

19 December 2008/20

Edexcel Thinks

What's the issue?

In December 2008, DCSF and Ofsted released a joint consultation paper on the introduction of a School Report Card. The intention is to provide a simpler but more coherent picture of school performance. This consultation forms part of a larger consultation on 21st Century Schools: A World-Class Education for Every Child. What does Edexcel think about the School Report Card?

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- Edexcel welcomes the consultation on the School Report Card and supports the aim of making information simpler to use. Edexcel believes that the performance categories proposed are the right ones but recognises that a lot will depend on the nature of the indicators developed
- Edexcel believes that many users will find the use of a single rating very valuable but has come concerns about how this might be used. One way of avoiding simplistic or headline grabbing judgements might be to make the overall 'grade' appear less dramatic on the Card. At present, as it stands out in bold, it would be too easy just to refer to this and ignore the rest of the other useful information. By reducing the size of the single-rating letter it would reduce the likelihood of people focusing only on this one feature of the Card
- Edexcel is pleased to see that the introduction of the Report Card is intended to lead to some other reporting mechanisms such as School Profiles being removed. It is still uncertain, however, quite what the relationship will be between Achievement and Attainment Table data and that on the Card. It notes that the Government will review this but believes there is a strong case for passing the Tables over to Local Authorities to consider whether they want to develop these as part of their own presentation of performance of local services
- Edexcel notes that the School Report Card will cover provision up to age 16. This implies dual performance systems for 14 - 19 provision and thereby runs counter to current thinking on creating a single learning phase. Given that the Framework for Excellence has yet to be fully piloted across 16 - 19 learning, Edexcel believes that serious thought should be given to whether the pilots should continue.



What is Edexcel doing?

Edexcel is working hard to support schools raise performance where necessary. It:

- has a designated project team working to develop resources and support for National Challenge centres
- has a Research and Assessment Team that has worked with a range of test materials since 1998
- provides Skills maps for GCSE maths and science specifications. Skills maps reveal how students, both as a cohort and individually, have performed according to the specific areas of knowledge being tested. This means that for each student, teachers get an instant visual picture of their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers can also combine data from a number of students to produce group skills maps. Skills maps are in development for a much wider range of subjects and will underpin all major subjects for GCSE 2009
- offers ResultsPlus Progress, an online diagnostic assessment service, created by the people who write and mark exams. Edexcel plans to launch similar services to ResultsPlus Progress for home study in 2009
- has a field force of Curriculum Development Managers ready to support schools with curriculum support and delivery
- has a team of subject 'experts' ready to answer subject specific queries as necessary.

Background

On 14 October 2008, the Secretary of State announced his intention to remove the KS3 National Curriculum tests. He also explained how he wanted to improve how schools' performance is reported through introducing a new School Report Card. The Report Card is intended to offer a clearer, more balanced and comprehensive account of each school's performance and complement Ofsted inspections.

The new Ofsted - the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills - came into being on 1 April 2007. It brings together four formerly separate inspectorates. It inspects and regulates care for children and young people, and inspects education and training for learners of all ages.

Useful links

<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-01045-2008> Link to DCSF and Ofsted consultation on the School Report Card

<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-01044-2008.pdf> DCSF consultation paper on 21st Century schools

http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2008_0229 DCSF News release on axing KS3 tests and introducing the School Report Card