

## GLOSSARY

- Accountability:** Responsibility for general school processes and student achievement, including confirming that resources were effectively used and using assessment results to provide information about what children have learned to the public.
- Assessment:** Using various methods to obtain information about student learning that can be used to guide a variety of decisions and actions. Methods include observations, interviews, video and audio tapes, projects, experiments, tests, performances, and portfolios.
- Bias:** A lack of objectivity, fairness, or impartiality on the part of the assessor or evaluator, the assessment instrument or procedures, or in the interpretation and evaluation process, that leads to misinterpretation of student performance or knowledge.
- Content standards:** The desired learning (knowledge, skills, understandings, and habits of mind) that students should acquire and be able to demonstrate.
- Developmentally appropriate:** Practices based on what is known about how children and youth develop, learn, and manifest their learning.
- English language learners:** Individuals whose primary language is not English and who are in the process of learning English. Sometimes called limited English proficient students.
- Evaluation:** The process of interpretation and use of information to make decisions; also, judgment regarding the quality, value, or worth of a response, product, or performance based upon established criteria.
- Exhibition:** An extended, multi-part project resulting in tangible products and/or presentations; a term often used to describe major performances or activities in a student's school career or a culmination of work in a class.
- Habits of mind:** A summary term for various dispositions important for effective thinking and learning, including such things as: reading with curiosity; reflecting critically on one's own work; developing independence, clarity, and incisiveness of thought; willingness to work hard; and an ability to manage time effectively.
- Important learning:** Central concepts, essential skills, and critical ways of thinking within or across a subject/discipline.
- Learning styles:** Characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how individual learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment.
- Observation:** Watching and recording what students do, without immediate judgment or interpretation.
- Opportunity to learn:** Giving students the means to acquire high level knowledge and skills; also, provision of equitable and adequate learning resources, including capable teachers, rich curriculum, high-quality facilities, equipment and materials, and essential support services.
- Performance:** A presentation of one's work before an audience, which may include classmates, parents, or members of the community, in addition to scorers.

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**Performance assessment:** General term for an assessment activity in which students construct responses, create products, or perform demonstrations to provide evidence of their knowledge and skills.

**Performance standard:** An established level of achievement, quality of performance, or degree of proficiency. Performance standards specify what a student is expected to achieve or perform to show the student has substantially met content standards.

**Portfolio:** A purposeful or systematic collection of selected student work and student self-assessments developed over time, gathered to demonstrate and evaluate progress and achievement in learning.

**Portfolio assessment:** The process of developing, reviewing, and evaluating student portfolios.

**Project:** An extended work, such as a research report in history or a science investigation.

**Professional development:** Continued learning by educators to improve their knowledge and skills.

**Reliability:** The degree to which an assessment measures consistently or to which assessment scores are free from errors of measurement.

**Sampling:** A way to collect information about a group by examining only a part of the group (the sample), or by dividing a test into sections and giving each member of the group or the sample only one part of the test (matrix sampling).

**Scoring guide ("rubric"):** A guide based on specified standards used to score performance assessments. Rubrics contain a scale (e.g., 6,5,4,3,2,1 or "distinguished, proficient, apprentice, novice") and descriptions of the features/characteristics of work at each point on the scale.

**Stakeholder(s):** Those individuals who have a substantial interest in schools and student learning, who may include students, teachers, administrators, other school staff, parents, advocacy organizations, community members, higher education institutions, and employers.

**Tracking:** The process of sorting students of the same age or grade level into categories and assigning them to various kinds of classes with different levels of instruction, for most or all of the school day, and for the long term or permanently.

**Validity:** The extent to which an assessment measures what it is supposed to measure. More precisely, the degree to which evidence and judgment supports or disproves the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and actions based on specific assessment information. Validity indicates the degree of accuracy of predictions or inferences based upon an assessment score.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The primary purpose of this Bibliography is to provide readers with a general introduction to performance assessment. Works marked with an asterisk (\*) provide general overviews of new assessments. Other works provide information about particular assessments, particular methods or activities, assessment in particular disciplines, assessment with particular groups, or discussions of implementation and progress. A few provide information on professional development or parent involvement.

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## RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS

*The following organizations provide assistance with or materials about performance assessment. In addition, various teacher, principal, administrator, school board, state superintendent, and subject area professional associations provide information on performance assessment or assistance in implementing performance assessments.*

**Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)**

1250 North Pitt Street  
Arlington, VA 22314-1403  
(703) 549-9110

**Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST)**

University of California at Los Angeles  
10880 Wilshire Boulevard, Rm. 734  
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**Center on Learning, Assessment, and School Structure (CLASS)**

648 The Great Road  
Princeton, NJ 08540  
(609) 252-1211

**Coalition of Essential Schools**

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**National Center for Education Outcomes for Students with Disabilities**

350 Elliott Hall  
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(612) 626-1530

**National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest)**

342 Broadway  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
(617) 864-4810

**New Standards Project**

c/o National Center on Education and the Economy  
700 11th Street NW, Suite 750  
Washington, DC 20001  
(202) 783-3668

**Performance Assessment Collaboratives for Education (PACE)**

Harvard Graduate School of Education  
8 Story Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
(617) 496-2770

**Project Zero**

Harvard Graduate School of Education  
Longfellow Hall  
Appian Way  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
(617) 495-4342

**The Prospect Center**

P. O. Box 326  
North Bennington, VT 05257-0326  
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## How the *Principles and Indicators* Were Developed

In 1991, the National Forum on Assessment released *Criteria for the Evaluation of Student Assessment Systems*, a two-page statement endorsed by dozens of education and civil rights organizations, designed to help guide the improvement of student assessment systems. This statement was the starting point for development of the *Principles*.

The *Principles* were produced through a multi-step process, beginning in November 1993, in which many drafts were written, discussed, and revised. The Forum itself met monthly to discuss the development of the document.

To obtain input from organizations and individuals outside the Forum, meetings were held in a number of cities. Some involved a range of people (teachers, administrators, community members, researchers, and policymakers) while others included members of a particular organization. These meetings were held in:

Cambridge, MA (co-hosted by Project Zero), December 20, 1993  
Washington, DC (civil rights groups), January 6, 1994  
Ft. Myers, FL (meeting of EIAC Assessment Task Force of CCSSO),  
January 20, 1994  
Washington, DC (teachers with the NEA), January 24, 1994  
Los Angeles (co-hosted by CRESST), March 15, 1994  
San Francisco (co-hosted by the Far West Laboratory), March 16, 1994  
Arlington, VA (administrators with the AASA), March 31, 1994  
Chicago (co-hosted by Designs for Change), May 13, 1994  
Chicago (meeting of ASCD Assessment Consortium), May 14, 1994  
Milwaukee (co-hosted by the Milwaukee Public Schools), May 16, 1994  
Madison (co-hosted by Center on Organization and Restructuring of  
Schools), May 17, 1994  
Cleveland (co-hosted by the Cleveland Foundation), May 18, 1994  
Alexandria, VA (principals with the NAESP), June 2, 1994  
New York (co-hosted by NCREST), June 7, 1994  
Albuquerque (CCSSO Large-Scale Assessment Conference), June 14, 1994  
Cambridge (co-hosted by Lesley College), June 20, 1994  
Phoenix (CCSSO Large-Scale Assessment Conference), June 20-22, 1995

In addition, hundreds of individuals and organizations received the *Principles* by mail, with many responding to drafts and offering feedback. Input from the meetings and the written comments were incorporated by the Forum into subsequent drafts and the final product.

Co-chairs of the National Forum on Assessment are Monty Neill, the National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest), and Ruth Mitchell, The Education Trust, American Association for Higher Education. They wish to thank the many reviewers, the organizations which hosted meetings, and the many Forum members who volunteered substantial time to work on the *Principles*.

FairTest provided staffing for the project. Funding was provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Joyce Foundation, with additional support from the Ford Foundation.

Assessment of student learning is undergoing profound change at the same time reforms are taking place in learning goals and content standards, curriculum, instruction, the education of teachers, and the relationships among parents, communities, schools, government, and business. These *Principles* provide a vision of how to transform assessment systems and practices as part of wider school reform, with a particular focus on improving classroom assessment while ensuring large-scale assessment also supports learning. To best serve learning, assessment must be integrated with curriculum and instruction.

High quality assessment must rest on strong *educational foundations*. These foundations include organizing schools to meet the learning needs of all their students, understanding how students learn, establishing high standards for student learning, and providing equitable and adequate opportunity to learn.

The *Principles* reflect an “ideal”—what the National Forum on Assessment believes is the best that assessment can be and do. We understand that they will not be implemented immediately or with great ease. We do firmly hold, however, that education systems must move toward meeting these principles if assessment is to play a positive role in improving education for all students.

**Principle 1: The Primary Purpose of Assessment Is to Improve Student Learning**

Assessment systems, including classroom and large-scale assessment, are organized around the primary purpose of improving student learning. Assessment systems provide useful information about whether students have reached important learning goals and about the progress of each student. They employ practices and methods that are consistent with learning goals, curriculum, instruction, and current knowledge of how students learn. Classroom assessment that is integrated with curriculum and instruction is the primary means of assessment. Educators assess student learning through such methods as structured and informal observations and interviews, projects and tasks, tests, performances and exhibitions, audio and videotapes, experiments, portfolios, and journals. Multiple-choice methods and assessments intended to rank order or compare students, if used, are a limited part of the assessment system. The educational consequences of assessment are evaluated to ensure that the effects are beneficial.

**Principle 2: Assessment for Other Purposes Supports Student Learning**

Assessment systems report on and certify student learning and provide information for school improvement and accountability by using practices that support important learning. Teachers, schools and education systems make important decisions, such as high school graduation, on the basis of information gathered over time, not a single assessment. Information for accountability and improvement comes from regular, continuing work and assessment of students in schools and from large-scale assessments. Accountability assessments use sampling procedures. Rigorous technical standards for assessment are developed and used to ensure high quality assessments and to monitor the actual educational consequences of assessment use.

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### **Principle 3: Assessment Systems Are Fair to All Students**

Assessment systems, including instruments, policies, practices and uses, are fair to all students. Assessment systems ensure that all students receive fair treatment in order not to limit students' present and future opportunities. They allow for multiple methods to assess student progress and for multiple but equivalent ways for students to express knowledge and understanding. Assessments are unbiased and reflect a student's actual knowledge. They are created or appropriately adapted and accommodations are made to meet the specific needs of particular populations, such as English language learners and students with disabilities. Educators provide students with instruction in the assessment methods that are used. Bias review committees study and approve each large-scale assessment.

### **Principle 4: Professional Collaboration and Development Support Assessment**

Knowledgeable and fair educators are essential for high quality assessment. Assessment systems depend on teachers and other educators who understand the full range of assessment purposes, use appropriately a variety of suitable methods, work collaboratively, and engage in ongoing professional development to improve their capability as assessors. Schools of education prepare teachers and other educators well for assessing a diverse student population. Educators determine and participate in professional development and work together to improve their craft. Their competence is strengthened by groups of teachers scoring student work at the district or state levels. Schools, districts, and states provide needed resources for professional development.

### **Principle 5: The Broad Community Participates in Assessment Development**

Assessment systems draw on the community's knowledge and ensure support by including parents, community members, and students, together with educators and professionals with particular expertise, in the development of the system. Discussion of assessment purposes and methods involves a wide range of people interested in education. Parents, students, and members of the public join a variety of experts, teachers, and other educators in shaping the assessment system.

### **Principle 6: Communication about Assessment Is Regular and Clear**

Educators, schools, districts, and states clearly and regularly discuss assessment system practices and student and program progress with students, families, and the community. Educators and institutions communicate, in ordinary language, the purposes, methods, and results of assessment. They focus reporting on what students know and are able to do, what they need to learn to do, and what will be done to facilitate improvement. They report achievement data in terms of agreed-upon learning goals. Translations are provided as needed. Examples of assessments and student work are made available to parents and the community so they know what high quality performance and local students' work looks like. Assessment results are reported together with contextual information such as education programs, social data, resource availability, and other student outcomes.

### **Principle 7: Assessment Systems Are Regularly Reviewed and Improved**

Assessment systems are regularly reviewed and improved to ensure that the systems are educationally beneficial to all students. Assessment systems must evolve and improve. Even well-designed systems must adapt to changing conditions and increased knowledge. Reviews are the basis for making decisions to alter all or part of the assessment system. Reviewers include stakeholders in the education system and independent expert analysts. A cost-benefit analysis of the system focuses on the effects of assessment on learning. These *Principles*, including "Foundations," provide the basis for evaluating the system.

## SIGNERS

*We, the undersigned, recommend that educators, schools, districts, states, and parent, advocacy, civil rights, community, business, and other organizations concerned with education give serious consideration to the Principles and Indicators for Student Assessment Systems for use in evaluating, revising, and developing assessments and assessment systems.*

### Organizations

- The Achievement Council, Los Angeles, CA  
Alameda County Office of Education, CA  
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), Washington, DC  
Association for Community Based Education (ACBE), Washington, DC  
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), Alexandria, VA  
Association for Women in Science, Washington, DC  
Boston Leadership Academy, Boston University  
California Teachers Association  
California Tomorrow  
Center for Collaborative Education, New York, NY  
Center for Collaborative Education, Metro Boston, Inc., Massachusetts  
Center for Language in Learning, El Cajon, CA  
Center for Women Policy Studies, Washington, DC  
Center on Learning, Assessment, and School Structure (CLASS), Princeton, NJ  
Chicago Teachers Union Quest Center, Chicago, IL  
Cleveland Education Fund, Ohio  
Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Public School System, Saipan, MP  
Community Involved Charter School, Lakewood, CO  
Community School District 3, New York, NY  
Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC), Boston, MA  
The Council for Exceptional Children, Reston, VA  
Council of the Great City Schools, Washington, DC  
Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, Chicago, IL  
Current Index to Research of Music in Education (CIRME), Boston, MA  
Education Law Center - PA, Philadelphia  
The Equality in Testing Project, Holmdel, NJ  
Erikson Institute, Chicago, IL  
Evaluation Assistance Center East at the George Washington University Institute for Equity and Excellence in Education  
Fairfax Association of Elementary School Principals (FAESP), Virginia  
Fairfield Area School District, Pennsylvania  
Fenway Middle College High School, Boston, MA  
Foundation For Youth Impact, Inc., Atlanta, GA  
The Foundations School, Chicago, IL  
Gallaudet University, Washington, DC  
High/Scope Education Research Foundation, Ypsilanti, MI  
Hispanic Education Coalition, Washington, DC  
Institute for Democracy in Education, Ohio University  
Institute for Education and Social Policy, New York University  
The Institute for Learning & Teaching, St. Paul, MN  
Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), San Antonio, TX  
International Reading Association (IRA), Newark, DE  
The Learning Center at Wildcat Canyon Ranch/City Stables, Oakland, CA  
Ludlow Independent Schools, Ludlow, KY  
Manoa Writing Program, University of Hawai'i  
Manpower International Inc., Milwaukee, WI  
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), Los Angeles, CA  
Midwest Desegregation Assistance Center, Kansas State University  
Milwaukee District Advisory Council, Wisconsin  
Mississippi Human Services Agenda  
National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE), Washington, DC  
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Washington, DC  
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), Alexandria, VA  
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), Reston, VA  
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), Alexandria, VA

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National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest),  
Cambridge, MA

National Center for Restructuring Education,  
Schools, and Teaching (NCREST), New York, NY

National Center on Educational Outcomes for  
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National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education,  
George Washington University

National Coalition for Indian Education,  
Albuquerque, NM

National Coalition of Education Activists,  
Rhinebeck, NY

National Council for the Social Studies, Washington,  
DC

National Education Association (NEA), Washington,  
DC

National Parent Teacher Association (National PTA),  
Chicago, IL

National Urban Coalition, Washington, DC

National Urban League, New York, NY

National Women's Law Center, Washington, DC

Network of Educators on the Americas (NECA),  
Washington, DC

New England Desegregation Assistance Center at  
Brown University, Rhode Island

North Philadelphia Community Compact for College  
Access and Success, Pennsylvania

Northern Trails Area Education Agency, Iowa

Panasonic Foundation, Secaucus, NJ

Parents Only Want Equal Rights in Education  
(POWER-E), Detroit, MI

Partnership for Professional Development,  
University of Louisville

Pennsylvania School Reform Network

Philadelphia Education Fund, Pennsylvania

Portfolio News / Portfolio Assessment  
Clearinghouse, University of California at San  
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Program Evaluation and Research Group, Lesley  
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Public Education Fund Network, Washington, DC

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Rochester Teachers Association's (RTA) Leadership  
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Synergy Learning, Brattleboro, VT

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- Rev. Patricia Matthews, Executive Director, Foundation for Youth Impact, Inc., Atlanta, GA
- Claude Mayberry, President and CEO, *Science Weekly, Inc.*
- James E. Mazza, Community Superintendent, Community School District 3, New York, NY
- Deborah W. Meier, Senior Fellow, Annenberg Institute for School Reform, New York, NY
- Samuel J. Meisels, Professor, University of Michigan and President and Founder, The Work Sampling System
- Angela Perez Miller, Assistant Professor, DePaul University
- Eula Ewing Monroe, Professor, Mathematics Education, Utah
- Joseph R. Montecalvo, President, Virginia Association of Test Directors
- Fred M. Newmann, Director, Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, University of Wisconsin at Madison
- Jesús Nieto, Associate Professor, School of Teacher Education, San Diego State University
- Sonia Nieto, Professor, University of Massachusetts at Amherst
- Jeannie Oakes, Professor and Assistant Dean, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, University of California at Los Angeles
- Kathleen M. O'Connor, Senior Associate, National Urban League, Chestnut Hill, MA
- Laurie Olsen, Co-Director, California Tomorrow
- Eduardo Peña, Jr., Esq., Washington, D.C.
- Vito Perrone, Harvard Graduate School of Education
- Zhining Qin, Ph.D., Assessment Specialist, Minnesota State Department of Education
- Charles I. Rankin, Ph.D., Director, Midwest Desegregation Assistance Center, Kansas
- Lynn Ann Reesman, Reading Resource Specialist, Milwaukee Public Schools, Wisconsin
- Ed Reidy, Deputy Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education
- Laura I. Rendón, Ph.D., Professor, Arizona State University College of Education
- Len Rieser, Co-Director, Education Law Center - PA
- Thomas A. Romberg, Director, National Center for Research in Mathematical Sciences Education, University of Wisconsin at Madison
- Larry Rosenstock, Executive Director, Rindge School of Technical Arts, Cambridge, MA
- Sophie Sa, Executive Director, Panasonic Foundation, Secaucus, NJ
- Francisca Sanchez, Director Research and Development, Alameda County Office of Education, California
- Carol H. Saylor, Superintendent, Fairfield Area School District, PA
- Janice Jones Schroeder, Delegate-at-Large, National Association of Bilingual Educators (NABE), Alaska
- Cynthia Schuman, Deputy Director, Rockefeller Family Fund, New York, NY
- Stephen M. Schyck, Principal, Fairburn, GA
- Marvin E. Smith, Educator, Utah
- Dr. Alicia Sosa, Assistant Professor, University of Texas at San Antonio
- Krysten M. Stepke, Vice President, Employee Selection Systems, Manpower International Inc., Wisconsin
- Janet Stotland, Co-Director, Education Law Center - PA
- Maria Sweeney, 4th Grade Teacher, Hawes School, Saddle Brook, NJ and *Radical Teacher* board member
- Martha Thurlow, Assistant Director, National Center on Educational Outcomes for Students with Disabilities, Minnesota
- Elliot E. Tocci, Principal, Shurtleff South School, Chelsea, MA/Boston University Partnership
- Marla Ucelli, Educator, New York, NY
- Ronald T. Vera, Adjunct Professor, Education and the Law, Loyola Law School, Los Angeles, CA
- Lucy R. Watkins, Consultant, Arlington, VA
- Prof. Edwardine Weaver RSM, Director, Margaret Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development, University of Rochester, New York
- Andrea Whittaker, Faculty, San Jose State University
- Dr. Pat Nellor Wickwire, President, The Nellor Wickwire Group, Hermosa Beach, CA
- Grant Wiggins, President, The Center on Learning, Assessment, and School Structure (CLASS), Princeton, NJ
- Harriet Doss Willis, Director, Southwest Center for Educational Equity, Southwest Regional Laboratory, Los Alamitos, CA
- Reginald Wilson, Ph.D., Senior Scholar, American Council on Education, Washington, D.C.
- Bob Witherspoon, Research Associate
- Jim Ysseldyke, Director, National Center on Educational Outcomes for Students with Disabilities, Minnesota
- Esteban Steve Zaplain, Specialist, Alameda County Office of Education, California

# SIGN-ON FORM

## PRINCIPLES AND INDICATORS FOR STUDENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

We, the undersigned, recommend that educators, schools, districts, states, and parent, advocacy, civil rights, community, business, and other organizations concerned with education give serious consideration to the Principles and Indicators for Student Assessment Systems for use in evaluating, revising, and developing assessments and assessment systems.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

- You may add our organization to the list of signers of the above statement. I understand our name will be used in public releases of the *Principles and Indicators*.
- You may add my individual name to the list of signers.
- You may use my organization's name, for identification purposes only, in public releases of the *Principles*.
- As an individual signer, you may not add my organization's name, even for identification purposes. I would like to be identified as \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Mail or Fax to:

National Forum on Assessment  
c/o FairTest  
342 Broadway  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
Fax # (617) 497-2224

*Note: The list of signers will be updated periodically.*

## **Principles and Indicators for Student Assessment Systems**

National Forum on Assessment  
c/o FairTest, 342 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139