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A Question about MEA Science Testing

A Maine school district that was analyzing the grade 5 and 8 MEA scores recently emailed me and posed the following question about the Science MEA. The wanted to know, “Is the Department of Education planning to focus on a few performance indicators or standards in the design of the Science MEA for a set period of time or are all the performance indicators and standards subject to assessment each year?”

This is a great question, and it’s important for us to be clear about the response. The Maine Department of Education determined that two of the five standards in the Maine *Learning Results: Parameters for Essential Instruction* would be identified as “accountability standards” for assessment. Currently, our MEA Science assessment at grades 4, 8, and 11 is designed to assess student understanding of all nine of the performance indicators for these two standards. The two standards are: standard D, The Physical Setting, and standard E, The Living Environment. Measured Progress, our assessment developer, creates multiple choice items to reflect the breadth of the descriptors across all nine of the performance indicators in these two standards. While a test for any given year does not contain enough multiple-choice testing opportunities to test each descriptor outlined in the nine performance indicators of these two standards, over time the range of descriptors is reflected. In a similar manner the MEA Science assessment balances the content of the constructed response items over time to reflect the range of performance indicators in each of the standards.

In the past, when the assessment was measuring the 1997 MLR, the state had identified a limited number of “focused performance indicators” to which the assessment was aligned. You may remember these as the Grade Span Expectations for Science. In regard to the 2007 Maine *Learning Results: Parameters for Essential Instruction*, all the performance indicators of two standards (D & E) are being assessed annually for accountability purposes.

- Anita Bernhardt