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|  | **District Assessment System Design Toolkit**  *Workshop #1, Advance Reading #3* |
| *Primer on Types of Assessment* |

**Developed By**

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# Primer on Types of Assessment

There are two broad types of assessment: *Formative Assessment FOR Learning* and *Assessment OF Learning*. At a high level, *Formative Assessment* is focused on *in-the-moment monitoring of student learning* to inform daily instruction. *Assessment OF Learning* is focused on *unit-based evaluation of student achievement* of the desired knowledge and skills associated with varying sizes of units of curriculum and instruction. Both types are critical in developing a balanced assessment system.

## Formative Assessment FOR Learning

*Assessment FOR Learning* is also known as *Formative Assessment*. The reason it is critical in developing a sound district assessment system is that it is a powerful educational “intervention” to improve student learning when implemented as described in the research literature. The definition of formative assessment is “…a planned, ongoing **process** used by all students and teachers during learning and teaching to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of intended disciplinary learning outcomes and support students to become more self-directed learners”(see advance reading 5). Table 1 describes characteristics, uses, and examples.

**Table 1.** Characteristics, Purposes, and Examples of Formative Assessment FOR Learning.

| Characteristics | Purposes | Examples |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Facilitates effective instruction (does not pause instruction) * Learning goals and criteria are clear to students * Students self-/peer-monitor progress toward learning goals * Students and teachers receive frequent feedback * Jointly controlled by each teacher and her students * Addresses micro units of curriculum and instruction (e.g., a daily lesson or part of a lesson) * Very frequent (e.g., multiple times per period) * Tailored to a set of students and an instructional plan * Might be comparable for a classroom, but not beyond * **Not a product (e.g., quiz, bank of questions/tests)** | * Engage students in learning/metacognition * through frequent feedback and self-/peer evaluation * Monitor moment-to-moment student learning * Diagnose individual students’ immediate instructional needs * Diagnose immediate group instructional needs * Immediately adjust instruction * Differentiate instruction * Self-evaluate daily and/or sub-daily instructional effectiveness * **Results from formative assessment are not appropriate for use in grading or accountability; however, ratings of the *quality* of formative assessment practice may be appropriate for use in accountability** | * Following a part of a day's lesson, students show thumbs up/down to indicate whether statements developed around anticipated misconceptions are true. Based on prevalence of misconceptions, the teacher reteaches parts of his lesson using a different strategy, strategically groups students to discuss their conclusions, or works briefly with one or two students. * At the end of class, students hand in a slip confidentially rating their attainment of each learning target as: (1) I can teach this, (2) I can do this on my own, (3) I need some help with this, or (4) I don’t get this at all. The teacher adjusts her next-day group assignments and planned activities accordingly. |

*Formative Assessment FOR Learning* could appropriately be called *Formative Instruction* because it is simply the process of gathering and incorporating information about students’ learning into daily instruction. Unfortunately, the term *Formative Assessment* is widely (and inappropriately) used to indicate a specific type of **product** used to implement *Assessment OF Learning*. The reason this use of the term is unfortunate is that *Assessment FOR Learning* is a highly effective practice to improve student learning; but to fulfill its promise, it has to be implemented as a **process** consistent with research literature (not as a **product** described in marketing literature). To address this unfortunate use of the term, there are two additional advance reading documents with additional detail: Primer on Assessment FOR Learning and ALN Learning Point on Assessment FOR Learning.

## Assessment OF Learning

*Assessment OF Learning* is what we generally think of as an assessment product (e.g., a quiz, test, exam, project, paper, homework assignment). There are two broad types: *Summative* and *Interim*.

### Summative Assessment OF Learning

*Summative Assessment OF Learning* is a capstone assessment **product** measuring the degree to which students have achieved the intended knowledge and skills from an entire marking period (e.g., course, grade, year) or complete course of study (e.g. all of high school, all required science courses). Table 2 describes characteristics, uses, and examples.

**Table 2.** Characteristics, Purposes, and Examples of Summative Assessment OF Learning.

| **Characteristics** | **Purposes** | **Examples** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Pauses instruction for evaluation * Covers one or more marking-periods (e.g., semester, course, credit, grade), or even an entire course of study * Infrequent (e.g., yearly, finals week) * Administered after completing a marking period * Based on who controls assessment, results may be comparable across at the student level all the way up across states * **A product** | * Evaluate achievement after one or more marking periods (or even a course of study) * Monitor progress across multiple marking periods * Corroborate results of Interim Assessment OF Learning * Evaluate readiness for the next marking period * Evaluation/adjustment of broad instructional practices, curriculum, programs, and policies * Predict later student outcomes * Grading and accountability | * District placement tests * Classroom-specific final exams, projects, papers, presentations * School- or district-wide final exams, projects, papers, presentations * Assessments for course credit without taking the course * Graduation/diploma endorsement tests * Annual state tests * High school equivalency tests * College admission tests |

### Interim Assessment OF Learning

*Interim Assessment OF Learning* is an assessment that is administered during a marking period or a complete course of study. There are two types.

#### *Minisummative Interim Assessment OF Learning*

*Minisummative Interim Assessment OF Learning* is a shortened version of a *Summative Assessment OF Learning* that covers the same marking period or course of study and is administered during the marking period or course of study. Table 3 shows characteristics, uses, and examples.

**Table 3.** Characteristics, Purposes, and Examples of Minisummative Interim Assessment OF Learning.

| **Characteristics** | **Purposes** | **Examples** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Pauses instruction for evaluation * Covers one or more marking periods (e.g., semester, course, grade), or even an entire course of study * Somewhat frequent (e.g., multiple times per marking period, though some may be given annually). * Administered at any time. * Based on who controls assessment, results may be comparable across students, teachers, schools, districts, and/or states * **A product** | * Monitor progress during a marking period. * Monitor progress during a course of study. * Pre-testing to get a general idea of where students are at the beginning of a marking period. * Predict performance on a Summative Assessment OF Learning. * Program and/or Policy Evaluation. | * Commercially published assessment programs that cover multiple grades (e.g., NWEA MAP). * Screening assessments (e.g., English proficiency) * District developed (“common”) assessments that cover an entire marking period but are administered during the marking period. |

#### *Unit-Based Interim Assessment OF Learning*

*Unit-Based Interim Assessment OF Learning* describes an assessment that covers a large unit of curriculum and instruction that is smaller than a marking period, or a smaller unit of curriculum and instruction. It is administered at the end of or after the unit is complete. Table 4 gives characteristics, uses and examples for both large and small units.

**Table 4.** Characteristics, Purposes, and Examples of Unit-Based Interim Assessment OF Learning.

| **Characteristics** | **Purposes** | **Examples** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Pauses instruction for evaluation * Covers small to large units of curriculum and instruction * Somewhat frequent (e.g., weekly to quarterly) * Comparable for students taking the same test * **A product** | * Evaluate achievement after a unit * Track progress within a marking period * Pre-test to tailor unit instructional plans * Identify post-unit remedial needs * Mid-course/mid-year self-evaluation and adjustment * Predict performance on summative assessment in the absence of intervention * Grading (and possibly accountability) | **Large-Unit examples**   * Monthly end-of-unit exams * Mid-term exams/projects/papers/presentations * Quarterly district common assessments   **Small-Unit Examples**   * Weekly quizzes * Weekly writing assignment * Weekly homework assignments * Daily homework (if used into grades)   **Examples that Work for Either**   * Pre-unit exams of unit pre-requisites * Pre-unit exams of unit content |