

CALIFORNIA PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT COLLABORATIVE

CPAC Newsletter

Save the date for our Regional Spring Convenings!

Southern California: April 6 at Pasadena High School in Pasadena Unified School District

Northern California: April 21 at June Jordan School for Equity/Envision City Arts & Technology
in San Francisco Unified School District

CPAC LAUNCH EVENT

On November 4, 2016, the California Performance Assessment Collaborative (CPAC) hosted a professional learning community launch event. Over 80 educators, funders, researchers, and partners came together in the spirit of true collaboration, where participants engaged in learning with and from each other, while keeping students at the center, and attending to practitioner professional learning and policy goals and challenges.

The event began with a charge from Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, President and CEO of the Learning Policy Institute, the organization that supports CPAC. Dr. Darling-Hammond emphasized the learning community structure and how CPAC works. She pointed out that the suspension of the California High School Exit Exam puts us in “in a moment of local graduation policy,” emphasizing that districts have the opportunity to develop graduation requirements that reflect 21st century learning. She concluded by saying we need to “build a knowledge base about this work, strengthen this work, and make it available and known to influential people in the state. We need to have outcomes evidence.”

The plenary session at the beginning of the day highlighted the importance of partnerships in performance assessment development and implementation. Envision Partners and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) shared the origins, features, and results of their partnership as they work collaboratively to shift toward performance assessments as the teaching and learning modality in their Linked Learning pathways.

Participants then spent time in several workshops organized around the needs of the larger collaborative. These workshops included:

- ✓ [Designing Quality Performance Assessments](#), where examples were shared about the elements of the multiyear sustained portfolio development that ultimately results in a student defense of his or her learning.
- ✓ [Supporting Equity in Learning through Performance Assessment](#), highlighting the features of portfolio assessment, including personalization, collaboration, and authentic work, as examples of attention to equity as an embedded principle of performance work.
- ✓ [Implementing Performance Assessment in Large High Schools](#) addressed the ins and outs of doing this work in large high schools, including a discussion of schoolwide systems, processes and procedures, teaching and learning for performance and student achievement.
- ✓ [Promoting Performance Assessment as a Graduation Requirement](#) focused on how to build and increase the credibility of the portfolio systems, especially among state-level policymakers who have questions around maintaining a high level of rigor in the portfolio processes and products.

At the end of the day, participants had the opportunity to meet with role-alike colleagues, where they shared common achievements, challenges, and interests. At the culmination of the launch, school and district teams met to debrief the day and plan next steps for their own performance assessment work moving forward.

INSIGHT AND INNOVATION AT ENVISION LEARNING PARTNERS: AN INTERVIEW

Ben Kornell, the Executive Director of Envision Learning Partners, graciously agreed to share his organization's work with CPAC. Envision has been a longtime pioneer in performance assessment—creating and designing schools with a strong portfolio defense system, and supporting schools and districts across the country in implementing performance assessments.

Why has performance assessment been central to Envision's way of working with students and teachers?

First, fundamentally, assessment is at the core of what everyone is doing. I think the difference here is performance assessment. Ultimately, we know that what gets measured gets done. The current system of measuring students through multiple-choice tests and knowledge-based assessment is lacking because it doesn't effectively measure what students can do. At Envision, we believe in know, do, and reflect. So it's not just the knowledge that students can attain, but it's also what they can do with the knowledge and reflecting on what that means for them, what that means for the world and for their place in it.

What is your theory of action with Envision schools, and other schools and districts, in terms of the implementation of performance assessment and practitioner development?

What we understand is that teachers and daily instruction are at the core of transforming the student experience in our schools to match the skills and competencies needed for success in the 21st century. We believe that by implementing performance assessments and performance tasks, students will reorient from knowledge to performance. We know that at the click of a button you can access through Google more information than has ever existed in human history. But what you do with that information is really the challenge of 21st century learners. By teaching folks to do performance assessments—and by implementing performance assessment systems—we actually support schools to transition from a knowledge-based instructional model to a performance-based instructional model. Lastly, I would say that it's not just the daily instruction in class; it needs to also be supported by systems and structures. This idea that every kid can—in 45 minutes, five times a day—move from class to class, and engage deeply in the material and content enough to really be able to do something with it, we think is an outdated model. So, ultimately, we believe that it's not just working with schools to implement performance assessments themselves, but it's the system—the performance assessment system—that really drives the results.

What have been the outcomes of this work?

Currently, Envision works with 70 schools sites across the country, and we've seen incredibly powerful results. First, in terms of traditional measures, students perform 15 to 20% higher on common core performance assessments, specifically in English. We have seen a huge bounce for English Language Learners as well as for general student performance. When we look at achievement gaps between affluent or white students and low-income minority students, we see that the achievement gap closes at a faster clip.

Our data for this is supported primarily by LA Unified School District and from Bryan Adams High School in Dallas, but it reflects trends that we've been observing across all of the sites. I think the real challenge for our work is to bring proof points, not just from individual sites but also from districts. One outcome in Los Angeles is that we've gone from three sites doing performance assessments and portfolio defenses to now 30 sites and in partnership, we plan to move to 45 sites doing performance assessments and portfolio defenses in 2017.

What are you most proud of?

We are all in this for the kids. Every time I hear student stories about how the portfolio defense transformed their lives, it's both inspiring and fulfilling. What's been surprising for me is actually hearing stories of students who failed the first time and what a big life-changing moment that was for them. They were able to experience a setback, gather themselves, revise and improve, and come back and ultimately pass their portfolio defense. Many students reflect on that experience as a pivotal moment in helping them understand what it takes to be successful in college, career, and beyond.

What is the role of Envision Learning Partners in the future development of graduation portfolio work, and in the statewide policies around the viability of the portfolio and its defense as validation of graduation readiness for California high school students?

Coherence in systems is critical to moving and transforming learning. We understand that at individual sites with individual pockets there can be innovation. But for us to really drive performance assessment forward, we need alignment between local schools, local school districts, county district offices, and the state. We believe this is an amazing opportunity in California history to align our high school requirements specifically around the high school exit assessments with the kinds of instructional strategies we know work—and the student learning that we know works. We hope that seeing is believing—with the opportunity to bring people who make policy into the classrooms where performance assessment is alive and well. Secondly, we hope

that we can create some common goals across California so that five, 10 years from now, we have a group of students who all have capabilities aligned with what is needed for 21st century success.

How is your membership in CPAC supporting your work? What do you hope to receive, and what do you hope to contribute to this collaboration?

I'd say, first, that this is humbling work. The idea that anyone has all the answers is misleading or the concept that anyone has all the answers would be a big mistake. So coming together with a set of practitioners who are working in collaboration to figure out what 21st century skills we should be shooting for; how we should be measuring that; how we should be leveraging that to drive instructional change—all of that is profound. That collaboration is profound within the CPAC group.

In terms of receiving value from this collaboration, what we are looking for is critical feedback as well as thought partnership. What we're hoping to contribute is the body of work we have been able to produce over the last decade around performance assessment—both within Envision schools and with the Envision partner schools, the 70 schools across the country.

Ultimately, I believe that California can be the national leader in performance assessment. I think CPAC is core to this work because policy without practitioners is an empty promise. Here in California, we actually have both working in coordination. Performance assessment is the wave of the future. It also is a monumental challenge, and together, practitioners, policymakers, students, families, teachers, we all need to find common ground to move this important work forward and pave the road to success for all kids in California.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND STUDY VISIT CALENDARS

Professional Development Opportunities

February 21 and 23

Hillsdale High School | Senior Defense Coaching
Contact Person: Jeff Gilbert jgilbert@smuhsd.org

March 15

Oceana High School
Contact Person: Jannah Scwab jschwab1@juhsd.net

April 10

LAUSD Linked Learning | Portfolio Defense Workshops for Teachers
Contact Person: Nancy Le ntl9835@lausd.net

April 26

Envision | Defense Design Workshop
School of Engineering & Sciences, Sacramento, CA
Contact Persons: Ben Kornell ben@envisionlearning.org;
Justin Wells justin@envisionlearning.org;
Rachel Maida rachel@envisionlearning.org

Performance Assessment Presentations and Professional Learning Visits

February 22

Envision | Impact Academy, Hayward, CA
Contact Persons: Ben Kornell ben@envisionlearning.org;
Justin Wells justin@envisionlearning.org;
Rachel Maida rachel@envisionlearning.org

February 23 and March 2, 7, and 14

STEM Academy of Hollywood
Contact Person: Esther Dabagyan eed3061@lausd.net

March 1 and 2

Hillsdale High School
Contact Person: Jeff Gilbert jgilbert@smuhsd.org

March 27–30

Envision | Portfolio Defense Observation
Samueli Academy, Santa Ana, CA
Contact Persons: Ben Kornell ben@envisionlearning.org;
Justin Wells justin@envisionlearning.org;
Rachel Maida rachel@envisionlearning.org

March 27 and 30

Los Angeles School for Global Studies | Tenth Grade Defense
Contact Person: Nicole Solig nicole.solig@lasgs.lausd.net

March 31

Oceana High School
Contact Person: Jannah Schwab jschwab1@juhsd.net

Find the complete calendars at learningpolicyinstitute.org/project/cpac

RESOURCES

- Center for Collaborative Education—[Quality Performance Assessment Summer Institute](#) (Info Session Thursday, March 9 from 3:30–4 p.m.)
- UL-SCALE Performance Assessment Resource Bank [webinar](#) and [slides](#)
- ConnectEd Studios has developed an online platform for creating, submitting, and evaluating student performance tasks. There is an interactive demonstration site available at demo.connectedstudios.org (see [here](#) for the calibration tool demo). The full online platform, which requires an account to log in, is available at connectedstudios.org. Feel free to contact Dave Yanofsky (dyanofsky@connectedcalifornia.org) with any questions, or for help setting up an account to access the online platform.
- [CPAC Website](#)

FINAL WORD

“A democratic education means that we educate people in a way that ensures they can think independently, [and] that they can use information, knowledge, and technology, among other things, to draw their own conclusions.”

—Linda Darling Hammond

CONTACT US

We welcome your contributions. Please contact cpac@learningpolicyinstitute.org with any comments, questions, or events/resources you would like to share with the CPAC network.

ABOUT CPAC

The California Performance Assessment Collaborative (CPAC) represents educators, policymakers, and researchers who are working to study and advance the use of authentic approaches to assessment, such as presentations, projects, and portfolios, which require students to demonstrate applied knowledge of content and use of 21st century skills. CPAC is composed of 34 schools from across the state, as well as representatives from Fresno, Jefferson Union, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, Pasadena, and San Francisco school districts. Big Picture Learning, Envision Schools, High Tech High, Internationals Network for Public Schools, and New Tech Network are also participating in the collaborative.

The collaborative serves as a professional learning community dedicated to the advancement of meaningful assessments for California students. Throughout the school year, CPAC members deepen and refine their performance assessment practices through in-person meetings, site visits, and information sharing. Participants have developed common principles that inform and guide their various approaches to performance assessment. The Learning Policy Institute (LPI) supports CPAC by orchestrating learning opportunities for participants, and engaging in research and documentation of performance assessment practices.