



October 30, 2020

Mr. Thomas Wei
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave. SW, LBJ, Room 6W208B
Washington, DC 20202

Evaluation of the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority Pilot Program-Survey Data Collection

Dear Mr. Wei,

Docket No.: ED-2020-SCC-0144

On behalf of KnowledgeWorks, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Department of Education (ED) Evaluation of the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA) Pilot Program-Survey Data Collection. These survey questions are critical to understanding the progress of these programs and to helping inform development of the Best Practices report.

KnowledgeWorks is a national nonprofit organization focused on advancing the future of learning and preparing all students for graduation. We support state and local leaders across the country to design and implement personalized and competency-based education systems. We identify and remove policy barriers that may inhibit the growth of personalized learning and competency-based learning and also develop new, more coherent visions of education systems capable of supporting all children. Innovative assessments are an integral part of our work to gauge the progress of all students and to ensure each student has the resources to be successful.

We very much appreciate ED's commitment to learning from the progress of the IADA program. The following are our recommendations to clarify specific ideas and to expand upon the surveys where additional information is necessary. Most importantly, we encourage the inclusion of several additional questions to better understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the pilot program's implementation.

Comments

1. We recommend including a question about the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic forced schools to drastically reimagine their education systems and made it impossible to carry out many state and districtwide assessments during the 2019-2020 school year. This current school year may bring similar challenges related to assessment administration on top of long term online or hybrid learning approaches in nearly all areas of our country. The pandemic has impacted the ability of states and school districts to carry out the implementation of their IADA

pilots. With this reality, we recommend adding the following question to the school districts survey to gain a better understanding of the impact of the pandemic on IADA implementation:

Consider the role [major impact, some impact, no impact, unsure] the coronavirus pandemic played in the following areas:

- a. General implementation of the IADA pilot.*
- b. Professional development for teachers and other education staff to support the implementation of the pilot.*

Follow up question: What are some of the reasons you answered this question the way that you did?

2. A key aspect of the pilot program is ensuring that it is leading to the acquisition of higher-order thinking skills. Collecting information through the survey from principals can help better understand the impact of the IADA pilots on the acquisition of these skills. To measure the impact of the IADA pilots on this topic, we recommend adding the following question to the principal survey:

In the following areas, please indicate if and/or when compared to the [REGULAR SYSTEM], the [IADA SYSTEM] assessments are [more effective, less effective, the same, don't know, not applicable] when:

- a. Assessing higher-order thinking skills such as analysis.*
- b. Assessing higher-order thinking skills such as evaluation.*
- c. Assessing higher-order thinking skills such as creating or designing.*
- d. Assessing higher-order thinking skills such as transfer.*
- e. Assessing metacognitive skills such as self-regulation.*
- f. Assessing metacognitive skills such as describing one's ability to process and understand.*

3. An important part of the IADA pilot program is it enables educators to encourage students to take ownership of their learning, or that students have "agency." Student agency is a critical component in learning and student success. To measure the impact of the IADA pilots on this topic, we recommend adding the following questions to both the teacher and principal surveys:

*Please indicate frequency for each of the following statements about your classes
[sample scale: frequently, often, occasionally, rarely, never]*

- a. Students decide when they are assessed on a learning target.*
- b. Students design or co-design how they will be assessed on a learning target.*
- c. Students have the ability to demonstrate learning in creative ways.*
- d. Students take advantage of the ability to demonstrate learning in creative ways.*
- e. Students set written goals for their learning.*
- f. Teachers engage students in goal setting.*

- g. Students have a say in the pacing of coursework and assessments to measure progress on learning that coursework.*
 - h. Students have opportunities to self-assess.*
 - i. Students have opportunities to peer-assess.*
- 4. Implementation of the IADA pilots has the potential to increase educator engagement and professionalism – an important benefit to building a high-quality educator workforce. This can occur through activities such as codesigning assessment tasks or collaborating with educators to calibrate assessment results. To better understand the impact of pilots on the education system, we recommend adding a question on how educators are benefitting from the IADA pilots. Specifically, we recommend adding the following questions to the teacher surveys:

Please indicate your experience with regards to professional development [Agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither disagree nor agree, disagree somewhat, disagree strongly]

- a. You receive the support you need.*
 - b. You have the ability to discuss important strategies to address each student's needs.*
 - c. You can collaborate with others to develop high quality assessments.*
 - d. Your ability to use assessments for learning has deepened.*
- 5. Question number 14 on the principal survey implies that the goal is solely efficiency of the assessment system. There are other comparative benefits that should be emphasized over efficiency in the implementation of IADA pilots, such as student agency, depth of learning, and time for educator collaboration. For this reason, we recommend reshaping this question and 15a, b, c and to also include the following:

Please indicate frequency for each of the following statements about your classes [sample scale: frequently, often, occasionally, rarely, never]

- a. To what extent do students have a say in the pace or timing of assessments?*
 - b. To what extent do students have a say in the length of time necessary for assessments?*
 - c. To what extent do students have a say in the modality or design of assessments?*
 - d. Enough time is provided for educators to collaborate around assessment implementation during school hours.*
 - e. The assessments capture a greater breadth or depth of knowledge, skills, and dispositions*
- 6. There are also other critical questions that will assist the Department in having a full understanding of how IADA pilots are being assessed. First, we recommend including the following questions to the teacher and principal surveys to better understand collaboration, input and a common understanding of assessment development goals by educators.

*Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.
[Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree]*

- a. I have a clear picture of what constitutes acceptable/mastery level for each learning target.*
- b. We have effective professional learning communities (PLCs) established to support the innovative assessment work.*
- c. Educators helped design or co-design professional development opportunities related to the innovative assessments.*
- d. Educators had opportunities for formal or informal roles in the development of the innovative assessments.*
- e. My colleagues and I use similar language, tools, rubrics, and norming procedures related to the innovative assessments.*

And secondly, we recommend the inclusion of the following questions on the teacher and principal surveys to better understand how assessment results can lead to an understanding of racial and other inequities.

*Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.
[Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree]*

- a. I understand how to use the assessments to collect data that can help expose racial inequities.*
- b. I understand how to use the assessments data to ameliorate inequities and close gaps among students, keeping all students to a high standard.*
- c. Compared to the regular assessments, these enable me to recognize and integrate knowledge of individual learners, diverse cultures and the community context in developing materials and pedagogy to ensure inclusive learning environments.*

Thank you again for your consideration of these recommendation. We look forward to working with ED to continue to ensure the success of the IADA pilot programs currently being implemented.

Sincerely,



Lillian R. Pace
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KnowledgeWorks