



# LEARNING POINT

## How Might Collaboration Create a State of Assessment Literacy?

*Imagine a future in which . . . systematic learning to improve is occurring every day in thousands of settings and engaging many thousands of educators, scholars, designers, and countless others. The education field could become an immense networked improvement community. We could greatly accelerate how we learn to improve. We could achieve valued outcomes that we now aspire to but realistically have no strategy to actually accomplish.” – ANTHONY S. BRYK*

This vision, offered by scholar Anthony S. Bryk in a 2014 AERA distinguished lecture on “Accelerating How We Learn to Improve,” offers a compelling challenge to educators—especially those with an urgent desire to improve the skills, knowledge, and disposition of a diverse group of stakeholders around educational assessment. It’s a vision the Assessment Learning Network has embraced and invites others to share.

### Michigan’s Assessment Learning Network: a networked improvement community

The Assessment Learning Network (ALN) is a professional learning community consisting of representatives from Michigan’s professional organizations. This group comes together four times during a school-year to learn with and from each other as well as with nationally

recognized experts in educational assessment. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) also participates and supports financially the ALN.

As productive and well received as the ALN meetings have been for the members, meeting together is not the intended end result. The goal of the ALN is to assist the professional organizations in helping their larger memberships increase their collective assessment literacy. The ALN provides professional development via the meetings as well as resources that can be used by the members

within their own organizations.

Not all professional educational organizations are structured in the same way, nor do they necessarily function similarly. As such, the ALN aims to explore a number of models and protocols for the organizations to use to improve assessment literacy among their members. Resources and support are provided through a collaborative relationship with other ALN members and the Michigan Assessment Consortium (MAC) and can be tailored to meet the needs of any particular group.

### To learn more

- [Michigan Assessment Consortium Assessment Literacy Standards](http://michiganassessmentconsortium.org)  
michiganassessmentconsortium.org
- [Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium \(ISLIC\) Standards](http://ccsso.org/Documents/2008/Educational_Leadership_Policy_Standards_2008.pdf)  
ccsso.org/Documents/2008/Educational\_Leadership\_Policy\_Standards\_2008.pdf
- [Learning Forward Professional Learning Standards](http://learningforward.org/standards)  
learningforward.org/standards
- [“Accelerating How We Learn to Improve,” by Anthony Bryk](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0013189X15621543)  
journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0013189X15621543
- [Communities of Practice framework \(Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner\)](http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice)  
wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice
- [Realizing the Power of Professional Learning, by Helen Timperly \(2011\)](#)  
Open University Press/McGraw Hill Education

Results from an ALN member survey given at the end of the 2016-17 school year show that participants are using the resources developed and provided to them. Additionally, results show that ALN members are interested in taking the material back to their organizations, with the preferred mode of working in collaboration with a MAC member. (See figures 1-2)

### A case study on collaborative professional learning

The Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principal's Association (MEMSPA) participates in the Assessment Literacy Network (ALN) through the representation of their executive director. MEMSPA is actively working on developing a system to help its members increase their assessment literacy using resources from the ALN. MEMSPA and MAC are collaborating to provide tailored professional development around assessment literacy to additional MEMSPA members. This work will offer one model for other ALN members to adapt when looking to improve assessment literacy in the field.

The structure of the MEMSPA professional development will be six, half-day sessions; each session addresses one aspect of assessment that is relevant to the membership. The half-day format will begin with breakfast and networking, with the presentation to follow. This series is designed to provide opportunities to think deeply with colleagues about assessment topics and not just provide two or three "quick fixes" that can be implemented immediately.

Key learnings that will be addressed during these meetings include:

- Increasing data literacy
- Understanding Student Growth
- Evaluating how to integrate assessment practices and results into action
- Discussing how to create and/or select high-quality assessments
- Learning how to plan for student learning success
- Discussing how to support teachers and plan for success

Presenters for these sessions will be members of MEMSPA, the MAC, and MDE, each presenting assessment topics about which they have knowledge. The series is a true collaborative effort. The final session will coincide with MEMSPA's annual Leadership Conference and include a celebratory dinner. Scheduling the last session with MEMSPA's conference was done to increase the visibility of the series among the association's leadership and to help recruit participants for future offerings of the series.

After the first year, MEMSPA and MAC will work to determine how this project will move forward. Ideally, the

initial group will want to stay together and continue to advance their assessment literacy. In addition, it is hoped that more members will become interested and able to participate so that a second cohort can form to start a journey toward increased assessment literacy.

### Let's collaborate!

If you are interested in exploring how to improve assessment literacy among your members or colleagues, contact Jim Gullen or Kathy Dewsbury-White to schedule a conversation to explore some models for learning and growing together. Email [assistant@michiganassessmentconsortium.org](mailto:assistant@michiganassessmentconsortium.org) to start the conversation.

### ALN Theory of Action

The Assessment Learning Network is built on a theory of action that suggests:

1. Research and evidence-based practice exist delineating what constitutes sound assessment practice and systems (the Assessment Literacy Standards)
2. All stakeholders that make up the system of education need to know what constitutes sound assessment practice and systems (including students, parents, teachers, administrators, policy makers)
3. It is important to invest in the development of these stakeholders about what constitutes sound assessment practice and systems in order to promote shared understanding and leverage the necessary interdependencies across stakeholders (the Assessment Learning Network)

Figure 1: ALN members' use of resources

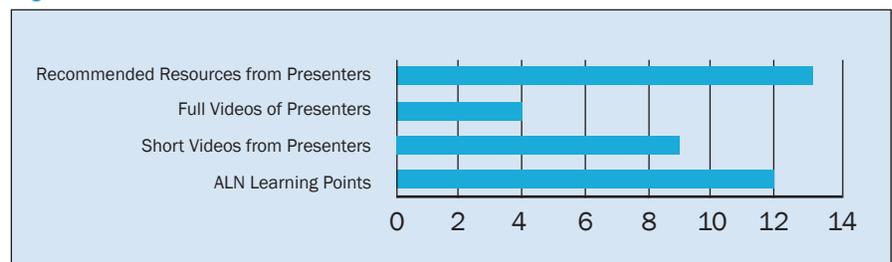
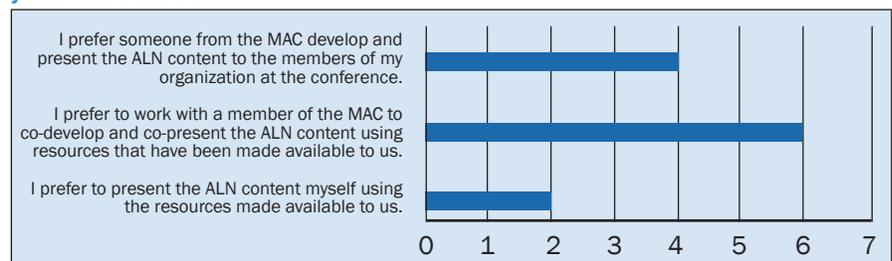


Figure 2: What would be your preferred way to have ALN content presented at your conference?



The Michigan Assessment Consortium's Assessment Learning Network ALN, is a professional learning community consisting of members from MI's professional education organizations; the goal of the ALN is to increase the assessment literacy of all of Michigan's professional educators.