



Assessment Edition

November 2015

Volume 3, Issue 3

Model Development Process for Common Measures

Referenced in the September issue of Spotlight, Educational Collaborative used the following process to work with educators to develop example common assessments. You can learn more about this on the Common Measures Development Process webpage.

Prepare

- ✚ **Setting Expectations:** Educators received training on assessment literacy concepts and the purpose of common measures as part of the MA Educator Evaluation Framework. The improvement of assessment literacy is often cited as one of the most impactful outcomes to participating in this work.
- ✚ **Identifying content:** Before identifying an appropriate measure, educators identified the most critical understanding, skills, or learning that educators are responsible for teaching and students are responsible for learning.

Develop

- ✚ **Identifying the measure:** Educators then selected the assessment type (e.g., performance assessment, portfolio, project, selected response, indirect measure) and an approach to measuring growth. Finally, if using an existing assessment, educators should review all items and materials and make necessary refinements (e.g., rewording items, adjusting scoring rubrics, clarifying student instructions).

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Important Dates

November 3	PreK-5 Conferences; 6-12 PD
November 5	PreK-5 Conferences; 6-12 PD
November 11	Veteran's Day- No School
November 25-27	Thanksgiving Break- No School
November 30	Mentor Meetings

Important Notice:

Central office is a **fragrance-free zone** so please be respectful and plan accordingly when you visit.

Due to one of our members at the CO being highly sensitive to any type of fragrance, we ask that staff visiting/meeting at the Administration building refrain from using any scented products. Fragrances from personal care products, air fresheners, laundry and other cleaning products have been associated with adversely affecting a person's health. We ask that we all work together to make the environment a safe and healthy workplace for everyone. Thank you very much for your cooperation!



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Developing Common Assessment Components:


After educators identified a measure, they needed to be clear about how the assessment should be used across different classrooms. This led to the development of administration protocols (including accommodations) and growth parameters which includes identifying the following:

- **Administration protocols:** How, when, and where an assessment is administered consistently to different classrooms of students.
- **Parameters:** What is the definition of low, moderate, and high growth (which may be described as exceeding, meeting, or approaching expectations)?

- **Accommodations:** In addition to clearly defining how an assessment will be administered consistently, developers need to think carefully about how educators may make changes to ensure that all students have an equal chance to demonstrate growth, including students with disabilities and English language learners.

Reflect

 **Collecting Data:** Educators then administered the measure and collected and scored the results.

 **Drawing Conclusions:** Reflecting on results, educators considered improvements not only to their practice, but to the measure as well. They also confirmed that the measure provided meaningful information about students' understanding of the identified content.



The Data Team Process



1	Collect and chart data (Go Visual!)
2	Analyze strengths and obstacles
3	Establish SMART goals: set, review, revise
4	Select instructional strategies (Choose strategies that will target the obstacles in student work, indicate the frequency and duration with which the team will implement in the next instructional cycle, and record the strategies.)
5	Determine results indicators (“If teachers do _____ then students will _____.”)

Quick & Easy Formative Assessments

Index Card

Give each student an index card. Ask them to write on both sides to answer the following:

Side1: Based on our study of _____ list a big idea that you understand.

Side 2: Identify something about _____ that you do not yet fully understand.

One Minute Essay

A one-minute essay question is focused with a specific goal that can actually be answered within a minute or two. Specific prompts are usually the most helpful.

Journal Entry

Students record their understanding of the topic, concept or lesson in a personal journal. The teacher reviews the journal entry and responds as needed. This provides a private place for students to express concerns or questions that they might not be comfortable sharing in public.

The key to this method of assessment is to actually read and respond to student journal entries. If the teacher doesn't respond, the students will be less inclined to be truthful and provide details of their understanding.

Brain Dumps

A 3-minute pause gives students a chance to stop and reflect on what they've just been introduced to. This also lets them make connections to prior knowledge/experiences and to seek clarification. You can have students talk to a partner or write ideas down. Here are some prompts to use:

- "I felt....."
- "I changed my attitude about....."
- "I related to"
- "I found it interesting that....."
- "One new thing I learned way....."
- "This reminds me of....." (Text to text, text to world, text to self)

Hand Signals

Ask students to display a designated hand signal to indicate their understanding of a specific concept, principal or process. Examples include thumbs up/down and showing fingers on a scale of 1-5.

Concept Map

Any of several forms of graphic organizers that allow students to recognize the relationships between ideas through diagramming key words and phrases.

Example include: Venn diagrams, webs, etc.

Exit Cards

Exit cards are written responses from each student that must be turned in before the end of the activity or the end of the day. They are "required" before a student can exit the class. Prompts may be general ("list one thing you didn't know about the topic before this lesson") or specific ("put the following steps in order"). You can ask students to write a response on a sticky tab, note card or piece of paper. Many teachers designate a space in their classroom where students must post or turn in responses.

Involving Students in the Improvement Process

(Originally titled "Assessment Through the Student's Eyes")

In this trenchant article in *Educational Leadership*, Oregon-based assessment guru Rick Stiggins continues his campaign to get students involved in continuous improvement by sharing formative and interim assessment data with them. He argues that the traditional approach to assessment has created classroom winners and losers, each with their own self-perpetuating psychology.

"Understanding the emotional dynamics of the assessment experience from the student's perspective is crucial to the effective use of assessments to improve schools," says Stiggins. "Even the most valid and reliable assessment cannot be regarded as high quality if it causes a student to give up."

For students on winning streaks, success breeds success; they are hopeful and optimistic, know what to do next, seek out challenges, practice with gusto, and have a firm foundation for future success. But students who are on a losing streak feel hopeless, panicked, confused, and stressed, see all feedback as criticism, have no idea what to do next, and conclude that they are too dumb to learn. "[W]e can't let students who have not yet met standards fall into losing streaks, succumb to hopelessness, and stop trying," writes Stiggins. "Our evolving mission compels us to embrace a new vision of assessment that can tap the wellspring of confidence, motivation, and learning potential that resides within every student."

Step one, says Stiggins, is giving students

measurable achievement targets in kid-friendly language and displaying examples of exemplary student work. Step two is having students do frequent self-assessments that give descriptive feedback on their progress. "The student's role," writes Stiggins, "is to strive to understand what success looks like, to use feedback from each assessment to discover where they are now in relation to where they want to be, and to determine how to do better the next time. As students become increasingly proficient, they

learn to generate their own descriptive feedback and set goals for what comes next on their journey." This can include students constructing rubrics or brief multiple-choice tests that parallel the content of final exams, gathering evidence of their learning in a growth portfolio, or leading parent/teacher report card conferences. The key outcome of students taking ownership of the assessment process is that they begin to believe that "success is within reach if they keep trying."

Stiggins tells the story of Gail, a fifth grader who is struggling with math. She gets 60% on a math test –

an F – and her growing sense of failure and inadequacy is reinforced. But then her teacher hands out another paper – a worksheet with six columns. The first column lists the 20 items on the test. The second column lists the math skill each item tested. The third and fourth columns have Right and Wrong at the top, and the teacher asks students to check which items they got right and which they got wrong. Gail follows directions and finds she got 12 right and 8 wrong.

The teacher then asks students to honestly evaluate why they got each incorrect item wrong: if it was a careless error, they mark column five. If they didn't understand how to do the problem, they mark column six. Gail finds that four of her incorrect answers were careless mistakes, but four of the problems she really didn't grasp. The teacher then has students go over their don't-understand questions and look



for patterns. Gail notices that all four of her wrong answers stemmed from the fact that she doesn't understand how to subtract 3-digit numbers with regrouping. The teacher provides differentiated instruction to students on their weak areas and allows them to take a second form of the same test. This time, Gail gets 100%, and leaps from her seat with her arms in the air. Her winning streak has begun.

Stiggins shares another story. A high-school English teacher asks students to read three novels by the same author, develop a thesis statement about a common theme, consistent character development, or social commentary in the books, and write a term paper defending their argument. The teacher then gives students a sample of an outstanding paper to read and analyze, and leads a discussion about what made the paper so good. The next day, the teacher gives students a low-quality student paper and has them analyze its features. Comparing the two papers, students decide on the criteria for excellence and translate them into a 4-3-2-1 scoring rubric, and the teacher produces samples of student work at each level. Students then write their first drafts, exchange papers, evaluate one another's work, and give descriptive feedback on how each paper can be improved, using the language of their rubric. The teacher circulates, giving comments and feedback when asked. Students hand in their papers when they feel they have done their best work. "In the end, not every paper is outstanding," writes Stiggins, "but most are of high quality, and each student is confident of that fact before submitting his or her work for final evaluation and grading."

"Assessment Through the Student's Eyes" by Rick Stiggins in *Educational Leadership*, May

2007 (Vol. 64, #8, p. 22-26); this article is available free on the ASCD website: go to <http://www.ascd.org>, click on Publications, and navigate to the May 2007 issue.

Seven Ways Assessments Can Build Student Motivation

(Originally titled "Can Assessments Motivate?")

"Many educators believe that success breeds success – that achievement leads to motivation" says Richard Curwin (David Yellin Academic College of Education, Jerusalem) in this *Educational Leadership* article. "However, that's backward. Motivation or effort leads to success, not the other way around. Cheating, luck, and easy work can all lead to success, but they do not increase motivation." Tests, unfortunately, often kill motivation, says Curwin.

Test scores and other extrinsic rewards may keep students working, but they create *finishers*, not learners.

Curwin believes certain assessment practices spur effort and motivation in students. Here are some examples:

- **Never fail a student who tries, and never give top grades to one who doesn't.** Effort should be counted as part of grades, he says – improvement should count, as should asking for help, offering to help others, and extra work. And students who coast to good grades should be seeking out (or given) more-challenging assignments.
- **Start with the positive.** Commend students on what they got right before correcting what they got wrong.
- **See mistakes as learning opportunities.** "In every life situation, from building relationships to



playing computer games, except school, mistakes are important in the learning process,” says Curwin. Mistakes in school should be used as diagnostic tools.

- **Give do-overs.** Students should be able to learn from their mistakes and try assessments again.
- **Show students the final test as they begin a unit.** “This way, they can see what they need to learn, what the teacher’s priorities are, and how to organize their learning,” says Curwin.



- **Prioritize corrections.** Too much red ink overwhelms students and makes it more likely that the corrected paper will be thrown away. “Tell students you’ll give them a chance to fix those two most important mistakes, which you’ve marked, before moving on to two more,” he suggests.

- **Do not compare students.** Grades should be given based on standards, now how other students are doing, says Curwin.

“Can Assessments Motivate?” by Richard Curwin in *Educational Leadership*, September 2014 (Vol. 72, #1, p. 38-40), <http://bit.ly/1si36QU>; Curwin is at richardcurwin@gmail.com.

“If assessment does not result in improved teaching, then its value in school diminishes greatly.”

Irene C. Fountas & Gay Su Pinnell

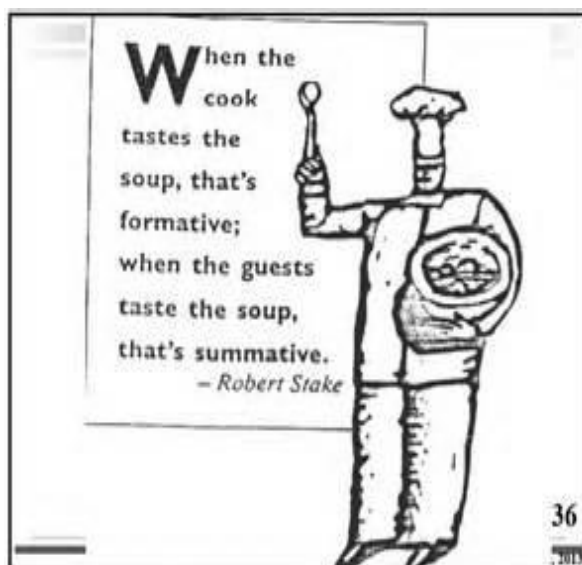
Principles of Assessment

1. **Assessments are grounded in a thoughtful, standards-based curriculum and are managed as part of an integrated system** of standards, curriculum, assessment, instruction, and teacher development. Curriculum and assessments are organized around a set of **learning progressions along multiple dimensions** within subject areas. These guide teaching decisions, classroom-based assessment, and external assessment.
2. **Assessments include evidence of student performance** on challenging tasks that evaluate Common Core Standards of 21st century learning. Instruction and assessments seek to teach and evaluate knowledge and skills that generalize and can transfer to higher education and multiple work domains. They emphasize **deep knowledge of core concepts and ideas** within and across the disciplines, along with analysis, synthesis, problem solving, communication, and critical thinking. This kind of learning and teaching requires a focus on complex performances as well as testing of specific concepts, facts, and skills.
3. **Teachers are integrally involved in the development and scoring of assessments.** While many assessment components can and will be efficiently and effectively scored with computer assistance, teachers will also be involved in interim/benchmark, formative and summative assessment systems so that they deeply understand and can teach the standards.
4. **Assessments are structured to continuously improve teaching and learning.** Assessment as, of and for learning is designed to develop **understanding of what learning standards are, what high-quality work looks like, what growth is occurring, and what is needed for student learning.**



This includes:

- Developing assessments around **learning progressions** that allow teachers to see what students know and can do on multiple dimensions of learning and to strategically support their progress;
- Using computer-based technologies to **adapt assessments** to student levels to more effectively measure what they know, so that teachers can target instruction more carefully and can evaluate growth over time;
- Creating opportunities for students and teachers to get **feedback** on student learning throughout the school year, in forms that are actionable for improving success;
- Providing **curriculum-embedded assessments** that offer models of good curriculum and assessment practice, enhance curriculum equity within and across schools, and allow teachers to see and evaluate student learning in ways that can feed back into instructional and curriculum decisions; and
- Allowing **close examination of student work** and moderated teacher scoring as sources of ongoing professional development.



5. **Assessment, reporting, and accountability systems** provide useful information on multiple measures that is **educative** for all stakeholders. Reporting of assessment results is timely, specific, and vivid- offering specific information about areas of performance and examples of student responses along with illustrative benchmarks so that **teachers and students can follow up on targeted instruction**. Multiple assessment opportunities (formative and interim/benchmark, as well as summative) offer ongoing information about learning and improvement.
6. Reports to stakeholders beyond the school provide specific data, examples, and illustrations so that administrators and policymakers can more fully understand what students know in order to guide curriculum and professional development decisions. (Darling-Hammond, 2010)



Common Formative Assessments (CFAs)

Guidelines to Developing Common Formative Assessments

- Set a specific minimum number of common assessments to be used in the course or during a unit of study.
- Show how each item on the assessment is linked to the standards.
- Assess a few key concepts frequently rather than many concepts occasionally.

How can we create common formative assessments to monitor and promote student learning?

- Assessments begin with the standards- why are you assessing what you are assessing?

- Instruction is the how we are teaching it.
- Assessment is the [how did we do?](#)
- The standards and the assessments should be precisely aligned.

5 Steps to Creating Common Formative Assessments



1. **S**elect an important topic that is essential for students to understand and one that needs attention based on your data.
2. **I**dentify matching priority standards by considering endurance, leverage, and readiness as well as what your data are telling you needs attention.
3. **U**nwrap" the standards by separating the concepts (nouns) and the skills (verbs) to demonstrate declarative and procedural knowledge.

Identifying the Bloom's verb or Depth of Knowledge (DoK) level in the standard will be important to developing the item.

4. **D**etermine the item type based on the rigor and the content of the unwrapped standard and create the item. Possible item types are selected response, constructed response, technology enhanced, and technology enabled.
5. **C**reate scoring guides/rubrics.

Recommendations

- Make assessment items valid (measure what they are supposed to measure) and reliable (consistent each time used).
- Format items to match district benchmark assessments, end-of-course assessments, and state tests only on CFAs
- Include [correct standards](#) terminology, not simplified terms.

**"We plan. We develop. We deliver.
We assess and evaluate the results of the assessment.
We revise, deliver the revised material, and assess and
evaluate again. Perfection is always just out of reach;
but continually striving for perfection contributes to
keeping both our instruction fresh and our interest in
teaching piqued."**

-E.S. Grassian