CAPACITY

Authentic Assessment and Accountability as an Engine of Educator Renewal

Education Accountability Remade paper series

WHAT DOES THE CURRENT SYSTEM ASSUME ABOUT CAPACITY?

That the workforce has to be ready before anything changes, so systems ask "Can teachers do it?" and keep standardized testing until they can. The paper argues capacity is built by doing authentic assessment, and that the current system is what is draining it.

THE KEY POINTS IN BRIEF

- **The current system drains the workforce.** Teacher turnover averages 15% a year at about $25,000 per loss, and roughly 1 in 8 positions is vacant or filled by an underqualified educator. Research links test-based accountability to stress, burnout, and plans to leave.
- **Ask a better question.** Not "Can teachers do it?" but "How can systems build educator capacity through authentic assessment?" Designing tasks and scoring work together is the work of good teaching, and it should replace test prep rather than add to it.
- **Two cases show it working.** In the New York Performance Standards Consortium, educators describe real professional authority. In Kentucky, the ChangeMakers pathway saw 175 of 193 teachers complete a year-long, state-approved program (91%), and the salary increase recoups its cost in about a year.
- **Seven levers to start.** Waivers and flexibilities, shared task banks and rubrics, regional moderation networks, micro-credentials, assessment audits that create "space on the plate," peer review, and public exhibitions of learning.
- **Safeguards and patience.** Shared rubrics and cross-school moderation guard against drift and grade inflation. The biggest risk is capacity-building treated as an add-on, and rebuilding professional ownership of standards takes years.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

If you're a parent or caregiver

- Are the teachers at my child's school staying, and what would make them want to?
- Would I trust the school more if I could watch students and teachers defend their work publicly?
- How does the school protect teachers' time to collaborate?

If you're a student

- Do my teachers have the time to really know my work?
- Have I seen my teachers review and score work together?
- Who gets to judge my big projects, and do I know the standard?

If you're an educator

- How much of my time goes to test prep and compliance versus designing and scoring meaningful tasks?
- Do I have a team and the time to calibrate scoring with colleagues?
- What support would make me confident taking this on?

If you're a policy maker

- How much of our budget and calendar goes to test infrastructure that could fund educator learning?
- Which policies, like evaluations tied to scores, would undercut a shift?
- Are we building capacity as a system, or as one-off add-ons?