



# Holding Ourselves Accountable

ISSUE ORIENTED

It seems to me that accountability is much more of a topic in education these days than it used to be. From my perspective, it started with the standards movement. Now NCLB has signed accountability into law. Technology allows us to record, analyze, and communicate the data needed to hold us as educators accountable. Technology also enables us to use data to drive our decisions, also known as data-driven decision making (DDDM). DDDM helps us improve while providing evidence for accountability.

But to whom should we be accountable? We have myriad stakeholders, from students to school boards to governmental agencies. One effect of NCLB is to make educators feel accountable to test results and lose the desired end of all students achieving at high levels. My belief is that keeping our focus on students first achieves the best results and balance. We want students to achieve their potential and be prepared for the future. Projects and studies that focus on the skills for the future help light that path. Higher-order thinking skills, collaboration, and technology skills are important. We can't stop with the basic skills emphasized in NCLB.

If we want students to achieve their potential, then we have to figure out what motivates each one. Look for ways technology helps, and consider using the tools students use and love. Gather data that will help you figure out what motivates each student. This is the first level of data gathering to improve practice. The second level is determining what students already know. Again look for technology tools to help with an otherwise impossible task.

Having the final goals in mind for ourselves—students developed to their full potential and ready to create and shape their future—is similar to deciding in advance what constitutes mastery for students, sort of a backwards design for educators. With a final goal in mind, we can think about how to make decisions and make sure we are getting closer and closer to our goal. DDDM becomes a state of mind if we are always asking, what data do I need to collect that will show progress or lack of it? How do I gather it? How do I analyze it? And how do I use it to get better and better results with students? Develop your DDDM skills and use them to improve and demonstrate that you are making progress. And don't forget to set the bar high!

By Anita McAnear

*Anita McAnear is L&L's acquisitions editor and national program chair for NECC. A former middle school math and language arts teacher, McAnear has been with ISTE since 1983.*

## COMING NEXT MONTH IN L&L

### **New Horizons for Computing**

L&L senior editor J.V. Bolkan describes forthcoming changes to computing architecture and how they will affect schools.

### **Podcasting: What Is It and How Do You Use It?**

Brian Flanagan, of the DeKalb County Schools in Georgia, and Brendan Callandra, from Georgia State University, define podcasting and discuss its implications for education.

### **Computerized Tutors**

David L. Johnson has studied some interesting artificial intelligence-based tutoring applications that could help your students succeed. This University of Minnesota doctoral student in learning technologies shares what he has found.