

INTRODUCING EDSTEPS

EdSteps, currently under development, will give teachers, parents, and students a Web-based resource for comparing their student work to that of other students.

The EdSteps Web site will be a resource for teaching and assessment. Its centerpiece will be a large, public library of student work samples in five key skill areas that are typically difficult and costly to assess. For each skill area, student work will be presented in a continuum — a gradual progression — from emerging to accomplished work.

In addition to showing this progression of skill, the continuums will offer:

- **Context for each work sample.** Visitors will see detail about each student work sample, including the grade level of the student who created the work and the purpose of the work or the audience. Work samples will not include the author's name or school.
- **Reflections by educators and visitors.** Each sample will be annotated with comments by educators.
- **Reference points for grade levels.** Each continuum will show a variety of work produced by students in all grade levels. Users also will be told where on the continuum they are most likely to find submissions by students in each grade level.
- **Options for searching.** In addition to the organization by grade level, visitors will be able to search the continuums using criteria such as gender, subject area, and type of assignment.

Over time, EdSteps will evolve, and visitors' participation will drive its growth. For example, the more submissions there are, and the more diverse the submissions are, the more information the continuums can provide. In the same way, the level of engagement will determine how EdSteps grows into an interactive tool in which visitors can share ideas about the teaching and assessment of key skills. In the future, for example, the continuums may provide:

- **Opportunities to share opinions.** EdSteps can become a forum in which educators and others can comment on the continuums, student work, and other issues related to assessment. For example, the continuums may lead to questions about whether student work that is typical for a particular grade is good enough to prepare students to be college and career ready by the end of high school.
- **Guidelines for college- and career-ready work.** With additional input, the continuums could indicate the level of work students should demonstrate in each grade to be on track for college and careers. In some skill areas, these indicators may not align with student work that is typical for each grade.

The EdSteps continuums will allow teachers, parents, and students themselves to measure individual students' progress over time and answer questions about whether students are on track to success. The continuums' work samples will help teachers, parents, and students answer a central question for student growth: Where is a particular student now, and what should he or she do to improve?

THE EDSTEPS DIFFERENCE

EdSteps is a grassroots effort to create a resource for teaching and assessment. Rather than assessing work based on a pre-set rubric, EdSteps uses student work as the starting point. After collecting thousands of work samples in each skill area, EdSteps uses a unique process to assess the student work samples, rank them, and place them on a continuum. This process is grounded in research and driven by those who work most closely with students.

EdSteps complements other assessment tools. The Common Core State Standards Initiative and EdSteps are key parts of the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) overall vision for a comprehensive system of standards, assessments, and accountability. The two initiatives, while separate, complement one another. EdSteps was created to find new ways to assess vital skills — those that contribute to college and career readiness — that are not currently assessed on a broad scale.

The Common Core standards currently are limited to English language arts and mathematics. The intent of EdSteps is to address skills and competencies beyond these areas. EdSteps will not serve as the large-scale summative assessment for the Common Core standards.

CREATING THE EDSTEPS CONTINUUMS

The value of paired comparisons. Each continuum will be made through thousands of *paired comparisons*. In a paired comparison, a reviewer looks at two pieces of student work and determines which is better. This approach is different from other assessment methods, which rely on absolute judgments or rating a single item based on set criteria. The paired comparison approach is effective because comparative judgments are more concrete and easier to make than absolute judgments.

By the numbers. For each skill area, EdSteps aims to collect 5,000 samples of student work. Researchers then will select a representative subset of about 1,000 samples. The subset will reflect variety in grade level, demographics, and attributes specific to the skill area, such as subject area or purpose for writing. The samples in the subset will be paired according to a mathematical model. To create a continuum based on 1,000 samples, there will be approximately 125,000 pairs of student work, each of which will be judged by at least 100 reviewers.

For more information about this methodology and its underlying mathematical model, visit www.edsteps.org.

Example of a continuum. Every EdSteps continuum will be different because each continuum is generated from the work samples collected. To see an example of the way an EdSteps continuum may appear, visit www.edsteps.org.

SKILL AREAS AND TIMELINE

The EdSteps skill areas were selected because they are important for student success and they are traditionally difficult and costly to assess. The five skill areas — Writing, Global Competence, Creativity, Problem Solving, and Analyzing Information — are in different stages of development and will be phased in over time. Beginning now, EdSteps is collecting work samples for Writing and Global Competence. In summer 2010, EdSteps will begin requesting work samples in Creativity. The final phase will include Problem Solving and Analyzing Information.

EDSTEPS SUPPORTERS

EdSteps is a project led by CCSSO and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The EdSteps Web site, www.edsteps.org, is being developed in partnership with The New York Times Knowledge Network and Epsilon.

EdSteps partners include state departments of education, school districts, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, and businesses.

State departments of education and school districts:

Iowa Department of Education, New Jersey Department of Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education, Somerville Public Schools, Utah State Office of Education, Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and West Virginia Department of Education

Institutions of higher education: University of Washington College of Education

Nonprofit organizations: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Asia Society Partnership for Global Learning, Cable in the Classroom, Center for Media Literacy, The William & Ida Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, Global Youth Leadership Institute, National Association of State Boards of Education, Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship, Project Tomorrow, Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations, and World Affairs Council

Businesses: Cartis Group, CISCO, MetaMetrics, ODTmaps.com, Pearson, and Wireless Reach from Qualcomm