

**ASSESSMENT
RESEARCH**

2/27/2009

UTLA

Justification: Source-California Language Arts Framework

Genuine alignment of curriculum, assessment, instruction, and organization rests at the school level.

The components must be identified, implemented, and adjusted to fit the conditions and context of the school and the needs of the learners.

Assessments must be:

- an integral and embedded part of instruction
- diagnostic as well as summative
- formal and informal
- formative-on-going based on state standards and assessments

Types of Assessments**Entry Level**

These assessment tasks determine the proficiency of individual students or groups of students according to a specific standard, prerequisite skill, or knowledge.

Application

Pre-test at the beginning of a unit of study through use of:

Diagnostic tests

Survey of skill knowledge

Unit opening activity

Monitoring of Progress

Focuses on the general skills and knowledge students are to acquire according to the standards. Formative assessments are designed to monitor student learning during the course of instruction when instruction can be adjusted based on results to support students in acquiring expected grade level standards. It is a process rather than a test.

Application

Formative assessments can include but not limited to:

Teacher observation

Publishers' tests - brief along the way quizzes and/or short essay exams

Teacher made tests – brief along the way quizzes and/or short essay exams

District developed assessments –brief quizzes and/or performance test items

Written products drafts and final

Oral Presentations

Performance activity
Peer Assessment

Summative

Summative assessments are designed to measure achievement of grade level standards over a period of time. These assessments determine the acquired skills or knowledge of already-completed instructional activities. Summative assessments do not give teachers information to adjust their teaching. It gives information of what has been acquired over time. There is no time to review or re-teach.

Application

Summative assessments can include and are limited to:

State yearly tests

Mid-year tests

Quarterly tests

Publishers' tests at the end of a unit of study

Teacher made tests at the end of a unit of study

Conceptual Understandings of the Use of Periodic Assessments

Periodic assessments by definition and use are summative assessments that are not an integral part of the ongoing instructional process.

Source: W. James Popham ***Transformative Assessment***, 2008

- Customized standards-based tests attempt to measure students' status with respect to too many curricular aims and typically measure the composition of a school's student body rather than a teaching staff's effectiveness.
- An instructionally supportive test (1) measures a modest number of truly important curricular aims, (2) provides clear description of the skills or knowledge measured, and (3) supplies all students with reports regarding each curricular aim assessed.
- An instructionally sensitive test accurately detects the quality of instruction specifically provided to promote students' mastery of what is being assessed.
- Formative assessment is likely to have a substantial impact on students' performance *only on appropriate accountability tests*, namely, those that are both instructionally supportive and instructionally sensitive.

- Traditional standardized achievement tests are designed to create score spread to permit comparative representations...by using items linked to students' socioeconomic status and to their inherited academic aptitudes, and these items tend to make such tests instructionally insensitive.

Educators must be able to distinguish between educational assessment practices that have shown to have a positive influence on student learning, and assessment practices that have not shown to have a positive influence on student learning and research.

Testing companies that are distributing as "formative assessments" products typically referred to as interim or benchmark tests. These tests are administered periodically (perhaps once every two or three months) to measure students' status with respect to mastery of important curricular outcomes. The test vendor would send teachers the results of the interim tests, thus providing 3 snapshots of their students' current status in regard to the skills/standards that will be tested in May. The results help teachers predict which of their students will have difficulty on the test in May. ***But there is no research evidence supporting the hypothesis that this kind of periodic assessment is educationally beneficial.***

In some districts, educators have created periodically administered assessments characterized as "formative". ***There is no evidence that these district-developed or state-developed assessments boost student achievement.***

Because testing time takes away from teaching time, there is an instructional advantage to using shorter rather than longer tests.

Source: Carol Ann Tomlinson "*Learning to Love Assessment (ASCD Dec/Jan 2007)*

Students who perform poorly on tests can show other evidence of learning. They solved problems well, contributed to discussions, generated rich ideas, drew sketches to illustrate, and role-played. When one form of assessment was ineffective for a student, it did not necessarily indicate a lack of student success but could, in fact, represent a poor fit between the student and the method through which one is trying to make the student communicate.

Understandings of ***informative*** assessments:

- Informative assessment isn't always formal.
- Informative assessment isn't separate from the curriculum.
- Informative assessment isn't about "after".
- Informative assessment isn't separate from instruction.
- Informative assessment isn't just about finding weaknesses.

Source: Stephen Chappuis and Jan Chappuis "*The Best Value in Formative Assessment*" (ASCD Dec/Jan 2007)

One result of No Child Left Behind has been a surge in student testing ...going beyond what federal law or state assessment systems require. Many school districts administer tests with

names like benchmark, short-cycle, and interim assessments (LAUSD-periodic assessments) to predict student performance on high-stakes tests and to identify students needing additional help.

This level of testing is often little more than a series of mini-summative tests, not always tightly aligned to what was taught in the classroom. There is nothing inherently formative in such tests-they may or may not be used to make changes in teaching that will lead to greater student learning.

Benchmark assessments, either purchased by the district from commercial vendors or developed locally, are generally meant to measure progress toward state or district content standards and to predict future performance on large-scale summative tests. A common misconception is that this level of assessment is automatically formative. The assessments will produce no formative benefits if teachers administer them, report the results, and then continue with instructional as previously planned.

Compared with state and district tests, classroom assessments (teacher developed/publisher tests) ...results are more immediately available and their learning targets have been more recently taught.

Findings of Current Use of District's Periodic Assessments

Periodic assessments are summative by definition and use and therefore have both benefits and disadvantages.

Benefits

Provide data that gives information for teachers and districts to predict which students will have difficulty on the state standardized test.

Give feedback that informs teachers and the district of which standards are met.

Give students exposure and practice of taking high stakes tests.

Inform the parents of child's potential performance on the state test in May.

Disadvantages

Assessments are given too far removed from instructional activities to give necessary timely feedback to affect instruction and improve student learning.

Items are limited in design and do not allow students to demonstrate actual learning or to "show what they know" and understand.

Items given and skills assessed are too numerous to effect ongoing learning and instruction.

Periodic Assessments, based on research, have not proven to be an educationally beneficial.

As currently administered, take away from valuable teaching time, therefore diminishing “time on task.”

Timing of data results and item design do not encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Because state standards are not developmentally appropriate, the design of the assessments and range of skills tested adds to the frustration of students seeing themselves as successful learners.

Emphasis on the performance of periodic assessments narrows the focus of instruction of subject matter content. This narrowing of the curriculum becomes an obstacle to teaching and reaching the whole child.

The emphasis on successful test performance causes teachers to teach to the test and spend instructional time on test taking skills.

Students of low socio-economic status receive an inferior quality education limited to language arts and math, resulting in a conceptual deficit of understanding and experiences in various subject areas.

Periodic assessments do not inform the teacher of his/her practice in order to make adjustments during instruction.