
imagine learning (n=16 educators)	Most educators are required to use **Imagine Learning** by their district. They use this tool primarily as a formative or diagnostic assessment. educators find it very easy to implement the tool and somewhat easy to use its data. educators report the tool is not stressful for their students or for them as teachers. The find the MAP assessment somewhat helpful for meeting their instructional goals and somewhat like the product overall.

This slide and the next present data on top five assessment products in a comparative format. The chart below allows for comparisons across all five products across the eight categories of interest.

	Required by	Primary use	Easy to implement	Easy to use data	Stressful for students	Stressful for teachers	Helps meet goals	Like product
i-Ready (n=43 educators)	My district (93%)	Diagnostic assessment (71%)	Very easy (60%)	Very easy (51%)	A little stressful (40%)	Somewhat stressful (37%)	Somewhat helpful (33%)	Somewhat like (50%)
nwea map (n=43 educators)	My district (82%)	Diagnostic assessment (39%)	Somewhat easy (63%)	Somewhat easy (53%)	Somewhat stressful (53%)	Somewhat stressful (53%)	Somewhat helpful (50%)	Somewhat like (66%)
Khan Academy (n=43 educators)	No one: I use this product entirely by choice (74%)	Formative assessment (50%)	Very easy (48%), Somewhat easy (48%)	Very easy (50%)	Not stressful (42%)	Not stressful (43%)	Somewhat helpful (60%)	Somewhat like (76%)

Note: Details of other specific assessment products can be provided upon request.

This slide and the next present data on top five assessment products in a comparative format. The chart below allows for comparisons across all five products across the eight categories of interest. Cont.

	Required by	Primary use	Easy to implement	Easy to use data	Stressful for students	Stressful for teachers	Helps meet goals	Like product
STAR Assessments (n=23 educators)	My district (78%)	Diagnostic assessment (39%)	Very easy (65%)	Very easy (45%)	Somewhat stressful (48%)	A little stressful (30%), Not stressful (30%)	Somewhat helpful (35%)	Somewhat like (47%)
(n=16 educators)	My district (81%)	Formative assessment (40%)	Very easy (56%)	Somewhat easy (47%)	Not stressful (38%)	Not stressful (53%)	Somewhat helpful (53%)	Somewhat like (62%)

DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS AND STUDENT IDENTITY

Educators agree that assessments are useful for spotting individual gaps, but the extent to which assessments are accessible depends on how much they integrate culturally responsive examples and relatable language.

Do you feel current digital assessments serve the needs of students who are Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and/or low-income? (n = 58 educators)

Yes, 29%	No, 28%	It's Complicated, 43%

Yes, 29%
- Respondents report that individual-level data are useful for spotting gaps, tailoring instruction, which is useful in helping groups of students who are already behind
- The nature of students being comfortable with digital tools means that they are accessible to all
- Digital tools can be tailored to meet individual needs such as modified context and include language alternatives
- Users perceive many tools as already including culturally responsive content

No, 28%
- Language accessibility is a primary concern especially the academic-like language, which is hard for ELL students and students overall to understand.
- The context is often described as not relevant for these demographics
- Students who don't understand the context are already at a disadvantage because they spend time and effort to understand the context before even answering the question and may misinterpret what is being asked

It's Complicated, 43%
- Language is not relatable to ELL students and to many other students overall
- Context is not relevant to this group of students, who may not have as diverse a frame of reference
- Students in these groups often face additional barriers in their learning contexts (home life, stability, etc.), for which assessments don't account
- Assessment tools aren't perfect but they can show gaps and enable individualized support

Educators agree that assessments are useful for spotting individual gaps but the extent to which assessments are accessible depends on how much they integrate culturally responsive examples and relatable language. Cont.

Do you feel current digital assessments serve the needs of students who are Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and/or low-income? (n = 58 educators)

Yes, 29%	No, 28%	It's Complicated, 43%

Yes: "Yes With IXL, students are assigned a level that they are at, and are encouraged to complete assessments at their current levels. … By providing lots of different lessons at each student's individual level, they can be met where they are, and not have to struggle."

– Middle School ELA Teacher, New Jersey

No: "Many times, the stories or pictures are not relevant to my urban low-income students. They often do not have the vocabulary or background knowledge needed to interact well with the stories."

– Elementary School Teacher, Texas

It's Complicated: "I think it's useful in identifying students who may need more support, but they often utilize materials and metrics that don't take into account the nuances of barriers these students might face and how it impacts their results."

– Elementary School Teacher, Florida

When asked who benefits <u>least</u> from assessment data currently, educators identified students, particularly English language learners, students with special needs, and both higher and lower performers, as the primary groups not fully benefiting from digital assessment data.

Who is not benefiting from digital assessment data as much as they could be? (n=57 educators)

Group	%
Students	74%
Teachers	16%
Caregivers	9%
SPED Teachers	5%
Administrators	2%
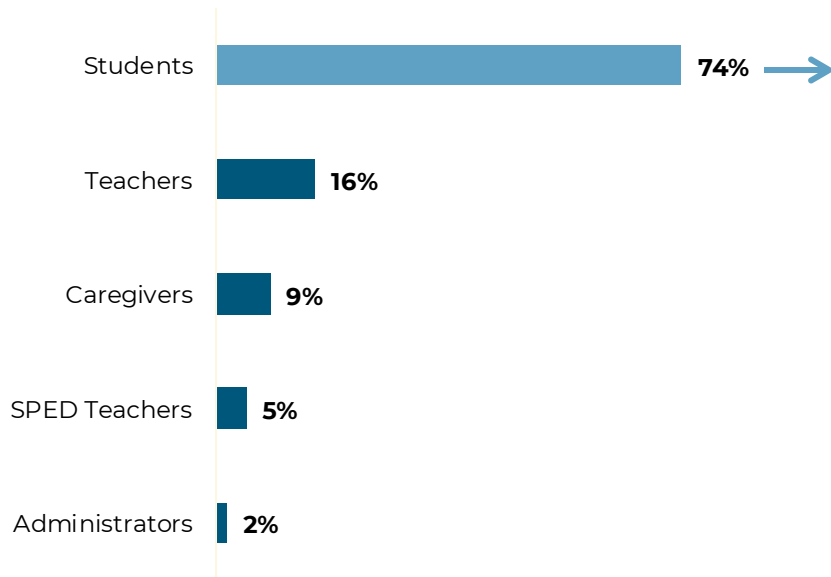
How might digital assessment data better benefit students overall?
- Make feedback actionable and highlight the value of learning by empowering students with data comprehension and ownership
- Minimize test length and frequency while still allowing ample time for completion
- Ensure approachability by aligning topics with students' interests and avoid unnecessary jargon
- Create user-friendly products that align with instruction
- Guarantee access to adequate technological infrastructure for all students.

Diverse students specifically?
- Offer customized assessments enabling diverse learners them to showcase their knowledge while minimizing frustration.
- Ensure English language learners have accessible/reduced wording and language options
- Provide students with special needs accessible features like read-aloud and individualized test-taking support

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Who is not benefiting from digital assessment data as much as they could be? (n=57 educators)

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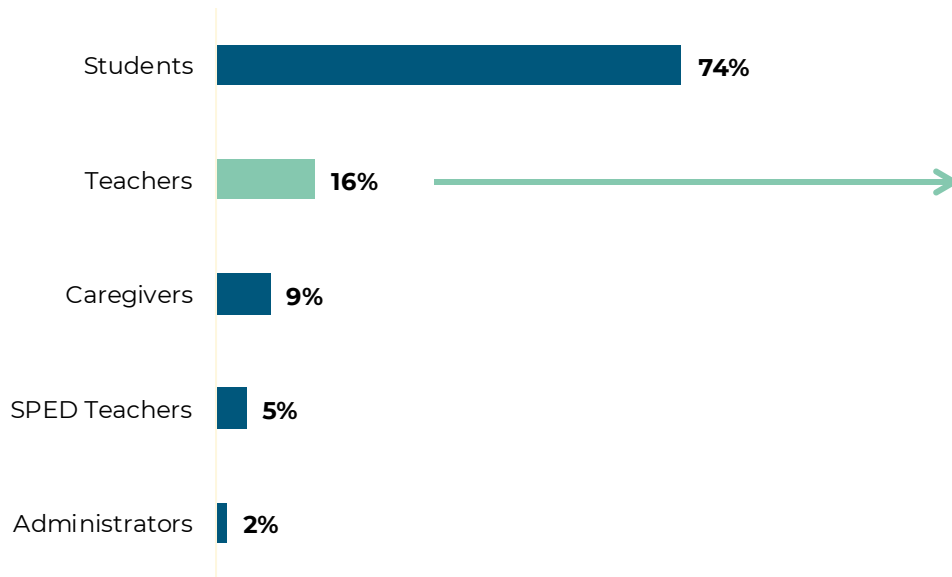
How might digital assessment data better benefit teachers overall?
- Training to interpret data effectively
- Actionable data, informing and supporting instruction.
- School support (structures and time) to ensure data is utilized meaningfully.

SPED teachers specifically?
- Data that articulates service delivery with results.
- Goals setting that help students reach their maximum potential.

Educators shared ideas in their own words for how digital assessment data could be more useful for students and teachers.

"**Students** should be involved in the process of looking over a data report and knowing exactly what it is telling them about their learning - ex/ Lexile level in reading. Students should be involved in this process so they become active participants in their own learning as well."

- Middle School ELA Instructional Coach, New Jersey

"We have to find a way to explain to them [**students, and caregivers**] the data, and how they can work on their deficiencies and grow academically. We have to make it easier to understand and analyze for the teachers as well to know how to help their students, based on the areas they are not grasping the concepts."

- Middle School Math Teacher, California

"The **SPED teachers** need to set high expectations for their students and not assume they can't complete the test because of a label."

- Elementary School Teacher, Illinois

"**Teachers** need more time to plan and really look at their data and apply it in meaningful ways."
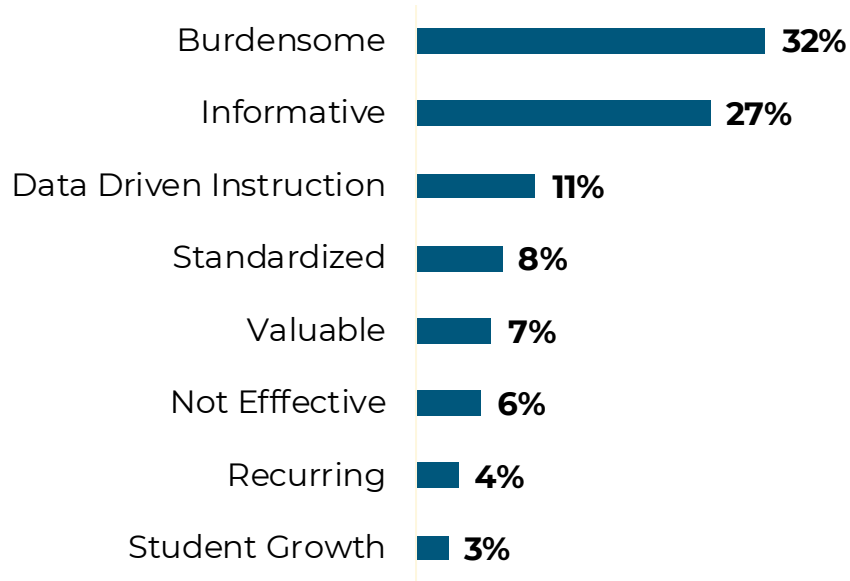
- Elementary School Instructional Coach, Missouri

HIGHLIGHT OF INTERIM AND BENCHMARK ASSESSMENTS USE

When reflecting on interim and benchmark assessments in particular, teachers had mixed feelings. Although they find interim and benchmark assessments burdensome, they acknowledge that they do allow them to generate data that helps inform instruction.

What words come to mind for teachers when they think about digital interim/benchmark assessments: (n=63 educators)

Word	Percentage
Burdensome	32%
Informative	27%
Data Driven Instruction	11%
Standardized	8%
Valuable	7%
Not Efffective	6%
Recurring	4%
Student Growth	3%

Most <u>educators</u> leverage data to gain insights into student performance and learning needs. This enables them to adapt instruction, group or place students to foster development at an optimal pace, and to implement targeted group or individual interventions. A smaller proportion, use it for parent communication and to motivate students.

In what ways do <u>educators</u> currently use digital interim or benchmark assessment data? (n=66 educators)

Inform instruction (61%)	Reteach lessons, provide supplemental material, prepare for state tests; group by level and needs; individual check-ins; classes placement and/or recommendation for retention; gifted programs or IEP services.
Enhanced understanding, diagnosis and comparative insights (42%)	Learn about students' level, growth, standards met, content mastered, areas of strengths and weaknesses, diagnostic; compare with district, county, State; determine alignment with standards; identify curricular gaps, and professional development needs.
Student motivation (9%)	Promote agency and ownership on learning process, set growth objectives.
Parent communication (8%)	Reporting for parent / teacher conferences; advocate for interventions
Don't or can't use it (8%)	Data not available on time, test misaligned/don't reflect true level of learning, not useful

"I use them to find out where my students' **strengths** and **weaknesses** are in learning the math curriculum. Also, once I find out where they are deficient or sufficient, I can create **reteach lessons**, provide supplemental materials and study guides to help them understand."

– Middle School Math Teacher, California

"I use interim assessments to **guide** my teaching. When I look at the data provided by through the results, I **create a plan** to reteach and remediate."

– Elementary School Teacher, Florida

When reflecting on common ways that <u>schools and districts</u> use interim and benchmark assessment data, many teachers found challenging articulating the school/district's data use and distinguishing it from individual educator use. Coaches appeared more closely connected to school/district usage and initiatives.

In what ways does your <u>school or district currently</u> use digital interim or benchmark assessment data? (n=63 educators)

Inform instruction (32%)

Identification of needs to plan and implement interventions, such as provision of special services, retention decisions and creation of tutoring programs; curricular improvement through identification of learning patters.

Enhanced understanding, diagnosis and comparative insights (57%)

Monitor students' progress and growth on standards, set goals and benchmarks, assess class/teacher performance, compare classes/school within and across schools/districts. Gauge readiness for state assessments at the school level.

Professional development (3%)

Data is used to identify trends to inform professional development needs and plans

Unsure about school/district use (33%)

Many educators were uncertain about school/district data use. Some perceive an expectation for them to utilize the data. Other responses centered on individual usage rather than on school or district use.

"We currently use digital interim/benchmark assessment data as an ELA coach to **communicate expectations** for learning, plan curriculum and instruction, monitor and evaluate instructional and/or program effectiveness, and to analyze and **predict future performance** of students in a specific subject area."

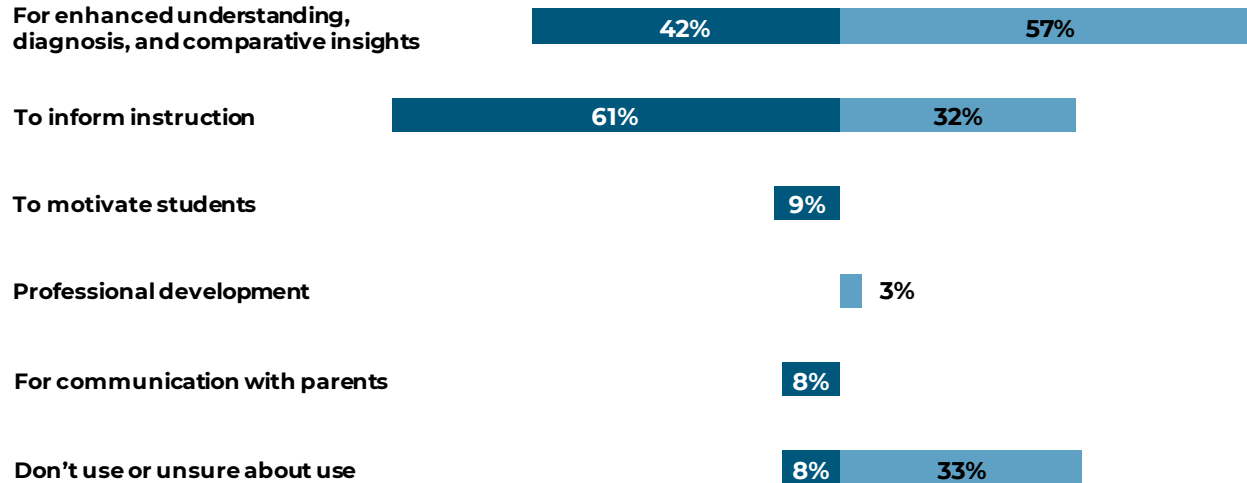– Middle School ELA Instructional Coach, New Jersey

"Once we get the data from the map assessments, we are able to see **which standards most of our students are understanding** and which standards are not. If they align with the standards that we have taught that year, then that's a good sign and when they do not we are able to retouch those standards and skills."

– Elementary School Teacher, New York

In what ways do you currently use interim/benchmark assessment data as a math or ELA teacher/coach vs. how is the data used by your school or district?

	Math or ELA Teacher or Coach (n=66)	School or District (n=63)
For enhanced understanding, diagnosis, and comparative insights	42%	57%
To inform instruction	61%	32%
To motivate students	9%	
Professional development		3%
For communication with parents	8%	
Don't use or unsure about use	8%	33%

■ Math or ELA Teacher or Coach (n=66)   ■ School or District (n=63)

Section 2: Visioning the Future of Assessments

The Following Section Features:

- Pain Points of Digital Assessments
- Redesigning Digital Assessments
- Redesigning Interim and Benchmark Assessments
- Systemic Shifts Needed in Digital Assessments
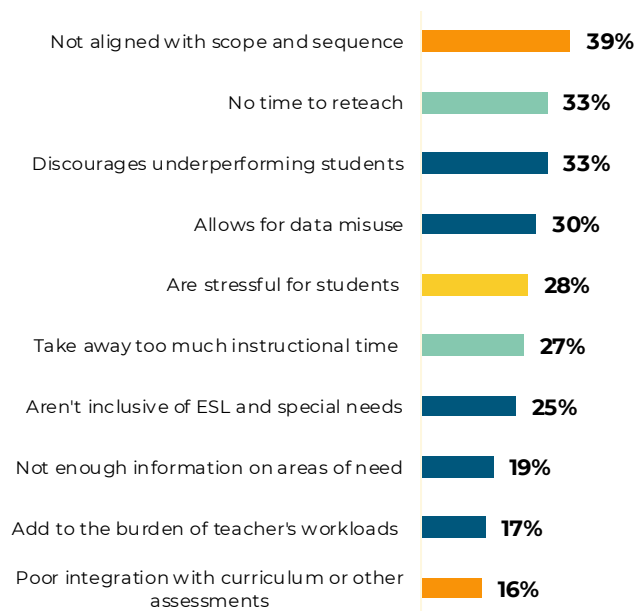
DIGITAL ASSESSMENT PAIN POINTS

Participants were asked about challenges with digital assessments in both an open- and closed-ended format. Across both questions, we see that digital assessment pain points are interrelated. Strategy could focus on those that occur most frequently.

What are the top challenges or pain points with digital assessment culture or use? (n=178 challenges submitted)*

1	**Technology:** Access to working devices on which assessment data can be captured; Technology is underdeveloped and clunky; Technology changes require ongoing student and teacher onboarding; Students and teachers often lack tech literacy
2	**Time:** Time dedicated to assessments takes time away from instruction; Using the data to inform instruction takes time as well
3	**Data Use:** Results and data are not always presented in an easy-to-understand format; It is challenging to interpret data and then use it to inform instruction
4	**Student Engagement:** Students don't take the test seriously or are burnt out on testing; Cheating and guessing affects quality of data
5	**Stress**: Tests are anxiety inducing for many students; Length, frequency, and content is overwhelming for students; Students and teachers face pressures
6	**Alignment:** Math and ELA teachers are using multiple tools and assessments and findings don't align; Findings don't align to standards or curriculum and make data-informed instruction challenging
7	**Content:** Language is too academic or not on par with expected reading ability; Ambiguous questions; Test developers lack an understanding of instruction and teaching
8	**Dosage:** Tests are conducted too frequently; Tests are too long and should be instead be conducted in mini-doses so findings are more immediately useful

*Note: Themes are listed in descending order of frequency.

As you think comprehensively across ALL of the digital assessments you're using, select the top pain points you experience: (n=64 educators)

Not aligned with scope and sequence	**39%**
No time to reteach	**33%**
Discourages underperforming students	**33%**
Allows for data misuse	**30%**
Are stressful for students	**28%**
Take away too much instructional time	**27%**
Aren't inclusive of ESL and special needs	**25%**
Not enough information on areas of need	**19%**
Add to the burden of teacher's workloads	**17%**
Poor integration with curriculum or other assessments	**16%**

Assessments Study ● 40

Teachers shared more depth on pain points in their own words:

"Too many decisions that directly effect classroom teachers are directly dependent on data from assessments that generally are **not an accurate picture of the students' skills**."

- Middle School ELA Teacher, Iowa

"We are forced to use both county and state digital assessments. That's **2 BOY, MOY and EOY assessments essentially testing the same thing** - it is frustrating. We've lost the performance tasks and project-based learning that students enjoyed and were still able to show what they've learned."

- Elementary School Instructional Coach, Virginia

"Finding a digital assessment product that is "all in one" It has ELA, Math, Science, SS, etc. One of the major issues is that **we have different programs and platforms for each subject**. It has got to be confusing for the kids, as it is for the teachers."

- Elementary School Teacher, Florida

"Digital assessments should offer **different ways of input** (keyboard, touchscreen, drawing tablet**) to best suit a student's physical abilities** to produce work as well as preference."

- Elementary School Teacher, Alaska

REDESIGNING DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

This section moves us from pain points into design thinking. We will share educator thinking about 3 different strategies to improve the digital assessment experience and ultimately improve student experiences and outcomes.

| Redesign Focuses |
|---|
| How the assessment system could be redesigned to be **more engaging** for students, motivate students, and help them persist |
| How the assessment system could be redesigned to **take student identities into account** |
| How the assessment system could be redesigned to **produce reports that better enable educators to drive instruction** and track and predict student growth |

Make assessments more engaging by including elements of gamification, ensuring content is relatable, and only testing content that has been covered in the classroom. Integrating assessments with project-based learning may also help improve student engagement in assessments.

How the assessment system could be redesigned to be more engaging for students, motivate students, and help them persist (n = 29 educators)*

- Include elements of **gamification** to make assessments more fun
- Ensure content is based in **relatable**, real-world, appealing, and captivating contexts
- Present only **content that has been covered** and language that is on par with reading level expectations to avoid student demoralization
- Bring students along and **create buy-in** by explaining the purpose of assessments and how they will help their learning experience

Assessments should incorporate elements of gamification. (n=58 educators)

24%	47%	19%	10%

■ Agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree
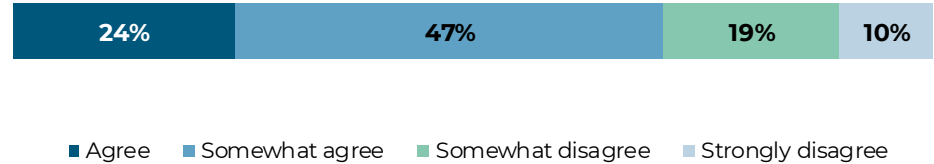
Assessments should incorporate elements of project-based learning. (n=58 educators)
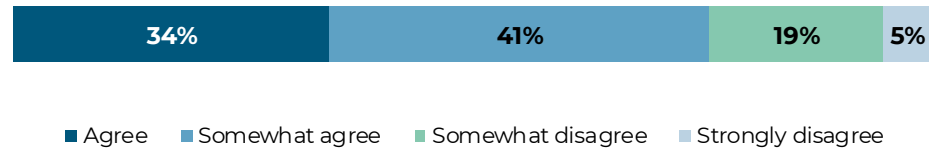
34%	41%	19%	5%

■ Agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

***Note**: Themes are listed in descending order of frequency.

Note: Legend error in Qualtrics, demonstrating here what respondents saw versus what we intended the legend to reflect.

In redesigning digital assessments <u>to produce reports that drive instruction</u>, practitioners want data to be presented in an easy-to-interpret format and to center messages of where gaps are and updates on when standards have been met. This is corroborated by how teachers want immediate feedback to inform additional supports for specific students.

How the assessment system could be redesigned to produce reports that better enable you to drive instruction and track and predict student growth? (n=16 educators)*

- Ensure data **reports are teacher friendly** in that they are short, easy to interpret, and easy to read
- Center messages of **where gaps are**, progress students have made, and updates on whose proficiencies have changed
- Clarify not just which benchmarks are met, but also which **concepts or standards have been tested**
- Provide **alignment** between skills tested and standards or curriculum
- Relate findings to how teachers can **inform lesson plans** and cover content to address gaps

Assessments should provide immediate feedback to inform group work or differentiation. (n=58 educators)

| 74% | 22% | 3% |

■ Agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Strongly disagree

Assessments should help students demonstrate the problem-solving skills they are learning. (n=58 educators)

| 59% | 33% | 3% 5% |

■ Agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

*Note: Themes are listed in descending order of frequency.

Note: Legend error in Qualtrics, demonstrating here what respondents saw versus what we intended the legend to reflect.

To better take student identities into account assessments should incorporate elements of real-life that students in sub-groups routinely experience. Identities could also be considered by prioritizing measuring growth over skill attainment to demonstrate positive change.

How the assessment system could be redesigned to take student identities into account (n=23 educators)*

- Integrate **relatable elements** of real-life that students experience
- Provide customization that makes assessments **individualized and tailored** to student capabilities or allows elements of student choice
- Infuse content that is **culturally relevant** or regionally specific
- Offer **accommodations** in platform for language translation and right-sizing for special education needs
- Include customization of platform interaction to account for **different learning styles** and ways to show what students know

Assessments should prioritize measuring growth and progress over skill attainment.
(n=58 educators)

45%	38%	10%	7%

■ Agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Assessments should be made more relevant by infusing real-world problem solving and by making content more relevant to students' own lives. (n=58 educators)
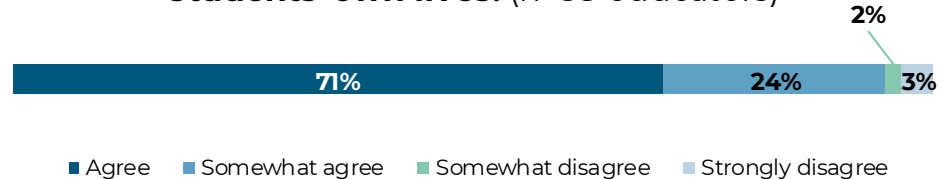
2%

71%	24%	3%

■ Agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

***Note:** Themes are listed in descending order of frequency.

Note: Legend error in Qualtrics, demonstrating here what respondents saw versus what we intended the legend to reflect.

REDESIGNING INTERIM AND BENCHMARK ASSESSMENTS

When asked how an assessment could be designed to meet both needs of teachers and school/district leadership, teachers struggled to produce ideas. Of those who did ideate, many suggested that assessments should be designed first with students and teachers in mind but ideally have data that could be rolled up to be of use by district and school leaders.

How might you design an interim/benchmark assessment product that meets the needs of both teachers and district leaders? (n=55 educators)

Participant Reflections	Interpretation of Meaning
Ensure that tests are only as long and as frequent as necessary such as by **having beginning-of-year and end-of-year data** for leadership but also capture **process monitoring** data that is useful for teachers	By collecting and reporting data at the right intervals (frequency) and at multiple levels, it can first inform at the student and classroom level but also roll up to be useful at the district level too.
Develop systems that produce data for **immediate use by multiple audiences** such as by reporting at the student level, classroom level, and grade level	
Select assessments that are **teacher-informed** and that center design on student and teacher use	If assessments are designed and implemented with student and teacher use in mind, they will ultimately provide more accurate data for all levels of audience to use.

"The product needs to be **completely focused on the students** in order to give authentic, useable information. The results need to be **tailored to truly help the classroom teachers**. The district leaders are not the ones in the classroom working with students on a daily basis."

– Middle School ELA Teacher, Iowa

Spotlight: A District Leader Perspective

"We have solicited our teachers' advice on deciding between the platforms at times. it's an area we need to do a better job. In the past, we have had leaders choose platforms without the full understanding of curriculum, and that's a very instrumental piece when choosing assessment platforms."

-District Leader, Texas
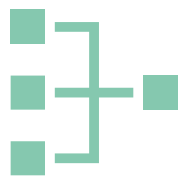
SYSTEMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Educators shared ideas for how they'd like support from their district and school leaders to be able to more successfully implement digital assessments and have data that is timely and useful for educators, students, and caregivers.

Teachers shared that optimally, admin:
- Are **open to hearing teacher feedback** and even concerns they have about assessments
- Are regularly involved in **conversations around data** and support educators to know how to use the data effectively
- **Encourage students** to try their best but view the data less as a mark of teacher success and more as a tool in their kit to be able to better serve students.
- Provide sufficient **training on how to implement** assessments efficiently and effectively
- Provide guidance on **how to set up a good testing environment:** testing security considerations + how to help students be able to focus

Teachers also suggested that admin be **more deeply involved in the early years** of implementation of an assessment but once teachers and students are familiar, they could have lighter touch moving forward focused more on data use support.

Spotlight: A District Leader Perspective

"Since we have overwhelming involvement and overwhelming support, we've never had issues with teachers not using it. We've had teachers not using that because we found out that they didn't have enough training or didn't feel comfortable enough. And then we find that out. And then given the more training or had the. The peer-to-peer training. Someone gets a little stronger at their school site, but there's never been resistance because we've never mandated it. It's a political issue, so it's easier to just get them involved early."

- District Leader, California

Throughout the Online Journal, teachers highlighted other systemic shifts worth acknowledging: reducing the total number of assessments to free up instruction time; make assessments shorter/faster but frequent enough to provide progress tracking data; and involve caregivers in data review to strengthen their role in their child(ren)'s education.

Reducing the total number of digital assessments would allow teachers to spend more time meeting students' individual learning needs. (n=58 educators)

59%	29%	10%	2%

■ Agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Assessments should be shorter, and delivered frequently in a micro-assessment format so teachers can track progress and adjust instruction. (n=58 educators)

66%	28%	3%	3%

■ Agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Spotlight: A District Leader Perspective

"We currently do not have a single assessment that does everything we need. So, we do use multiple assessments, and that is a problem... They do different things. It would be great if they only had to take one or the other. The reality is, during that first two weeks of school, my kids spent out of the ten days they spent, four of them taken tests. That's necessary, but not ideal."

- District Leader, California

What is needed for assessments to be more useful: "Teaching parents and students how to read the assessment data, what it means, and next steps."

– Elementary School Teacher, Georgia

CONCLUSION

Across study findings, math and ELA practitioners elevated that assessments should be representative, accessible, come with easy-to-use reports, and center focus on student experience.
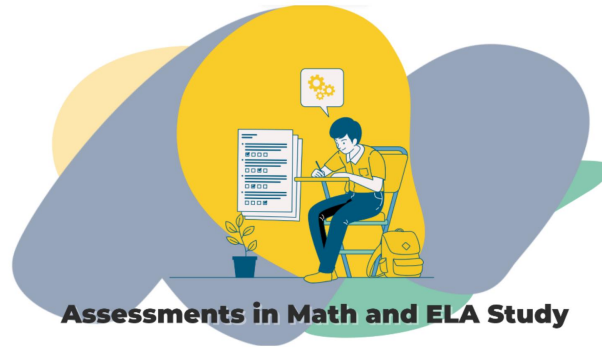
Key Takeaways

Overall, an improved digital assessment should:

- Be **representative** of student sub-group identities and cultural backgrounds
- Be **accessible** for all students including English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and students/schools with limited tech proficiency
- Have **easy to use reports** and/or dashboards providing teachers and school/district leaders the data they need to inform instruction or other decisions in a timely manner
- Center focus on **student experience** by ensuring that content is relevant and engaging, friendlier and more appealing, easy to understand, and fun such as through gamification
- Ensure **assessments are aligned** to the standards, curriculums, and pacing guides to ensure data is useful
- Improve mechanisms so the tests are **easier to administer**, automated, and scored automatically
- Be **reported out by sub-groups** and includes resources to help teachers close learning gaps
- **Test only what has been covered** to not overwhelm or demoralize students.

"Digital assessments are excellent tools to use to gain insight into student performance. However, unless used correctly and in a **timely manner**, these assessments will yield no promising results. Digital assessments must be **user friendly** (all stakeholders), **compliment the standards**, and **provide timely authentic data** to use to guide instruction and provide a deeper glimpse into individual students, as well as a class, snapshot regarding needs and strengths."

- Middle School ELA Instructional Coach, New Jersey

Assessments in Math and ELA Study

THANK YOU!