

MLSS NEWSLETTER



New Mexico's Balanced Assessment System

How the BAS Supports the MLSS Initiatives in New Mexico

As we have entered this new school year that has provided many unique challenges, the NMPED has been working to develop systems that will offer deeper, more guided support for both educators and students of New Mexico. Two of these systems are the NM Multi-Layered Systems of Support (MLSS) and the NM Balanced Assessment System. The key to successful systems such as these is strategically beneficial alignment so that there is a natural fit and flow between systems.

The mission of MLSS is accomplished by “aligning all interventions to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and student data; being proactive and flexible about addressing student needs; and working with a variety of community, family, and health/wellness professionals to provide coordinated supports that address a student’s holistic success.” The New Mexico Balanced Assessment System is a natural partner in supporting these goals. An assessment system is considered balanced when the assessments in the system are coherently linked through a clear specification of learning targets, when they comprehensively provide multiple sources of evidence to support educational decision-making, and when they continuously document student progress over time (NRC, 2001).

Each type of assessment has very specific purposes and uses; however, it is shown that formative practices have the greatest impact on learning and instruction.

Formative assessment practices relate to MLSS directly by supporting teachers and administrators in making real-time databased decisions; providing necessary student information to make Level 1 intervention decisions; promoting collaborative processes during PLCs through planning of formative practices; and contributing to the positive climate of the school through effective feedback loops where students take a more active role in their learning. Formative practices are embedded in teacher planning and actions.

High-quality formative practices are inseparable from instruction and are used to provide in-the-moment feedback to students, and for teachers to gain insight into student thinking so they can adjust instruction to best meet students’ learning needs. The key to formative practice is feedback. If feedback is received and understood by the student, then the task is formative.

The New Mexico Balanced Assessment System consists of three assessment types:

- 1. Formative Assessments** – a planned, ongoing assessment process utilized during instruction by teacher and student
- 2. Interim Assessments** – assessments used by educators to monitor the progress of students across a school year (BOY, MOY and EOY)
- 3. Summative Assessments** – assessments given at the end of the year to determine overall proficiency levels

What is the purpose of implementing formative practices? The primary purpose of formative assessment practices is to provide feedback about student learning and inform teachers’ adjustments in instruction.

IN THIS ISSUE:

New Mexico's Balanced Assessment System	1
No-Cost Assessment Resources	2
Formative Assessment Modules Available in Canvas.....	2
Data-Driven Instruction & Data-Informed Decision Making ...	3
Many Forms Of Data	5
Using Data to Determine Interventions	7

No-Cost Assessment Resources

The NMPED has created partnerships to provide effective resources that directly support building formative practices in schools. These resources are provided to all NM schools at no cost:



K-2 RESOURCES EARLY LITERACY & MATH

- [New Mexico and Istation K-2 Assessment System Overview](#)
- [Professional Learning Opportunities](#)

Istation is a computer-based progress monitoring tool and is available for both home and school administration.



3-8 RESOURCES ELA, MATH & SCIENCE

- [Formative Item Sets Additional Resources and Training](#)

Formative item sets are downloadable PDFs for classroom instruction and can also be used remotely to support formative assessment practices and provide evidence of student understanding. See Canvas module below.



9-12 RESOURCES MATH & READING

- [SAT Suite Question Bank \(SSQB\)](#)
- [K-12 Reporting Portal](#)

The SSQB is a web-based set of 3,500 real SAT, PSAT/NMSQT, PSAT 10, and PSAT 8/9 test questions that can be searched and filtered to develop formative or summative assessments. See Canvas module below.

[Quick Reference Guide: Technology Requirements for Formative and Interim Assessments](#)

Formative Assessment Modules Available in Canvas

COURSE	DESCRIPTION	AUDIENCE
Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Instructionally Embedded Assessments	This course focuses on understanding the purpose, advantages and uses of the DLM instructionally embedded assessments and their administration process.	District test coordinators, special education directors, special education coaches, and special education teachers
Interim (iMSSA) and Formative Assessment Practices	This course offers educators the opportunity to learn about the formative assessment tools and iMSSA provided by NMPED to make adoption decisions. It also covers how to set up accounts in the eProve platform.	3-8 Math, ELA and Science educators; school leaders; district test coordinators; curriculum directors
English Language Arts-SAT Suite Question Bank Resource Mathematics - SAT Suite Question Bank Resource	These courses are the products of a collaboration between the Center for Assessment and NMPED. They each contain three modules to help educators better understand how to use the SAT Suite Question Bank (SSQB) in their classrooms.	High school educators, curriculum directors

After successful completion of a course, educators will obtain a badge that is recognized by NMPED as evidence of staff-elected professional development as part of an educator's PDP and Domain IV criteria of Elevate NM.

Data-Driven Instruction & Data-Informed Decision Making

The New Mexico Public Education Department's Multi-Layered System of Supports 2020 Manual includes eight core components:

1. Data-Driven Instruction and Data-Informed Decision-Making
2. High Quality Core Instruction and Interventions
3. Informed and Effective School Leadership and Systems
4. Collaboration and Processes for Providing a Layered Continuum of Supports
5. Positive School Culture and Climate
6. Student Wellness
7. Family Engagement
8. Community Schools

Although each of these elements plays an equally valuable role in creating a solid framework and foundation for successful implementation of MLSS, the importance of using data is critical to evaluating the efficacy of interventions and practices of the MLSS framework in any school.

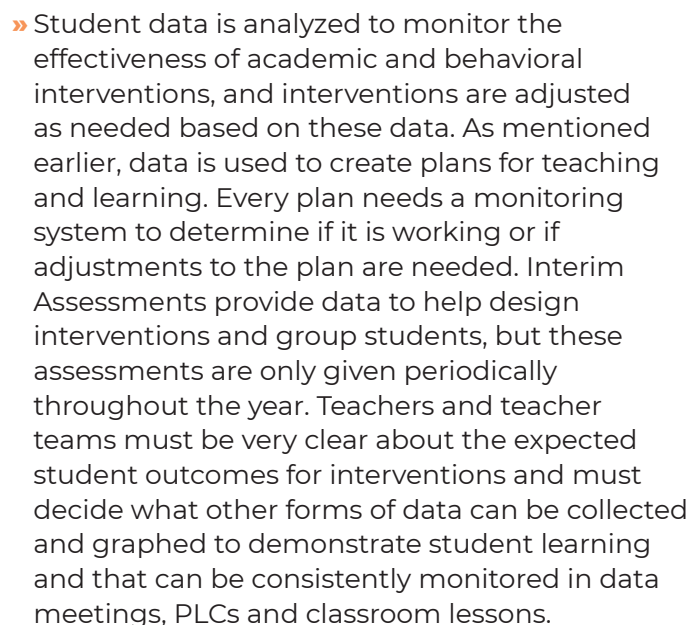
What does the phrase Data-Driven Instruction and Data-Informed Decision-Making mean in the context of MLSS?

» Small-group instruction is designed based on student performance data, and teacher teams regularly review instructional outcome data to better support students. Interim assessments are used in all grade levels with cut scores published and are used in addition to screening tools. Student data is analyzed to monitor the effectiveness of academic and behavioral interventions, and interventions are adjusted as needed based on these data. Students with disabilities participate in all interim assessments except as stated in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). (NMPED MLSS Manual 2020, p. 5.)

As we unpack that section of the MLSS manual, some unstated, but underlying elements also become evident.

- » Small group instruction is designed based on student performance data, and teacher teams regularly review instructional outcome data to better support students. This sentence indicates that student performance data must be collected regularly, and that data must be such that teachers are able to group students and design targeted interventions in all layers of MLSS. Data must also inform teachers and teacher teams about the academic and behavioral progress of students. Not only do data need to be collected regularly, but they also need to be analyzed regularly as well. MLSS is designed to address the real-time needs of ALL students in every layer, so it is crucial that necessary interventions be designed, implemented and assessed for students regularly to ensure that meaningful and successful learning opportunities are in place.
- » Interim assessments are used in all grade levels with cut scores published and are used in addition to screening tools. Interim Assessments should be given at least three times per year. This form of assessment allows educators to evaluate where students are in their learning process and to determine whether they are on track to perform well on future grade-level tasks and assessments. It is important to publish cut scores so that both students and educators can set appropriate goals and create action plans with an exact target in mind. These are the data that teachers can use to create intervention groups, especially in layers 2 and 3, that are tailored to filling the gaps in student learning.





Two important items to note for your students with disabilities:

- MLSS is a framework around which schools can build structures and routines that enable all students to be successful. However, in order to ensure that the structures are sound, Data-Driven Instruction and Data-Informed Decision-Making must be a deliberate practice and part of the discussion in all facets of the school system. In the words of Carly Fiorina, “The goal is to transform data into information and information into insight.” It is that insight or understanding that will empower educators to create even better learning opportunities for New Mexico’s students.**



- **Center for Parent Information and Resources:** read more about assessments and accommodations for students with disabilities. [Click here to visit the website.](#)
- **Edutopia:** learn three ways that student data can inform your teaching. [Click here to visit the website.](#)

Many Forms Of Data

The Summary of Your Students' Stories

Authors and data gurus Chip and Dan Heath once said, "Data are just summaries of thousands of stories—tell a few of those stories to help make the data meaningful." That statement cannot be more apropos for the MLSS framework. The spirit of this framework is to address the needs of the whole child, and in order do this big work meaningfully, we must seek to collect the data that reveal the "stories" of our students. So, aside from standardized assessment data, what are some examples of other data that educators can use to help them understand more about their students?

Language Proficiency

It is important to know which of your students are English Learners (ELs) whose home or heritage language influence is not English. These students are unable to speak, read, write, and understand English at a level comparable to their grade-level proficient peers as determined by objective measures of proficiency such as the ACCESS test. This assessment provides a snapshot of how a student understands and produces the English language that is necessary to access academic content to be successful in school. Knowing this information will allow teachers to provide the English Language Development instruction necessary for English Learners to become proficient in all four language domains (reading, writing, listening, and speaking).

For more information about understanding ACCESS data, [click here](#) for the Interpretive Guide to Access Score Reports.

Please [click here](#) to access the NMPED English Language Development Instructional Framework. This tool provides guidance for teachers to work with ELs in their classrooms.

General Health Information

As educators, we understand that wellness is directly related to student success. This information should be part of the universal screening every year for all students. The data include vision and hearing screenings and general health information provided by parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year. This information is important to understand when determining academic interventions for students or as part of the data used to determine if a 504 plan is needed or if a possible referral to Special Education is recommended.

Student Work Samples

It is beneficial for teacher teams to work collaboratively to plan lessons, determine student learning outcomes and to explore student work samples during PLCs or data meetings. When analyzing this work against the success criteria, teachers are better able to determine trends in correct or incorrect answers given by students. Then teachers can analyze the answers to determine whether whole-class reteaching may be necessary or if intervention groups may need to be formed to work on specific skills. This data is especially useful as it is collected frequently and allows teachers to address student needs quickly.

Please [click here](#) to access a set of slides about making sense of student work. This presentation explores a protocol that teachers can use to explore student thinking.



Student Observation Data

Educators are busy people. They are working with classrooms full of students and need the help of other professionals to collect information about student behaviors and attitudes in the school environment. Student observation data can be collected by administrators, instructional coaches, school counselors or other trained personnel. This information provides a clearer picture of how students approach classwork or of how students behave in the context of the classroom or school environment. Since observations are done over multiple settings, on varied days of the week and during different times of the day, the data from them paint a much clearer picture of a student. Observation data, when combined with other data, provide more comprehensive information from which teachers can create intervention plans in all layers of MLSS.

Other Assessment Data. Aside from the state-required assessments and the interim assessments, educators collect an abundance of other data to inform them about student performance. These scores may come from assessments such as Istation or Moby Max or from evaluation reports for students with disabilities who have Individualized Education Programs. This data is often communicated to parents during parent/teacher conferences as well. All data that we collect on students should reveal information about them that teachers can use to make decisions about instruction. However, the scores are often reported using terms such as percentile rank, grade-level equivalent, age equivalent or lexile. It is important for administrators, teachers, and parents to understand what these scores mean to avoid inaccurate labeling or understanding of a student's performance.

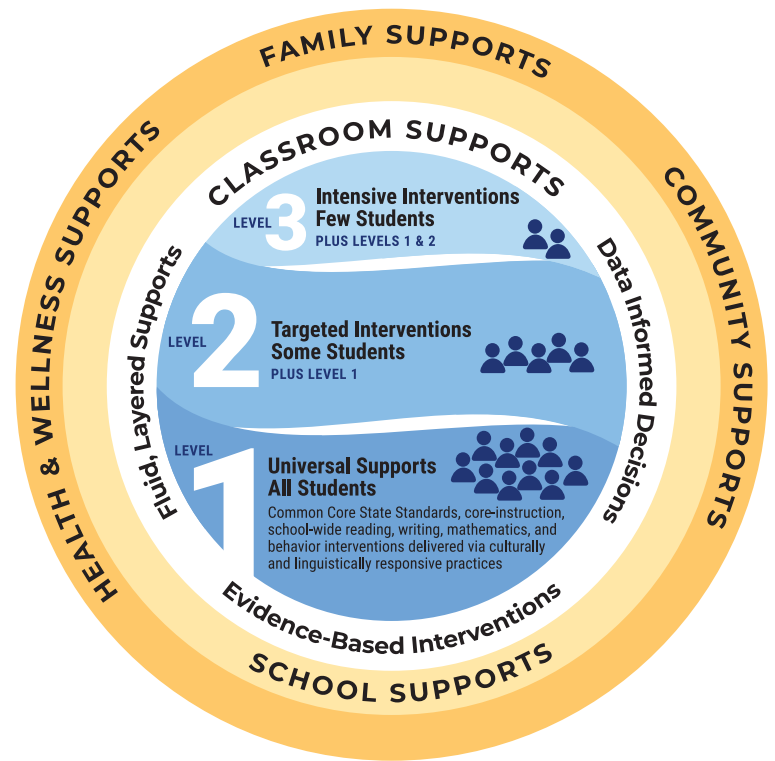
In sum, there are many forms of data that educators can collect and use to make informed instructional decisions. No singular piece of data reveals the academic or behavior summary of a student. Instead, when educators learn more about their students from a variety of sources, they can better understand their students' "stories," make more meaningful decisions about the needs of the whole child, and intervene appropriately.



Using Data to Determine Interventions

Layer One in the MLSS Framework addresses the needs of ALL students through universal interventions. In Layer Two some students may require more targeted interventions, while fewer students will require intensive Layer Three interventions. Several actions occur that define whether to classify the intervention as Layer One, Layer Two or Layer Three.

Interventions can be either instructional or behavioral. They require intentionality because interventions address a specific need or task. They are evidence-based, meaning the interventions have been repeatedly evaluated have been proven to be effective. Interventions are also specific and structured. The intervention cycle lasts a certain number of weeks or months and the efficacy is monitored and assessed at certain times during the cycle. From the progress-monitoring data, the teacher will know when to move a student from Layer One interventions to Layer Two or Three, where the interventions will be more intensive and increased in the amount of time, duration and frequency while reducing the number of students in the group. As MLSS is designed to allow students to receive core instruction and interventions and services in all layers, if needed, it is crucial that progress monitoring data is frequently analyzed in order to monitor and adjust the interventions accordingly for students.



In Layer One, universal interventions are generally done through differentiated instruction, which means the teacher adjusts instruction to meet the needs of all students. This differentiation can be done in a few ways. Teachers can adjust the **content**, using text on audio for example. By allowing students to demonstrate learning using a variety of methods, the teacher is differentiating **products**. The **environment** can be also be structured in different ways depending on the learning activities planned by the teacher. Finally, the **process**, or how the students learn the content, can be differentiated. One way to differentiate process is by allowing students to work independently, with partners or triads or in small groups. Teachers can use data from formative assessments in the classroom, from exit tickets, or from language proficiency assessments, for example, to determine how to group students appropriate for differentiated instruction.

If you are interested in learning more about differentiating instruction, [click here](#) to read a blog on the Share My Lesson website.





If the screening or benchmark assessments (Example: Kindergarten Observation Tool, ISIP) or interim assessment data indicate that students are below expected proficiency for grade-level expectations and if the students are not making the expected progress in Layer One, these students should be grouped differently to receive more targeted interventions in Layer Two. These research-based interventions should come from a reliable source; examples include Istation Teacher Resources or high-quality supplemental instructional programs adopted by the district or school. For elementary students, these interventions should be implemented daily for thirty minutes. Group sizes should be less than nine students (Oregon K–12 Literacy Framework as cited on page 17 of the NMPED MLSS Manual 2020). For middle and high school students, supplemental time for Layer 2 interventions should be part of the master schedule. Progress-monitoring data for these interventions should be collected and analyzed at least once per month to determine if the student is closing the learning gap or if the intervention plan needs to be adjusted. From these data, in conjunction

with other information about the student collected in Layer One, the teachers can determine if the students need the most intensive interventions offered in Layer Three.

Layer Three intensive interventions are for students who are identified as experiencing educational crisis or for students who are not making expected progress from Layer One and Two interventions. These students may require supports for health and wellness in addition to evidence-based academic

or behavior interventions. While these students continue to receive supports in Layers One and Two, they may also require one-on-one pull-out services provided by instructional specialists, counseling services or even push-in services provided by a behavior specialist. These are the most intensive interventions, and it is critical that response to intervention progress is monitored on a biweekly basis and that parents are kept informed about their students in Layer 3 on a biweekly basis as well.

In New Mexico's Multi-Layer System of Supports, interventions are available for ALL students and every level. Interventions become more intense in grouping, frequency, duration, and delivery method in Layers Two and Three, and they must always be delivered using evidence-based practices and high-quality materials. The efficacy of the intervention plan must also be monitored and adjusted using appropriate assessments and data. Using data and high-quality, evidence-based materials to design intervention plans for students at all levels in the MLSS framework is essential to ensuring that every student in New Mexico has an equal opportunity for success.

OTHER RESOURCES:

- To learn more about linking progress-monitoring data to interventions, [click here](#) to access an article on the RTI Action Network.
- For more ideas about interventions, visit the Intervention Central Website by [clicking here](#).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

[View current guidance and access online resources.](#)