

Data Rich – Information Poor

Guidelines for understanding assessment results

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What information do we get from summative score reports?

Generally Four Categories

- Performance
- Comparison
- Narrative
- Error

Performance

- Student performance can be reported as:
 - Scale score or raw score
 - Composite or by domain/ strand/ subtest
 - Performance level
 - Growth estimate
- Discussion questions:
 - For summative assessments, which is most precise?
 - What is the difference between raw scores and scale scores?
 - How are sub-scores best understood and used?

Comparison

- Examples:
 - Comparison to school, district, state mean
 - Indication of spread (e.g. quartiles)
 - Percentile
- Discussion questions:
 - What does a national percentile mean?
 - How are comparisons to summary data (e.g. state or school mean) best used?
 - What questions might one ask to better understand the information?

Narrative

- Typically this is a brief statement of what students in each performance level know and can do (i.e. PLDs)
- Discussion questions:
 - How is this information valuable?
 - What are some limitations or caveats associated narrative information?
 - What are some good questions to ask or sources of information to better understand the narrative information?

Error

- Most score reports provide an indication of the precision of the scores
- Examples:
 - Overall standard error
 - Conditional standard error
 - Error bands
 - Explanation of error
- Discussion question:
 - How is this information best understood and used?

Limitations

- Summative assessment information is typically most accurate and useful for estimating performance level classifications
- Most tests are less useful for disentangling degrees of difference in performance, especially for very low and very high performing students
- Comparative information can be useful but is better understood in more context than is typically provided
- Summative tests are especially ill-suited to provide diagnostic information (e.g. what's next?)