Introduction

Teachers are being asked to test, test, test, but many schools do little with the test results other than sort students into various categories of proficiency or lack thereof. Some teachers feel testing has taken the joy out of teaching. Others believe valuable instructional time has been lost as a result of testing.

Yet as 2014 approaches, the deadline according to NCLB for when all students must meet or exceed standards, we, as teachers, are under increasing pressure to make certain our students meet standards and our schools meet adequate yearly progress. Now, more than ever, we need to embrace testing as a valuable classroom tool to guide instruction, use the efficient technological resources that are available for test scoring and analysis, and profit from the benefits that come from analysis of test results to increase learning, motivate students, and even raise test scores.

As teachers, most of us received little formal training in how to assess students or make use of assessment data. Though tools for scoring and assessment analysis are available and currently exist in many schools, many teachers still engage in the time-consuming task of hand-scoring tests and are unwilling or unable to use the data analysis tools that are available to dramatically increase their capacity to monitor learning and increase students' learning trajectories.

Assessment-Powered Teaching illustrates, step by step, the power teachers can gain from *using* test results from both state and local classroom tests in their classrooms on a daily basis to inform teaching, monitor the progress of all students, and motivate and energize students with the results of their learning. By using test results as an integral part of the planning and teaching process, our teaching improves because we take into account what our students know, believe, and bring to our classrooms, as well as what our students still need to learn. Understanding the needs of our students also guides our broader decisions about curriculum and program design and systemic changes needed for meaningful intervention.

Though tests often are used to separate students and exclude them from programs and opportunities, testing also can be a lever for greater equity in learning and a means for closing the achievement gap. The use of standards-based curriculum and assessments increases the likelihood that students will acquire the same knowledge and skills and have their work judged according to the same criteria. Using results from standards-based tests gives us the information needed to guide our reteaching and intervention efforts. When we disaggregate data from standards-based assessments, we are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of specific subgroups and thus provide specific subgroup interventions that will close the achievement gap.

Assessment-Powered Teaching explains how an individual teacher, a teacher team, or an entire school can build a standards-based curriculum and assessment system that will provide reliable test results to guide a data-driven instructional process. Assessment options, scoring options, and details on how to use test data in meaningful ways, individually or in a team setting, are discussed. A glossary of terms associated with testing is provided to enhance clarity and understanding of the various resources available to teachers.

Knowing how to use standards to define learning targets, build standards-based curriculum and assessments, gather and use test data in the classroom, and share data-driven teaching strategies with team members gives us, as teachers, power. Knowledge is power, and *Assessment-Powered Teaching* puts it all together in a step-by-step format.