Southeastern Regional Technical Vocational High School’s leadership team is excited to see where student achievement will go as a result of its efforts to implement the new educator evaluation system. According to Leslie Weckesser, Vocational-Technical Director,

  Growth in student learning is what all programs are focusing on in the [CVTE] classroom. Hence, looking at what we can do to ramp up academic achievement and technical skills attainment by using assessment data from our DDM efforts will be transformative. I know that if we get this data and the right tools in the hands of our educators, we can move mountains together. I am confident we can do it, because we have made substantial progress in our district.

To accomplish its goals, Southeastern will be relying on a number of existing strengths, each highlighted in the following sections.

**Building on Existing Strengths: Data Integration Infrastructure**

Southeastern is fortunate to have developed strong data collection, analysis, and dissemination practices over the last few years. Since 2008, Southeastern educators and administrators have used a district student information system (SIS Net) to keep track of key CVTE performance indicators. This student information system has evolved into a robust database of multiple measures of student academic achievement and technical skills attainment, including formal and informal measures for all 24 CVTE and regular programs. Annual student achievement and growth data for MCAS and other common assessments (e.g., senior capstone projects) are routinely reported and discussed during annual school induction. Over time, these data have been compiled into a report known across the district as the Vocational Performance Indicators Report. A sample of data from this report is shown in Figure 4.
This report is reviewed by all educators during the first two weeks of school each year. Data are used for accountability purposes—at the educator, course, grade, and district levels—in many programs. The report has become a popular reference tool for educators and administrators when developing measurable objectives for annual performance reviews and for growth plan documentation, and as part of educators’ SMART goals.

This investment in technology has provided Southeastern educators with tools that enable them to leverage “teachable moments” that align and integrate higher-order thinking skills and applied communications skills (e.g., presentations, demonstrations) across the curriculum. District administrators are confident that, as their educators learn, engage, and immerse themselves in working with DDMs, they will discover that they have already been engaged in “temperature-checking assessment,” while embedding competency-based evaluation of technical skills attainment into daily classroom activities. The DDM development and implementation process will provide CVTE educators with an opportunity to work with both their colleagues and administrators to analyze student performance data and detect trends and patterns that may enable improvement of instructional practice. For this reason, Southeastern administrators anticipate a smooth transition to use of DDMs as measures of educator effectiveness.
To track student competencies, Southeastern currently uses SkillsPlus, but in the near future, the district looks forward to using Edwin’s enhanced features and the CVTE-specific tools that Edwin will offer to support data literacy and evidence-based decision-making. The inclusion of the competency tracking functionality in the Edwin Teaching and Learning system, a tool that encourages CVTE educators to use the system, is an important and much-anticipated development. District administrators believe that shop educators, in particular, will find using the Edwin interface to track and monitor students’ progress toward proficiency in the standards contained in the CVTE Frameworks to be a productive and worthwhile exercise that will help inform and support their use of assessment data to enable differentiated instruction and tailored intervention for each student.

**Building on Existing Strengths: Existing Assessments and Current Initiatives**

Many of the direct and indirect measures considered by Southeastern for possible use as DDMs are familiar to educators. Since 2012, Southeastern’s CVTE and academic directors have found that the four models for Educator Plans recommended by ESE have proven easy to customize to support educators’ needs. Its educators are accustomed to a data-driven and evidence-based management approach that capitalizes on measures traditionally used to gauge program success and student achievement. These same measures are now being proposed for use to gauge educator effectiveness.

**Table 10. Measures Currently Used at Southeastern Regional Technical Vocational High School**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employability Skills and Career Readiness</th>
<th>Technical Skills Attainment</th>
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<tr>
<td>• SkillsUSA</td>
<td>• Industry certification (e.g. SP/2)</td>
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<td>• SkillsUSA</td>
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<td>• Massachusetts State Board exams</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Local measures for literacy and writing</td>
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About six years ago, declining achievement levels on MCAS, SkillsUSA, and industry credentialing exams prompted district administrators to implement an aggressive Response to Intervention program designed to improve literacy skills among at-risk students and to increase data literacy among faculty. After analyzing MCAS and employability assessment data, the district’s Evaluation Team was able to identify the source of the decline in student performance as being correlated to student reading ability. With the support of the district’s data analyst, the Evaluation Team was able to pinpoint exactly where CVTE students continue to experience challenges in meeting the reading standards. Unsurprisingly, the Evaluation Team discovered that the students who were having the most difficulty on standardized assessments such as MCAS and the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) were also students.
identified as needing remedial literacy interventions to support the development of applied communication skills, as measured by the four technical essays required each year of CVTE students.

Thanks, in part, to a Race to the Top (RTTT) award that has allowed the CVTE and academic directors to offer diverse and quality professional development programming around assessment and data literacy, Southeastern is working hard to develop the literacy skills of its students. Each year all students (freshmen through seniors) are required to draft, revise, and submit four essay writing assignments for evaluation online through the My Access portal. According to Ms. Weckesser,

> We have been working to embed literacy across the board in every area, whether it is history, mathematics, English, plumbing, engineering, or visual design. The district has long recognized the need to foster shared responsibility for literacy across [CVTE] and academic faculty. Efforts have been underway for over four years to provide educators with data that tracks the success of their students and their program, in the form of an annual report shared at the start of each school year, the Vocational Performance Indicators Report.

As shown in Figure 5, these efforts appear to be paying off as, in all but two CVTE programs (Graphics and Health Services), Freshmen Portfolio grades improved between the 2012 and 2013 school years.

**Figure 5. Comparison of Freshmen Portfolio Grades, 2012 vs. 2013**

Southeastern administrators have decided to align DDM initiatives to this literacy initiative. By making literacy a districtwide priority and a shared responsibility among all instructional personnel, school administrators hoped to foster interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration between CVTE and academic faculties as a by-product of DDM implementation.
Early on, school administrators decided that they wanted to focus on identifying current measures that could be commonly used across the district and that would not entail additional logistical burdens on staff. They understand that they will need to model and scaffold the culture of assessment that they seek to realize. Preliminary reports confirm that district culture and teaching practice are slowly evolving, with thanks to the common metrics and rubrics underpinning the new evaluation system. They also suggest that slow but steady progress is being made in transforming the culture of teaching and learning by making it very clear that the purpose of using DDMs is to improve instructional practice.

Building on Existing Strengths: Making Professional Development a Priority

The 2011 adoption of the *Massachusetts Framework for Educator Evaluation* aligned nicely with the district’s already robust educator performance monitoring and tracking system. In fact, by that time, school administrators had been conducting annual classroom observations while also gathering and studying key performance indicators for both academic and CVTE students. School administrators had long used metrics from the Vocational Performance Indicators Report to inform goals and objectives within educator performance plans. So, when the new educator evaluation model arrived, requiring that educators earn two independent but connected ratings to identify the intersection of educator practice and educator impact, Southeastern was well positioned to implement use of both measures districtwide. Educators and administrators had become comfortable with using student performance data from MCAS and other indirect measures of student achievement to inform their instructional decision-making.

Using a cycle-of-inquiry approach (see Figure 6) to structure and animate their collaborations, CVTE and academic educators have focused their attention on unpacking the *Standards for Literacy in History, Social-Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects in the Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* (pp. 72–79). Their inquiry and discussion related to the literacy standards confirmed their opinion of the primacy of basic reading and writing competencies as foundational and gateway skills that all district

![Figure 6. Cycle of Inquiry Collaboration Strategy](image-url)
staff shared a responsibility for, in some way, encouraging, enabling, and evaluating. Director of Academics Heidi Driscoll, who is leading the development of the CVTE Model Curriculum Units (MCUs), is pleased with the strides and gains that her teams have made, and reports that “educators say this collaboration in unpacking the standards and developing MCUs has changed the way they teach and will help inform how they approach DDMs. RTTT-funded PD has offered automotive, carpentry, culinary, early education and care, and health services educators an opportunity to facilitate curriculum design groups and to collaborate with academic educators in planning, teaching, assessing, and documenting lessons.” For CVTE educators, this pedagogical focus is a huge but critical shift in teaching practice, which school administrators plan to support, scaffold, and sustain.

School administrators have thoughtfully and deliberately worked to embed multiple opportunities for educators to take greater ownership of the DDM development and implementation process through professional learning communities and circles of inquiry established to address achievement gaps. Additionally, through the normal course of work each year at common-planning-time meetings, during PD half-days, during one-on-one consultations and observations, and at other district convocations, district administrators have prioritized increasing data and assessment literacy by structuring discussions around student performance data and program metrics, such as the number of co-op placements made by a CVTE program or the number of certification or licensure examinations passed by CVTE students each year. Each professional learning touchpoint is designed to offer educators meaningful and timely feedback, while guiding them through collaborative activities designed to support professional growth around DDMs and a process of continuous improvement. Because all educators participate in the same evaluation process, with a focus on continuous improvement to promote growth and development, district administrators feel that its educators and students are “all in” and well positioned to learn and make the most of DDM implementation while aligning and integrating other valued reforms to improve educator effectiveness and close achievement gaps.

**Planning for Districtwide Tryouts**

When it came time to explore and evaluate measures of student growth and achievement for use as DDMs, the district had both formal and informal existing measures to consider. Because the district had been working to develop both literacy and employability skills as means to boost and bolster student achievement, it had already considered what core content to teach, what skills to evaluate, and how to measure skills attainment over time. Having an extensive database of information derived from multiple measures of student performance data collected since 2008 offered the district a leg up in understanding where it needed to focus its efforts.
The district’s evaluation team is composed of CVTE and academic educators, administrators, and union representatives who have been working together to support students and educators for many years. Because union representatives, educators, and district administrators are all involved in a common, districtwide planning process and have a voice in the outcomes and expectations set to measure performance, the district has enjoyed a smooth transition to the new educator evaluation system.

By June 2014, the district superintendent will propose using two DDMs for all professional staff, both related to improving literacy, with one being the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). As Ms. Driscoll notes of SRI,

> Every academic, vocational, and technical educator uses this measure. It is already embedded in our daily routine and used to set educator performance goals. It is not a scary new practice. So it was a natural to become our first DDM. We have been fortunate to be able to leverage processes and structures that have been in place for some time. The task would have proven more daunting otherwise.

The other measure is yet to be determined, but given the ample number of direct and indirect measures already tracked at Southeastern, the Evaluation Team members feel confident that they will readily settle upon a second DDM (see the 2012-13 Vocational Performance Indicators Report in Appendix A). The Evaluation Team is reviewing results from this year’s SRI administration to help inform its selection of a second districtwide DDM. The first option would be to use an end-of-year portfolio or capstone project assembled by students in My Access, which samples various work products and artifacts including a technical writing assessment, as a DDM. The second option would modify the first by limiting the capstone project or portfolio’s contents to only writing assignments or only vocational work samples.

The Evaluation Team will be considering which approach to take in the coming months. The appeal of using the full portfolio as a DDM is its comprehensive sampling of core content over an entire year, while the appeal of using the end-of-year capstone project is that it focuses attention on applied communication skills development. School administrators acknowledge that either choice involves trade-offs: the portfolios entail greater logistical complexity and learning impact, while the capstone project engages industry partners and tradespeople, who could serve as raters and judges on project evaluation committees in the future.