

VALUE-ADDED ASSESSMENT AND THE OHIO COMMUNITY COLLABORATION MODEL FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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In the Ohio Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement (OCCMSI), all school improvement efforts are ultimately focused on student achievement. The goal of the model is to identify non-academic issues students bring to school that substantively impeded their ability to learn, and to then implement strategies and programs that substantively address those issues. The working hypothesis of the model is that by coupling instructional efforts with efforts to address health, social, and behavioral issues facing students, we create a balanced and considerably more effective school improvement strategy.

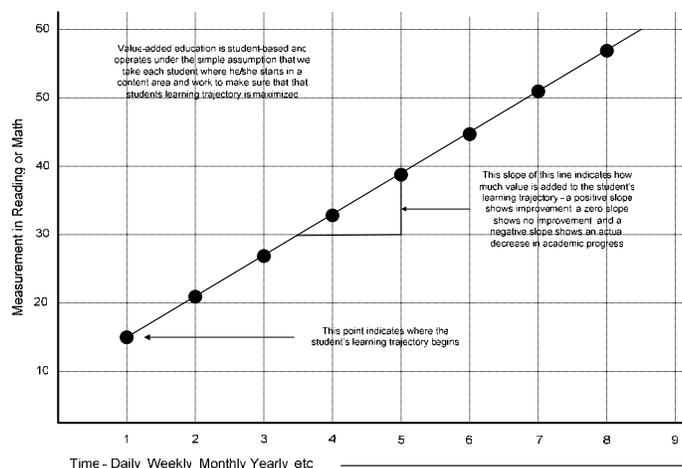
The OCCMSI requires data that tells us how each student is progressing academically. While we have access to a substantial amount of student assessment data

- grades, achievement tests, standardized tests, district specific tests, etc. - there are limited systems in place that actually track student progress on a regular basis over time. Without regular data, it is difficult to determine if our school improvement efforts are making a difference academically for our students.

A student-growth oriented data system called value-added assessment (or analysis) is growing in popularity in the US and in Ohio. It provides a framework for tracking individual student progress over time. While there is controversy about how it has been implemented in some states and districts, it has great appeal when compared to student assessment systems that define students' 'success by pass/fail standards.

THE BASIC PREMISE OF VALUE-ADDED ASSESSMENT

Value-added assessment has a very simple premise. It argues that effective classrooms and educational programs should carefully assess where a student begins (establish a beginning point or baseline) in a content area and then work to ensure that skills and capacities are added to that beginning point over the student's academic life (by systematically tracking growth or gains over time). An example student trajectory is shown in the companion figure. The first data point represents the beginning of the trajectory. The following data points track progress through data points collected by an assessment system. Value-added proposes that the line will go up for each student as optimally as possible.



The OCCMSI is a collaborative endeavor sponsored by the Ohio Department of Education and implemented by the College of Social Work at The Ohio State University and the Department of Psychology and Center for School-Based Mental Health Programs at Miami University. For more information, please contact Dawn Anderson-Butcher (614-292-8596; anderson-butcher.1@osu.edu) and/or Amber Kwiatkowski (614-466-9540; amber.kwiatkowski@ode.state.oh.us).

How Value-Added Assessment Supports Improvements to Educational Practice

- Helps target student intervention, both academic and non-academic
- Promotes and supports evaluation efforts
- Aids in data-based decision-making
- Provides helpful feedback to parents/caregivers
- Supports strategic planning at the classroom, building, and district levels
- Informs curriculum planning
- Helps identify professional development needs of school staff and leaders
- Improves responsive instructional practices
- Useful for engaging students in their own learning

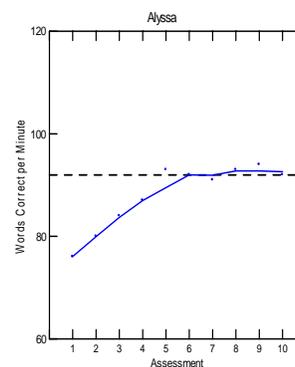
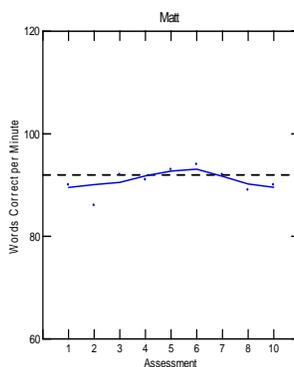
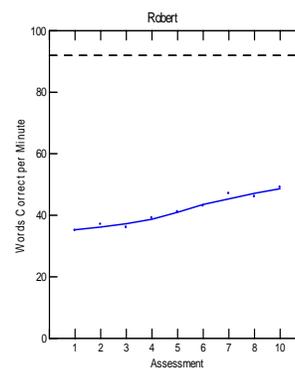
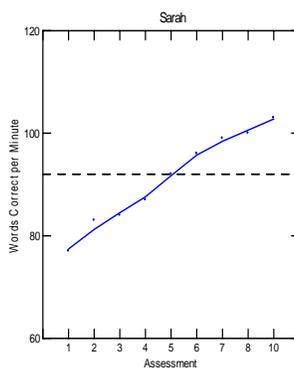
THE OCCMSI LINK TO VALUE-ADDED ASSESSMENT

One of the most important features of value-added assessments is that they generate individual student growth trajectories for the content area measured. The graphs on the right show four individual student trajectories for oral reading fluency. Each student was assessed on the same schedule.

These trajectories provide important data for teachers/school staff. For example, the teacher for these students might see that one student (Sarah) seems to be progressing nicely - her line is going up at a positive rate. The other students (Robert, Matt, and Alyssa), however, are not experiencing adequate progress. Robert's slope is shallow, Matt's slope is flat, and Alyssa was doing fine for awhile but flattened in her progress. In the value-added context, these data patterns would trigger instructional changes for these students.

This trigger-to-action implied by a student's trajectory is where the link to the OCCMSI becomes critical. In traditional uses of value-added assessments, teachers/school staff would focus primarily on changes in instruction for students. Within the OCCMSI framework, teachers would also consider non-academic barriers the students might be experiencing that are influencing academic progress and growth. There may be, for example, significant mental health issues impeding student progress. Or, students may be experiencing difficult home situations, grief and loss, or may be experiencing bullying or other life stressors.

In other words, a value-added assessment that triggers decision-making should not be limited to just instructional considerations. Students may bring many issues to school that impede progress, some more obvious than others, that have to be addressed systematically if all students are going to make adequate gains and growth. Using data to guide both instructional and non-academic decisions truly is a balanced approach to student improvement, on embedded in the OCCMSI framework.



AN OCCMSI CASE EXAMPLE

Some of the OCCMSI pilot sites have made commitments to data-driven decision-making in classrooms using value-added assessment strategies. For instance, teachers/school staff at one OCCMSI school pilot are regularly tracking student oral reading fluency through the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) system. Teachers enter progress monitoring data for each student into a web-based system weekly. The system then provides individual student oral reading fluency trajectories that help guide instructional decision-making, as well as the design of non-academic related to supports to address students' relevant non-academic barriers to learn-

ing. Grade-level teams of teachers regularly discuss individual student data to guide immediate accommodations, interventions, and student supports. School-wide "Data Days", or periodic planning days where teachers/school staff come together to discuss aggregate student data, allow for classroom-wide, grade level-specific, school-wide, and/or community-based interventions to be designed to target curricular or group-specific interventions to address priority needs and gaps. Resultant strategies may address academic intervention priorities, but also may target non-academic barriers that the students bring with them to school.

