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Evaluation Strategies: 5th Grade Science

Evaluation strategies need to be diverse to truly assess students fairly and accurately. I believe strongly in short-cycle assessments (SSAs). SSAs were implemented in the 2007-2008 school year in the area of science for Springfield Local Schools. These short assessments are to be given every couple of weeks or less in addition to the more traditional unit tests given every 2-4 weeks. SSAs are to guide teachers in lesson planning to better meet the needs of the students. Instead of teaching an entire unit and finding out in the end that a student did not understand a concept, a teacher would know there was a problem much sooner.

Besides SSAs, student performance on the OAAs has been and will continue to be closely monitored. Recently, science scores across the district have increased, perhaps due to the implementation of SSAs. It is also important to take the data from the OAAs to identify “at-risk” and “advanced” students. At-risk students must be identified early on so that they can receive the attention they need all year long. The same is to be said for advanced students. Based on the data collected, an after school tutoring club has started, advanced literature and math groups have been created, and test taking skills have been implemented into the everyday curriculum.

Evaluation tools must be wide-ranging and effective. It is not enough anymore to give a traditional multiple choice or true and false test. Teachers must give challenging and developmentally appropriate assessments. In science, informal evaluations during labs are also of great use. Many times it is hard to duplicate a skill using paper and pencil. Besides the evaluation strategy, teachers must then know what to do with the data reflected in those evaluations.