Q4. What assessments—other than standardized tests—might we design to ensure that all students across all districts are succeeding and that schools have the data they need to improve? In your view, what might such an alternative assessment be, and how might does it work?

"I was only able to teach 6 days in March and April." K-5

"Being an independent teacher, I'm not a part of this world." 6-8

"I think that there has to be some type of standardized test in order to objectively evaluate our students and ourselves. Without a common assessment, it is too easy to bury your head in the sand and "believe" that you are doing a good job. However, standardized tests should be criterion based rather than norm referenced. This allows the focus to be the material which is deemed most important rather than using obscure questions to assure a bell curve." K-5

"Such assessments need to include a wide range of methods - not just high-stakes. Classroom observations, representative student work (especially long-term writing projects!), teacher gradebooks, discipline records, student interviews, and more. I would call this something like "wrap-around" assessment. It would be very complicated and involved, but might come closer to providing a true picture of what is happening in a school and why students are or are not learning." 9-12

"We have all the data we need in classroom assessments: projects, performances, and portfolios." 9-12

"I feel that districts could come up with their own benchmarks and assessments. They know their own students best. These could be woven into the fabric of the year." K-5

"If students are all working towards an end goal of a project that involves math, reading, writing, science, etc, then they are more engaged and can actually see the benefits of such learning. Learning doesn’t happen in a vacuum, and assessment shouldn’t either." College

The Kind of Question: Free response, issues of equity

Survey Responses

439 responses, representing K-5; 6-8; 9-12; college
91 respondents did not respond--nearly 1 in 5

What Kinds of Assessments Do They Recommend?

--"Portfolios, portfolios, portfolios" 23% (99)
--Often in concert with projects
--Projects/performances 6% (29)
--Context specific assessments:
  Running records (K-5; 6-8)
--Rubrics 3% (14)
--District-level
--Real world/authentic
--Hybrid assessments: a mix of an annual state or national test, for comparability, with classroom-based assessments
Assessment Story Project

- **What Values Do Teachers Endorse?**
  - Student development
  - Transparency in the assessment process
  - Increasing use of digital technology for real world tasks: book reviews; wikis; petitions; ebooks; imovies; online portfolios
  - Assessment that is meaningful in terms of supporting student learning: timely, useful

- **What Models and Sources Do Teachers Draw On?**
  - Their own practices: classroom, building, district
  - Proven US successful practices: college portfolios
  - Practices elsewhere: Finland, Europe, Quaker, AAC&U

- **What Assessment Design Principles Inform Teachers’ Thinking?**
  - Engage students in real-world tasks.
  - Employ tasks calling for students to be creative problem-solvers.
  - Tap classroom work that students are already engaged in; use “embedded” assessment.
  - Include students presenting to others: administrators, parents, and community members.
  - Provide for feedback that can be used during the school year to support learning.

All features of an assessment practice that is robust, innovative, social, and useful.

The government and leading organizations like NCTE should promote standards of assessment creation, which local schools are accountable for enforcing. Assessment design is an intimate process. **The farther you remove the designer from the practitioner, the more likely the two will have a misunderstanding.** 9-12

I always conclude a literature study with two large assessments: 1 a test, with matching, multiple choice, and short answer; the other, an alternative assessment, such as a group project, or an individual essay written using the writing process of drafts, peer response, and revision. In this way, **students are not only reading and learning, but they are doing so as part of a community of learners who are learning as well to hold intelligent, civil, thoughtful conversations on serious subjects.** 9-12