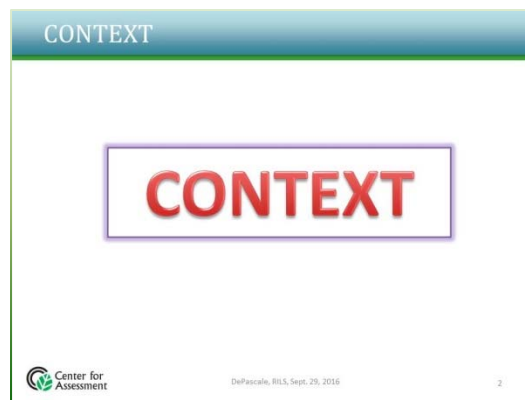


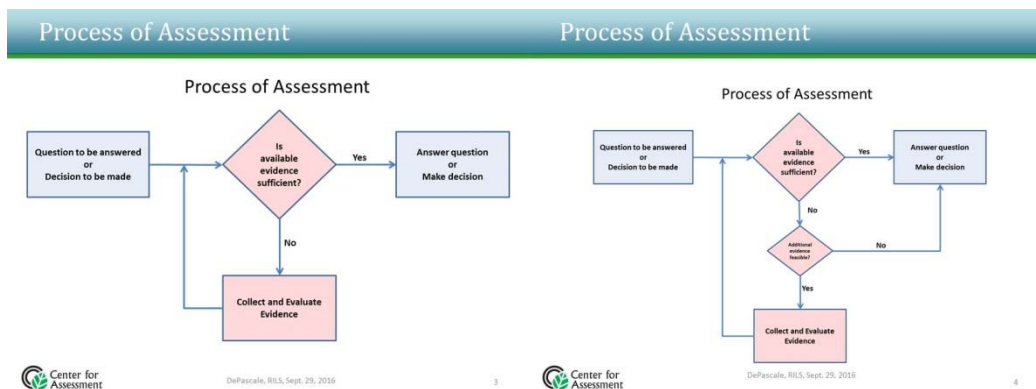
A Framework to Improve Assessment Literacy

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The starting point for our Assessment Literacy Framework is that assessment literacy is a concept that cannot be considered without reference to a specific context. The preceding presentations made a case for the importance of matching an individual assessment or set of assessments to a particular purpose or need; that is, context. Similarly, we make the case that assessment literacy cannot be considered in isolation as a standalone set of knowledge and skills. Rather, we present an assessment literate person



as one who has the ability to effectively use assessment in their particular context. For teachers, that context might be the use of evidence gathered from the assessment process to inform and support instructional decisions. For a school administrator, that context might be the use of evidence gathered from the assessment process as part of a project to evaluate the effectiveness of a new curriculum or remediation program.



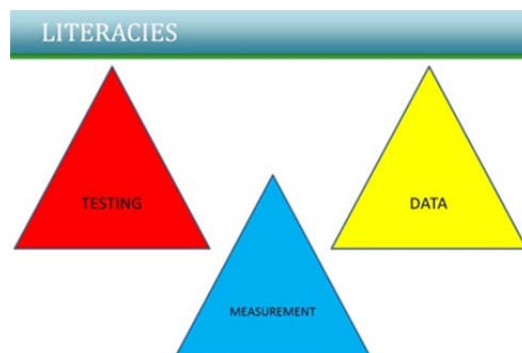
At its core, the process of assessment is quite simple. An assessment is being administered because there is a question to be answered or a decision to be made. Available evidence is examined. The educator must determine whether the available evidence is sufficient to inform a decision or lead to an answer to the question. If the evidence is not sufficient, additional evidence is collected. However, as

shown in the figure on the right, in many cases it may not be feasible to collect additional evidence prior to making a decision. The knowledge and skills needed to determine the sufficiency of available evidence, to determine whether there is a benefit to collecting additional evidence, and if so, to determine how best to collect that evidence is the essence of assessment literacy. To be sure, a working knowledge of assessment is a component of the necessary knowledge and skills necessary to make those decisions. A deep understanding of the context is also needed to determine the sufficiency of the available evidence. Assessment literacy is necessary, but not sufficient, to use assessment to inform educational decisions.

If assessment literacy is not sufficient, what additional knowledge and skills are necessary? The answer to that question is dependent upon the stakeholder and the type of questions they are asking and the decisions that they must make based on their interpretation and use of assessment results. As described above, the context in which a teacher primarily uses assessment (i.e., to inform decisions about individual students or instructional strategies) is likely different from the context in which a school administrator or central office administrator uses assessment (e.g., to evaluate the effectiveness of a particular program).



Other stakeholders, such as policy makers, the general public, students, and their parents will each have their own needs for interpreting and using assessment results. The level of direct interaction between stakeholders such as teachers and parents or administrators and teachers or policy makers and the general public may influence the extent to which their assessment literacy needs overlap. Each group of stakeholders, however, will also bring their own unique context to the use of assessment.

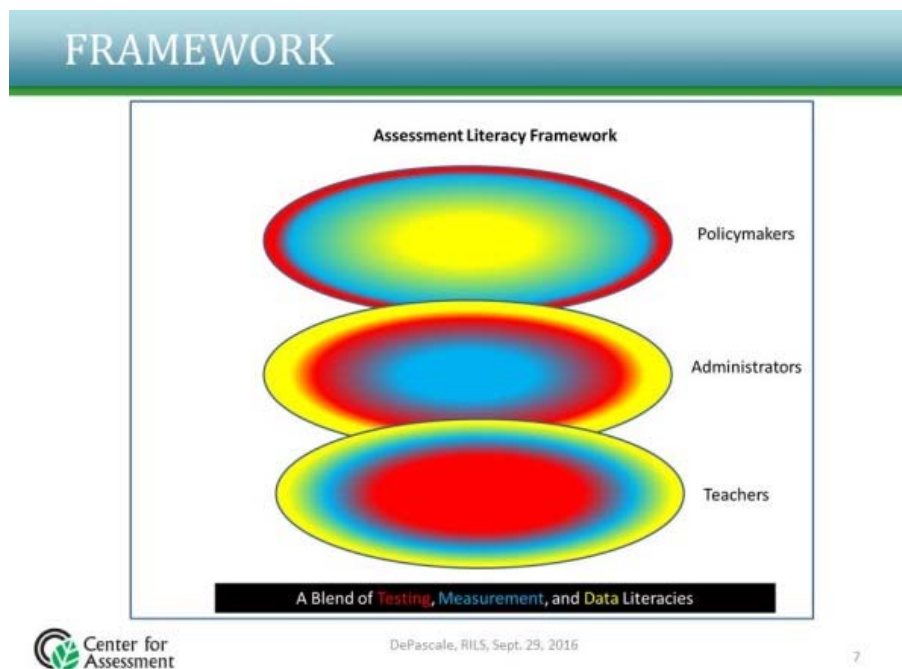


Accepting that different stakeholders interact with assessment in different ways, it is easier to understand that assessment literacy is not a single, unidimensional set of knowledge and skills. In this framework, we posit that assessment literacy comprised three distinct sets of literacies: testing literacy, measurement literacy, and data literacy.

- Testing Literacy – the understanding of the fundamental principles of test design, development, and use.
- Measurement Literacy – the understanding of the fundamental measurement principles, particularly those related to validity and the uncertainty of measurement.
- Data Literacy – the possession of the basic skills needed to organize and manipulate data so that it can be analyzed, interpreted, and used appropriately.

There is obviously overlap across the three categories. The categorization does not imply that the principles in each of the categories should be addressed separately or out of context. However, educators’ understanding of assessment concepts and the development of instructional materials can be improved by a better understanding that Assessment Literacy is multidimensional, requiring knowledge and skills from a variety of disciplines.

Additionally, in order to improve assessment literacy, it is necessary to understand the particular literacies that are needed by individual stakeholders for their particular context. Although all stakeholders may need degree of testing, measurement, and data literacy, the amount of each that is needed and the manner in which the knowledge and skills within each interacts will vary across stakeholders. In general, assessment literacy for teachers is likely to require a high degree of testing literacy, supported by measurement literacy, and some degree of data literacy. In contrast, administrators may require more measurement literacy, but also a fair degree of testing literacy as they select assessment instruments and serve as instructional leaders with teachers. Policy makers, on the other hand, are much less likely to require testing literacies, but may require a solid understanding of data and measurement literacies.



The unique blending of knowledge and skills that are needed by particular stakeholders and the manner in which stakeholders must share interact regarding assessment are the core of the assessment literacy framework.

In summary, understanding context is essential to understanding and improving assessment literacy. In particular, we have focused on two aspects of context in developing this framework. On one level, context is critical to understanding the blend of testing, measurement, and data literacy needed to be assessment literate. On another level, placing assessment literacy within the context of the knowledge and skills that are central to an educator's role and responsibilities.

DUAL NATURE OF CONTEXT

- **Context in Assessment Literacy** – Understanding the importance that context plays in determining the specific testing, measurement, and data use knowledge and skills needed by various stakeholders.
- **Assessment Literacy in Context** – Placing assessment literacy within the context of the broader sets of knowledge and skills needed to address educational issues faced by teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders