

# RISING TO THE CHALLENGE



***A contribution to the development of a holistic value-added  
Assessment and Evaluation Framework  
for Northern Ireland***

# Contents

## **1: Introduction**

- 1.1 Context
- 1.2 Aim
- 1.3 Objectives

## **2: Agreeing Principles**

- 2.1: Shared Agreement
- 2:2 Fundamental underpinning principles

## **3: Addressing Challenges**

- 3.1 The use of teacher assessment
- 3.2 Levels of Progression
- 3.3 Moderation
- 3.4 Contextual value-added
- 3.5 Pupil value-added

## **4: Proposed Assessment Tools and Processes**

- 4.1 Teacher 'Assessment for Learning'
- 4.2 Assessment tools
- 4.3 Base-line assessment of productive language on entry to school:
- 4.4 Cognitive abilities analysis
- 4.5 Attitudes to learning analysis
- 4.6 Informed target setting
- 4.7 On-going Teacher Assessment
- 4.8 Occasional standardised testing

## **5: Reporting**

- 5.1 Managing the data
- 5.2 Reporting to parents
- 5, 3 School reporting to Boards of Governors and for external evaluation
- 5.4 System reporting
- 5, 5 Transfer of data

## **6: Moving forward**

- 6.1 Testing for fitness for purpose, utility and manageability
- 6.2 Full economic appraisal
- 6.3 Interim arrangements

## **7: Capacity Building**

- 7.1 Teacher skills in the use of formative assessment for learning
- 7.2 Senior management skills in managing data and pedagogical leadership

## **8: Summary of Proposals**

## **9: Rising to the OECD challenge**

# Rising to the Challenge

## *A contribution to the development of a holistic value-added Assessment and Evaluation Framework for Northern Ireland*

### 1.1 Context

This paper responds to the challenges offered in relation to pupil assessment within:

- the OECD NI report (Dec 2013) (a summary of which is set out in the appendix)
- the OECD *'Synergies for Better Learning: An International Perspective on Evaluation and Assessment'* Report (April 2013), and
- *'Data-driven Improvement and Accountability'* (Hargreaves & Braun, Oct 2013).

### 1.2 Purpose

The paper focuses on the pupil assessment component of the framework and primarily on the Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 elements which have proved contentious to date. While acknowledging that CCEA is the lead agency in this area, the purpose of the paper is to 'rise to the OECD challenge' to build consensus as a pre-requisite for the successful implementation of policy reform through an iterative process of proposals and feedback. It is offered in the spirit that *'there is much to be gained from cross-fertilisation of distinct perspectives into compromises than from antagonism and the imposition of particular views over other stakeholder groups'* (OECD Dec 2013: 44).

### 1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the paper is to contribute to the design of a more holistic, value-added assessment (and evaluation) framework for Northern Ireland, with clear *'synergies'* between the key components of pupil assessment; teacher and leadership appraisal and school and system evaluation to avoid *'duplication of procedures and prevent inconsistencies of objectives.'* (OECD 2013)

The objectives are:

- To seek agreement on the fundamental principles that should inform pupil assessment and school evaluation including *broader system purposes; broader data; sensitive analysis of data; value-added; and supportive accountability; and revised government targets.*
- To offer manageable value-added solutions to address remaining concerns. The proposals centre around system-wide use of a suite of tried and tested diagnostic, formative and summative tools (already used by many schools) to inform individual target setting, focused teaching and learning, qualitative reporting to parents and broader, value-added system outcome data.
- To allow precious teacher time to focus on improving assessment for learning and to allow scarce support resources to be targeted at improving building capacity to use 'assessment for learning' supported by revised progression indicators and quality assurance moderation of school assessment processes.

## **2 Agreeing Principles**

### **2.1: Shared Agreement**

There is shared agreement about the key components of official assessment policy (OECD P 57-63) including the focus on:

- formative assessment and teachers' professional judgement;
- strengthening assessment literacy among teachers and promoting student engagement in self- and peer-assessment;
- moderation to build teacher assessment literacy/capacity and to increase trust in teacher professional judgements;
- strong communication with parents and reporting on student progress;
- providing central diagnostic tools; and
- effective use of data and information systems to track progress in student learning.

The challenge is to ensure that each of these components (assessment for learning, moderation, effective use of data and reporting on progress) is implemented in manageable ways to support the primary purpose of improving teaching and learning.

### **2:2 Agreeing fundamental underpinning principles**

The impact of data-driven accountability is profoundly influenced by the breadth and depth of data used; the care with which it is analysed; the use to which the analysis is put; the consequences that flow from it; and how these consequences affect different groups of teachers, students and schools. The OECD team highlights that:

- Effective use of data can help teachers and schools to evaluate pupil progress and their own teaching and to make appropriate data and research-informed classroom, school and system interventions in pursuit of continuous improvement and to inform accountability.
- Conversely, inappropriate and narrow use of data can lead to the distortion of teaching and learning and distraction from the broader purposes of schooling, with the danger of a deterioration of services, morale and commitment. For example, an over-emphasis on narrow measures may well achieve improvement in numerical data in priority policy areas but is no guarantee of real improvement in overall education standards, due to an artificial emphasis on meeting designated targets while other equally important areas are neglected.

We know all too well that results can be influenced by drill and practice. The key to overcoming this relates to the extent of emphasis placed on quantitative measures as the basis of school and system evaluation as opposed to the factors which lead to genuine progression in learning.

Progression in learning is unique to every individual and is strongly dependent upon a mix of factors such as:

- The development of dispositions to learn (subliminally influenced by ‘cultural capital’ from the family and therefore subtle and challenging to develop)
- Intrinsic (self) motivation
- Extrinsic motivation to achieve for outward reward and recognition (doing well in tests and exams to please parents and teachers)
- Application and hard work
- Iterative mastery of the same broad range of skills from early years to age 18 and beyond, (*communication, using maths; using ICT; and thinking skills and personal capabilities including information management; problem-solving and decision-making; creativity; self management and working with others*) including self management and the ability to working with others ; and
- Conceptual ‘leaps’ at various stages of development.

The key to all pupils making progress is for the system to be seen to ‘measure’ and ‘weigh’ more of the things that influence learning and progression rather than the extrinsic outcomes. The subtlety is that weighing and measuring the practices and processes that lead to progression in learning will actually achieve progression in outcomes. The reverse, however, is not the case because we know that emphasising and weighing only the quantitative outcomes (levels and exams) can lead to a distortion of the processes (cramming and gaming) to achieve the semblance of better outcomes that are not necessarily the result of better learning.

The solution therefore is to genuinely expand the emphasis of school evaluation (and individual reporting) to include a breadth of data that reflects broader system goals:

This means setting challenging but achievable targets for every child based on individualised insights into potential and ‘measuring’ individual progress against those targets so:

- ‘That **every** young person will achieve his or her **potential** at each stage of his or her development’ (DE)
- ‘To raise standards for **all**’ and ‘to close the performance gap and increase access and equality’ (DE)
- To empower young people to achieve their potential to make informed and responsible choices and decisions throughout their lives as individuals; contributors to society and contributors to the economy and environment (NIC)
- To enable young people to develop 21<sup>st</sup> C cross-curricular skills of: *communication, using maths; using ICT; and thinking skills and personal capabilities including information management; problem-solving and decision-making; creativity; self management and working with others* (NIC).

To ensure that a focus on data-driven accountability generates more positive and fewer negative outcomes

**It is proposed that a clear commitment is established to the following fundamental principles: viz. broader system goals; broader data; sensitive analysis of data; value-added; and supportive accountability**

## 2.3 Fundamental principles

1. **Broader system goals:** as opposed to excessive concentration on meeting targets on just one or two policy areas such as 'Count Read Succeed';
2. **Broader data:** that serves all system level goals so that the focus of teaching and learning is not distorted and no one indicator carries disproportionate weight. The OECD team's advice is that such data should take account of measures such as the development of critical thinking and personal capabilities, dispositions to learn and overall well-being.
3. **Sensitive analysis of data:** taking account of *contextual factors* to enable comparisons that are fair to schools and pupils. To ensure sophisticated analysis of genuine trends, as opposed to 'bull-whip' responses to what may be short-term and unrepresentative blips, data analysis must take account of :
  - *the fallibility of data* drawn from different forms of evidence involving non-scientific scoring systems and human judgements with significant margins for error.
  - *The volatility of data* such as that derived from small class, key stage or school sample sizes which can make schools' value-added estimates vary inexplicably from year to year if the fluctuations are erroneously interpreted.
  - *Timescales factors* such as over- dependence on most recent evaluations which can contain potentially volatile swings in results from one year to the next, that are not representative of broader trends.
  - *Changes in 'standards'* such as when curriculum and/or assessment instruments are themselves changed making it impossible to draw conclusions about whether standards have improved.
4. **Value-added:** taking account of *school and individual pupil contextual factors* to enable comparisons that are fair to schools and pupils (rather than reliance on "raw" results which may more accurately measure the school's intake, rather than the value it has added to student outcomes).
5. **Supportive accountability:** not attaching external rewards or punitive consequences to the extremes of performance but rather operating on the assumption that poor performance is largely due to insufficient capacity and/or resources rather than to lack of effort or deliberate intransigence.
6. **Revision of government targets**

The foregoing requires that the nature of government educational targets and the way in which these are monitored and reported on by DE and the NI Audit Office and evaluated by ETI are fundamentally adjusted .

**It is proposed that government educational targets are based on research-informed analysis of performance against a broad range of measures that align with system goals and are monitored in a way which avoids distortion of those goals**

### 3. Addressing Challenges

The OECD team has helped to clarify the key challenges that need to be addressed in order to achieve consensus. The implications of each of the research-informed position is summarised below and workable proposals offered.

#### 3.1 The use of teacher assessment

It has been clearly communicated in the most recent proposals relating to statutory assessment that teacher assessment against Levels of Progression is primarily designed for diagnostic and formative purposes. The OECD team cites three research-informed views in relation to the use of this data:

- that assessment designed for diagnostic and formative purposes should not be used for summative or accountability purposes as this would likely compromise its primary purpose (Linn, 2000);
- that the more purposes an assessment is intended to serve, the more each purpose will be undermined by compromises made during the design process (Pellegrino et al,2001); and
- that it is possible for an assessment to have multiple purposes as long as they are not logically incompatible (Newton 2007).

There is overwhelming evidence since teacher assessment against levels was first introduced in Northern Ireland two decades ago that the primary diagnostic and formative purpose of teacher assessment has been severely compromised by its dual use for accountability purposes. The clear and consistent message is that:

- the qualitative professional purpose of teacher assessment against progression criteria (for the improvement of teaching and learning and for informed feedback to pupils and parents) is considered by teachers to be extremely valuable; but
- the current quantitative measures as framed (and their use for accountability purposes) are considered of little or no utility to pupils, schools, parents, policy makers or politicians (*GTCNI survey findings 2013*); and therefore that
- the evidence of distortion associated with their secondary use for accountability purposes is logically incompatible with their primary purpose and therefore educationally unacceptable.

**It is proposed that teacher assessment should be used for diagnostic and formative purposes only to inform qualitative reporting to pupils and parents.**

#### 3.2 Levels / Indicators of Progression

It is not an easy task to develop criteria that are clear [sufficiently detailed and fine grained] and widely agreed upon (Looney, 2011b; Nusche et al.,2011). This, however, is crucial to inform subsequent teaching and learning and to develop a shared understanding of what may constitutes a specific performance at the different stages of learning progression.

Defining progression is complex. There is no single linear developmental pathway which is neatly age-related with an expected end-point. Nor are 'levels' equivalent between key stages due to variation in context and demand.

**It is proposed that the 'Levels of Progression' are revised:**

- **to take explicit account of conceptual knowledge and understanding and thinking skills;**
- **to be more useful to teachers in planning and assessing pupil work and providing feedback and to pupils in undertaking peer and self assessment\***
- **numeric levels are replaced with progress indicators** eg emerging, consolidated
- **to make it clear that achievement at one key stage may not be comparable to the next key stage due to changes in context and task demand**

Framing progression indicators in this way will facilitate the effective use of the criteria by all teachers in all curriculum areas to promote a common understanding of standards within and across the curriculum. *A generic model and an exemplification of how the model can be used at classroom level in all key stages (including key stage 4 and 5) can be offered as a basis for discussion and development.*

It may still be possible to translate this data into quantitative equivalence for aspects of system level performance analysis.

### **3.3 Moderation**

We concur with the view that the involvement of teachers in moderation should develop their assessment capacity and improve the reliability of teacher assessed summative outcomes. In line with the proposal that teacher assessment should be used for diagnostic and formative purposes and to inform summative judgements, (but not for accountability purposes)...

**It is proposed that the purposes of moderation support is to quality assure school's internal assessment processes and to enhance teacher capacity:**

- **to use 'assessment for learning' pedagogy**
- **to devise appropriately challenging assessments**
- **to make valid assessments against knowledge and skills-based criteria across the Northern Ireland Curriculum focused on internally moderated assessments that include ICT and the development of thinking skills and personal capabilities supported by specifically designed tasks (and potentially future 'unseen' assessments)**

### **3.4 Contextual value-added**

One of the strongest predictors of academic achievement is the socio-economic background of pupils and parental education. Statistical models can be used to incorporate a range of factors relating to contextual background. For example,



*'In Sweden a model is used to assess a school's expected performance by adjusting its actual results with regard to student characteristics including parental education. A comparison is made between the school's expected and actual results to provide a measure of value added. (Perry C. NIAR Oct 2013)*

**It is proposed that, in addition to the Free School Meals (FSM) Index, other mechanisms are explored to inform the development of a statistical model to enable the stratification of schools by intake** *(for example the use of such as Super Output areas potentially refined by using Geographical Information System (GIS) analysis of individual pupils post-codes (as in New Zealand) or parental education (as in Sweden)*

### **3.5 Pupil value-added**

*'Individual value added'* aims to measure the progress made by a pupil between different stages of education. The advantage of value-added assessment measurement over criterion or norm-referenced assessment is that it focuses on how far a pupil has progressed at the end of a specific period (for example, at the end of the school year or key stage, compared to the start).

This requires a pre-test (or the use of relevant data passed on by/ from the previous teacher) and a post-test (end of year/cycle) to determine what pupils have learned during a particular course of study. This data provides results that can be compared across classrooms and years. The more information teachers can gain about a pupil's potential, learning dispositions and progress, the better able they will be to tailor the learning environment and ways of teaching and learning to enable pupils to maximise their potential.

**It is proposed that the following range of research-informed diagnostic, predictive, performance monitoring and reporting tools and approaches (which are part of the assessment processes of many schools already) should be used across all schools to identify individual strengths and areas for development to inform targets to evaluate value-added** *(See section 4 for detail)*

## 4: Proposed Assessment Tools and Processes

### 4.1 Assessment tools

The OECD team reported that both primary and post-primary schools identified the need for diagnostic measures to monitor pupil and cohort progression against individual base-line starting points to enable comparisons that are fair to students and to schools and to facilitate the exchange of pupil information from primary to post-primary schools. Key considerations that need to be taken into account to ensure that these measures enhance, and do not distort, teaching and learning or overburden teachers are:

- the diagnostic qualities and ease of use of the proposed mechanisms;
- who can access the data in what form for what purpose; and, crucially
- how it is used subsequently and reported for system accountability.

Before describing the various tools and approaches, it should be noted that all of the proposed tools:

- already exist in paper and digital format;
- are research informed and have been validated as fit for purpose;
- can be customised to the specific context of NI;
- are essentially 'work-load free';
- should take up a minimal amount of time near the beginning and/or end of the school year/ key stage;
- provide almost instant feedback and diagnostic analysis to inform the focus of teaching, learning and assessment;
- can generate sophisticated statistical and narrative reports for teachers and senior management which provide valuable educational insights and advice on learning in relation to individual pupils, groups and cohorts;
- can also generate reports for pupils and parents with advice on learning;
- collectively address all assessment and value-added purposes; and
- should be affordable if procured as an integrated package at system level (especially given that many schools are already paying independently for access to these tools from two established providers).

### 4.2 Base-line assessment

Productive language on entry to school is a key indicator and determinant of ability to learn. A range of baseline tools exists to assess spoken language on entry to school, for example, *The Renfrew Bus Story (RBS)*, is a quick to administer short screening assessment which uses 'narrative re-tell' or storytelling to assess receptive and expressive oral language for young children age 3 years to 6 years 11 months. The outcomes provide a quantitative and qualitative assessment of each child's oral language skills based on rich language data to identify children with language impairments, as well as to predict of later language and academic skill (*Stothard, Snowling, Bishop, Chipchase, & Kaplan, 1998*).

### 4.3 Cognitive abilities analysis

From the age of 7 it is possible to generate a comprehensive profile of individual pupil's dispositions to learn and abilities to reason with, and manipulate, different

types of material through a series of Verbal, Non-Verbal, Quantitative and Spatial Ability tasks. (Recent research has confirmed the importance of assessing pupils' spatial ability in order to develop and support skills that are important across the curriculum and particularly important for success in STEM subjects and careers).

The analysis of outcomes provides teachers with a comprehensive profile of individual pupil's reasoning abilities, to identify strengths, weaknesses and learning preferences and to generate indicators of future attainment (for example at KS2, KS3, GCSE, AS/A Level). The data can be used alongside attainment data (and other factors known to impact on learning, such as attendance and attitude) to set individual pupil targets; to plan focused teaching and learning (with interventions for different individuals or groups of pupils); and to monitor progress and track progress.

#### **4.4 Learning dispositions analysis**

Analysis of pupils' attitudes towards themselves as learners and their attitudes towards school on an individual basis can provide insights into motivation, and well-being to enable early identification and early intervention strategies to be provided for those at risk. Insights can help teachers and schools to set smarter monitoring and tracking targets to improve student well-being, behaviour and attendance and to reduce disaffection. The improvement of dispositions to learn and attitudinal measures such as improvement in liking, for example reading, can inform targets and interventions.

#### **4.5 Informed target-setting**

The combination of outcomes from cognitive abilities analysis, dispositional analysis, base-line and occasional standardised progress data will help teachers and schools to set challenging (but achievable) targets for each individual pupil.

#### **4.6 Occasional standardised assessment**

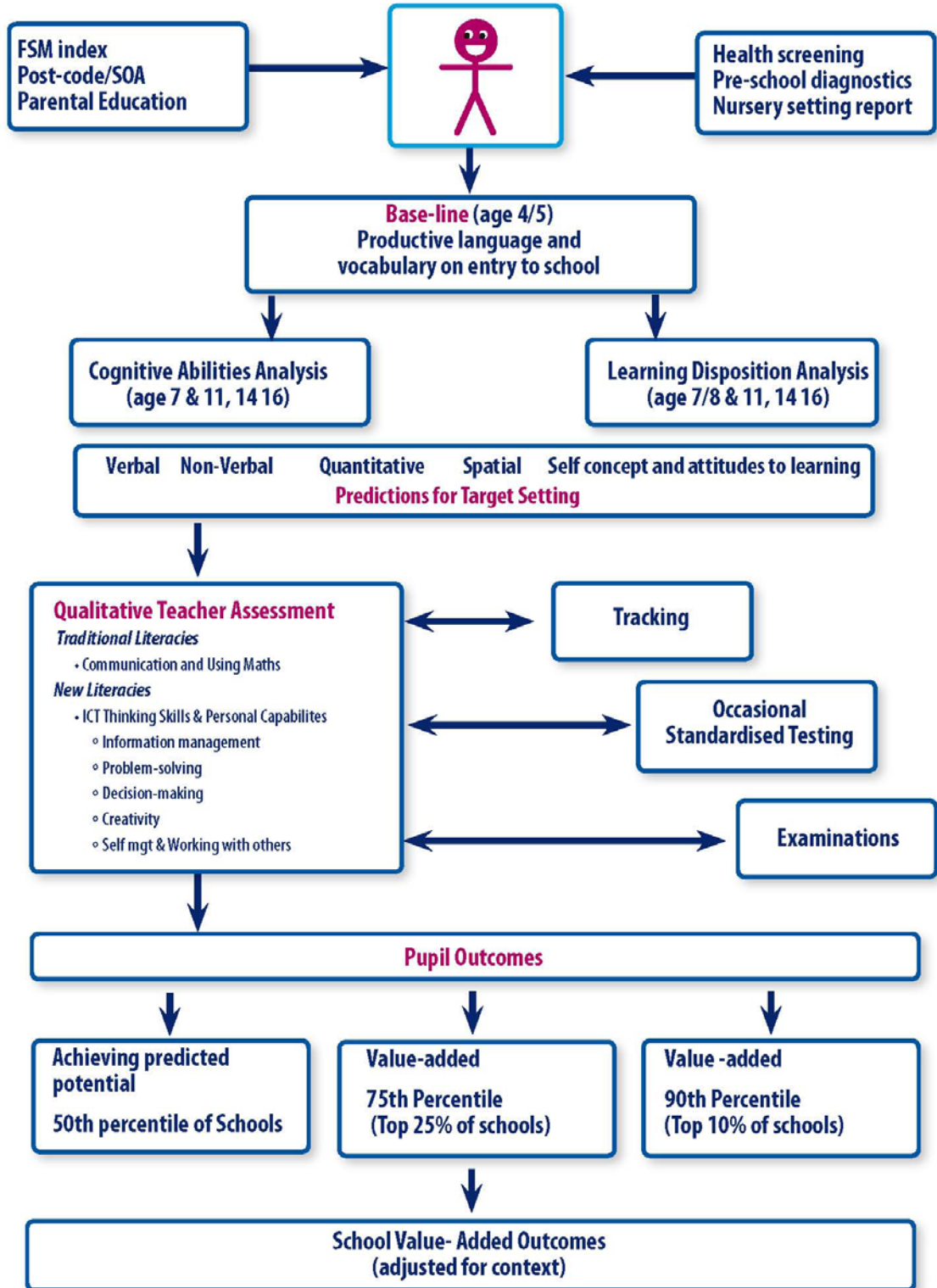
While teachers' professional judgments are based on on-going day to day assessment, the use of occasional standardised tests can give teachers an informed snap-shot of how individuals and pupil cohorts compare against UK/NI standards on traditional literacies (i.e. communication and using maths). The occasional use of standardised tests (a few weeks after the beginning of the year and/or at the end of a year) can provide helpful in-depth information to establish a baseline position and to identify possible gaps in learning in order to plan and adapt teaching and to track monitor and report progress. Outcome scores can provide insights into bands of performance across a cohort and short-comings in progress in skill areas to inform the focus of future teaching and learning.

#### **4.7 On-going Teacher Assessment**

The information provided by these diagnostic, predictive and monitoring tools aim to inform curriculum planning; the development of appropriately challenging assessment tasks; negotiated /shared learning intentions; clear success criteria to be used in peer/self and teacher assessment; effective questioning, and informed feedback on next steps in learning. *(A matrix for devising and assessing tasks using progression indicators can be provided for discussion)*

# Tools to enhance Teaching Learning and Assessment

(including informed target-setting and the assessment of value-added)



## 5: Reporting

### 5.1 Managing the data

As highlighted earlier, numerical outcomes can be influenced by drill and practice. Therefore placing undue emphasis on narrow quantitative outcomes can lead to practices that distort rather than enhance learning and are no guarantee that anything has actually improved. It is accepted, nevertheless, that systems demand numbers, even if the numbers do not reflect the goals that the system purports to seek. The key to overcoming distortion of broader system goals is to define broader research-informed targets and manage the reporting and use of data at all levels of the system to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

### 5.2 Reporting to parents

Parents/guardians want to know if their children are happy at school; if they are making progress against their own previous baseline and achievements; how that progress relates to other children of the same age; and what they can do to help. Over-emphasising numerical outcomes to parents can lead to despondency in some and 'pushiness' in others to achieve the semblance of better outcomes that do not necessarily lead to better learning. It is therefore important that parents are provided with information on:

- 1) their child's well-being and confidence, dispositions to learn, interests, engagement and effort;
- 2) the outcomes of diagnostic assessments used to set challenging but achievable targets for learning;
- 3) individual progression made against the child's own targets including:
  - managing their own learning and working with others;
  - communication, using maths, ICT and thinking skills across all areas of the curriculum; and
  - next steps in learning and how parents/guardians can help
- 4) an indication of whether the child is working at, above or below the standard expectation for their age (taking account of month of birth and diagnostic data – with the health warning that progression in learning occurs at different rates for different children and is highly dependent on intrinsic motivation, confidence and self esteem).

### 5.3 School reporting to Boards of Governors and for external evaluation

School reporting to Boards of Governors and for external evaluation should focus on the value-added to every child's diagnostic predictions. Data can be derived from:

- Indicators of improvement in verbal\*, quantitative\* and spatial\* data derived from occasional (end of year) standardised scores reported in stanines, adjusted by informed teacher judgement as appropriate. *NB where upward or downward adjustments are made teachers /schools should retain sufficient evidence to justify the adjustment. Where sustained patterns of upward adjustment are established evidence might be reviewed externally.*

- Indicators of improvement in self concept and attitudes to learning can be derived from repeat diagnostic testing of changes to learning dispositions at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3. Occasional pupil surveys of *for example enjoyment of reading* could also feed into this data.
- Indicators of improvement in ICT and Thinking Skills derived from on-going teacher assessment across the curriculum and by the completion of specially designed tasks requiring pupils to manage information (possibly provided on-line) to solve problems, make decisions and present creative solutions. (In the future this could possibly be administered as a system wide 'unseen' assessment which would have the effect of getting teachers to focus on thinking skills).

#### 5.4 System reporting

System targets and reporting should be based on diagnostically-informed value-added measures for all pupils, adjusted for individual school context (moving away from arbitrarily derived percentages expectations for some pupils). The reporting of system level data needs to be managed carefully to pre-empt media distortion.

In addition, or alternatively the system could draw on 'sampling' of 10% or more of schools to provide stable and robust indicators of system performance in core policy areas (Literacy and Numeracy) for the purposes of accountability and policy formation. Recent advice in Scotland (Hayward et al., 2012) endorses this and suggests the potential for enhanced targeted sampling in areas where there are concerns, to provide robust and independent data.

##### **It is proposed that**

- **all reporting at individual, school and system level is based on value-added, adjusted for context;**
- **DE use an additional, or alternative, sampling mechanism for the purposes of accountability and policy formation.**

#### 5.5 Transfer of data

Detailed pupil data should be transferred from teacher to teacher and school to school

- to avoid gaps in information
- to assist future planning; and
- to prevent unnecessary and costly duplication of processes

##### **It is proposed that:**

- **detailed rich pupil data is transferred each year in an agreed format to assist future planning, teaching, learning and assessment and value-added**

## 6 Moving Forward

### 6.1 Pilot testing and phased implementation

Best practice recommends that any proposed model is thoroughly piloted and that feedback from the pilot is used to assess and amend the model as necessary before procurement and planned, phased roll-out on a systemic scale.

The advantages of the model proposed is that many of the core components are already in use (and paid for independently) by a large number of schools in Northern Ireland. However, it is not known how many schools make use of the full suite of components and their analytical value-added potential

**It is proposed that a number of case-study schools are identified at both primary and post-primary level to explore the quality, educational utility and manageability of the proposed model and associated diagnostic and monitoring tools before considering customised procurement.**

### 6.2 Full economic appraisal

The majority of schools in Northern Ireland already expend significant funds on standardised testing but many (possibly most) do not make use of the analytical predictive and advisory components that are available alongside these tools to enhance their educational utility. The proposed solutions have the potential to achieve stakeholder buy-in because of: familiarity with, and trust in, the diagnostics offered by various elements of the model; the synergies between the various components; its ease of use and manageability; and its potential to address all quality assessment and data analysis needs for the foreseeable future. The intended result is to free up teachers' time to focus on the core professional task of quality teaching and learning to meet pupils' needs and to improve their outcomes.

**It is proposed that a full economic appraisal is undertaken of the merits of procuring a completely integrated suite of tools that has the support of all stakeholders in terms of:**

- **The use of quality information for educational and accountability purposes,**
- **manageability and teacher time saved for core professional purposes; and**
- **freeing up other agencies from a focus on accountability to a focus on providing much-needed capacity building support.**

*(If NINAS & NILAS are to be included in this suite they must provide similar levels of diagnostic information as those available from 2 commercial providers)*

### 6.3 Interim arrangements

**It is proposed that:**

- **Teachers continue to assess and report to parents in qualitative terms as working at, above or below expected standards;**
- **Schools are invited to register to have their internal assessment processes quality assured by CCEA; and**
- **Best practice schools are enabled to act as centres of good practice for other schools in their catchment /area learning community.**

## 7. Capacity Building

The OECD Team recommends that effective implementation will require capacity building at all levels of the education system.

### 7.1 Teacher skills in the use of formative assessment for learning

Agreement on the fundamental principles (that the sole purpose of teacher assessment and moderation is for the improvement of teaching and learning and the quality assurance of moderation purposes) will free up CCEA capacity to focus on supporting assessment for learning as opposed to accountability. Scotland has supported a major 'assessment as, for and of learning' initiative. The NCCA in the Republic of Ireland is currently providing £100K of bursaries for practicing teachers to undertake PhD study in assessment for learning and ICT to develop deep capacity within the system.

**It is proposed that over the next few years that assessment support resources should focus on developing teacher assessment for learning capacity; and**

### 7.2 Senior management skills in managing data and pedagogical leadership

Agreement on the use of broader data for informed target-setting and the assessment of value-added will require Principals and senior management in schools to be able to understand interpret and use data in increasingly sophisticated ways in pursuit of improved teaching and learning for improved outcomes. The latest digital developments in pupil assessment facilitate the immediate feedback to senior managers and teachers (as well as pupils and parents) of outcomes in the form of analytical and advisory graphical and narrative reports to support more focused teaching and focused interventions for individuals and groups.

**It is proposed that there should be a major emphasis over the next few years on: the development of**

- **Principal's pedagogical leadership skills and**
- **Senior management skills in managing and interpreting data.**

### 7.3 System capacity for value-added assessment

In order to ensure the transfer of skills in the development of research-informed assessment tools opportunity opportunities should be sought, as part of any procurement exercise, to ensure that there is an appropriate transfer of knowledge and skills to Northern Ireland.

- **In time consideration might be given to establishing a centre of excellence in diagnostic, predictive and standardised assessment and analysis in Northern Ireland.**



## 8: Summary of Proposals

	It is proposed that
<b>Fundamental principles</b>	1. A clear commitment is established to the following fundamental principles: viz. broader system goals; broader data; sensitive analysis of data; value-added; and supportive accountability
<b>Revised Government Targets</b>	2. government educational targets are based on research-informed analysis of performance against a broad range of measures that align with system goals and are monitored in a way which avoids distortion of those goals
<b>Teacher Assessment</b>	3. teacher assessment should be used for diagnostic and formative purposes only to inform qualitative reporting to pupils and parents
<b>Levels Progression</b>	4. Levels of Progression are revised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to take explicit account of conceptual knowledge and understanding and thinking skills;</li> <li>• to be more useful to teachers in planning and assessing pupil work and providing feedback and to pupils in undertaking peer and self assessment*;</li> <li>• numeric levels are replaced with progress indicators eg emerging, consolidated;</li> <li>• to make it clear that achievement at one key stage may not be comparable to the next key stage due to changes in context and task demand</li> </ul>
<b>Moderation</b>	5. The purposes of moderation support is to quality assure school's internal assessment processes and to enhance teacher capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to use 'assessment for learning' pedagogy</li> <li>• to devise appropriately challenging assessments</li> <li>• to make valid assessments against knowledge and skills-based criteria across the Northern Ireland Curriculum focused on internally moderated assessments that include ICT and the development of thinking skills and personal capabilities supported by specifically designed tasks (and potentially future 'unseen' assessments)</li> </ul>
<b>Equity and value-added</b>	6. in addition to the Free School Meals (FSM) Index, other mechanisms are explored to inform the development of a statistical model to enable the stratification of schools by intake (for example the use of such as Super Output areas potentially refined by using Geographical Information System (GIS) analysis of individual pupils post-codes (as in New Zealand) or parental education (as in Sweden)

<b>Assessment Tools and Approaches</b>	7. A range of research-informed diagnostic, predictive, performance monitoring and reporting tools and approaches (which are part of the assessment processes of many schools already) should be used across all schools to identify individual strengths and areas for development to inform targets to evaluate value-added
<b>Value-added Reporting</b>	8 Reporting school and system level is based on value-added, adjusted for context 9 DE use an additional, or alternative, sampling mechanism for the purposes of accountability and policy formation
<b>Data Transfer</b>	10 Detailed rich pupil data is transferred each year in an agreed format to assist future planning, teaching, learning and assessment
<b>Piloting</b>	11 A number of case-study schools be identified at both primary and post-primary level to explore the quality, educational utility and manageability of the proposed model and associated diagnostic and monitoring tools before considering customised procurement
<b>Economic Appraisal</b>	12 A full economic appraisal is undertaken of the merits of procuring a completely integrated suite of tools that has the support of all stakeholders in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of quality information for educational and accountability purposes,</li> <li>• manageability and teacher time saved for core professional purposes; and</li> <li>• freeing up other agencies from a focus on accountability to a focus on providing much-needed capacity building support.</li> </ul> <p>(If NINAS &amp; NILAS are to be included in this suite they must provide similar levels of diagnostic information as those available from 2 commercial providers)</p>
<b>Interim arrangements</b>	13 Teachers continue to assess and report to parents in qualitative terms as working at, above or below expected standards; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools are invited to register to have their internal assessment processes quality assured by CCEA</li> <li>• Best practice schools are enabled to act as centres of good practice for other schools in their catchment /area learning community</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Capacity Building</b>	14 Over the next few years that assessment support resources should focus on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing teacher ‘assessment for learning’ capacity</li> <li>• Principal’s pedagogical leadership skills and</li> <li>• Senior management skills in managing and interpreting data</li> </ul>
<b>System capacity</b>	15 Consideration be given to establishing a centre of excellence in diagnostic, predictive and standardised assessment and analysis

## 9: Rising to the OECD challenge

The following table summarises the challenges offered in the OECD NI report, using mostly direct quotations from the report. Those that we consider are addressed by these proposals are shaded in grey.

<b>Vision</b>	Communicating the long-term aim/vision of evaluation and assessment policies 1) to improve the quality and equality of pupil learning outcomes and 2) to promote social cohesion
<b>1: Assessment</b>	
Clarify the purpose of Key Stage assessments and secure capacity for implementation <input type="checkbox"/>	Clearly communicate that the primary purpose of Key Stage Assessment is to inform the subsequent learning of the individual pupil and to report levels of pupil progress to pupils and parents. balance the requirement to seek performance information in discrete areas (i.e. the cross-curricular skills at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3) [with other broader information] which can be used to improve the system. develop the Levels of Progression to make sure these are useful for formative assessment, ensuring that educators take a lead role in providing finer details within each level assess demands on capacity at the school level and centrally in the CCEA and build teacher capacity for student formative assessment against educational standards engage educators in the piloting and regular evaluation and review of the system and the extent to which it supports high-quality instruction, providing a mechanism for listening to schools, recognising any limitations and addressing issues as a matter of priority.
Moderation	Schools that demonstrate consistency in initial verifications are accredited and trusted to conduct moderation processes. Periodically evaluate and re-accredit school internal quality assurance processes for key stage assessment (possibly as part of school inspections). Provide feedback on best practice examples identified by CCEA evaluations and school inspections. *engage educators more systematically in the discussion of assessment results; particularly in the deliberation of how to develop policies to address identified challenges.
pupil information exchange primary to post-primary	Facilitate and promote the exchange of pupil information from primary to post-primary schools capitalising on the potential of C2k school-based information systems to share key assessment information at the transition stage. Agree what kind of supplementary assessment data is useful at the individual level, and the requirements for the generation of this assessment data
Diagnostic Tools	In the longer term secure central capacity to develop and validate diagnostic assessments to monitor individual pupil and cohort progression incorporating the functionalities of the most frequently used commercial tests and ensuring that the reporting function provides useful feedback for parents and educators...

<b>2. Equity and Social Cohesion</b>	
Align reporting systems to priority goals including equity	Give more prominence and ensure a consistent approach to reporting on equity in school and system evaluation and in the government's programme of work
	Research the relative advantages of different measures for equity to ensure credibility for the choice of the major measure (pupil entitlement to free school meals).
	develop a dedicated space on the Department of Education's website to provide an easy overview of all system-level information on equity bringing together different research briefings on pupils with special educational needs, pupils in deprived areas, etc. □
	develop a more systematic longitudinal research strategy to draw on the Education and Training Inspectorate's insight to cross-departmental challenges and priorities. □

<b>3 Inspection</b>	Strengthen ETI's capacity to undertake risk assessment with a stronger data analysis function.
	ensure a consistent approach to reporting on equity in school and system evaluation
	Build school self-evaluation capacity and adapt external evaluation to reflect the maturity of the school self-evaluation culture
	accepts a school's own self-evaluation (do not require schools to complete a specific evaluation form)
	Only move to a more proportionate and risk based approach school inspection once the evaluation culture is consolidated, evaluation capacity in schools is satisfactory, and data gathering and analysis within the school evaluation framework is established
	bringing together all different strands of data and research into a common knowledge base to develop an integrated body of knowledge on school quality
	Develop new indicators in key areas of pupil performance and self evaluation capacity
	Potentially consider CCEA moderation feedback on the school's application of standards for end of Key Stage assessment.

#### 4. Professional development and support

Sustain significant investment in professional development and Support	Conceive “Professional learning” as a process of interaction with peers and information that challenges assumptions and creates new meanings, building school capacity to undertake improvement actions
	Engage educators seriously in helping to design these services.
	harmonise and strengthen the support offered to schools by drawing on the experience in the existing support bodies and identifying their most effective practices
	Plan and organise local delivery of learning opportunities in innovative ways e.g. practitioners visit other schools, exchange practical advice and conduct action research.
	Promote and strengthen professional peer learning and collaboration through Area Learning Communities.
<b>Leadership</b>	Promoting specific training offered to associate assessors, notably the techniques for classroom observation. □
	Design further materials and specific training to develop capacity for school leader incorporating the best aspects of existing training for school leadership
<b>BoGs</b>	support BoGs to in undertake a regular challenge and support role. □
	.Identifying BoGs that have effective evaluation models
	develop guidance materials and training to support BoG capacity to undertake task and classroom observations as part of the annual appraisal of school principals.

#### Teacher appraisal and career development

Review the teacher competence model and use this as a basis for a career structure	review of the use of teaching standards and criteria by schools to understand how the competence model could better fit their needs.
	revise the teaching standards in close collaboration with stakeholders in schools to develop clearer descriptions of the competencies necessary for different roles and career steps
	promote the wider use of teacher competence standards as a working document in schools
	Develop professional standards for school leadership to promote excellence and common reference criteria for a fair, valid and reliable appraisal process.
	provide a single set of standards complemented by criteria and illustrations of effective practice to help make the standards operational for regular use in school-based teacher appraisal. to contribute to a fair, valid and reliable appraisal process.
	ensure coherence between initial teacher education, registration appraisal and professional development

<p>Consolidate the use of PRSD for development and career progression and strengthen the capacity of those conducting appraisal</p>	<p>school-based PRSD should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• retain its close link to the School Development Plan</li> <li>• be underpinned by the revised competence model</li> <li>• potentially be externally validated through school inspection</li> <li>• include tailored feedback for each teacher</li> <li>• be followed up with adequate professional learning &amp; development opportunities through mentoring etc</li> </ul>
<p>Career progression</p>	<p>conceive registration as career-progression appraisal with teachers being required to periodically renew their registration status.</p> <p>Graduates from initial teacher education to be “provisionally registered” and then apply for full registration upon completion of Induction and Early Professional Development.</p> <p>Access to each career stage could be through a voluntary application process and a formal appraisal process based on a review of teachers’ actual practice (through the teacher registration system).</p> <p>Include an external view in appraisal (for registration and registration renewal), for example through an accredited external evaluator, which could be a teacher from another school with expertise in the same area.</p>