

## **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 and accurate information about student learning. They employ practices and methods that are consistent with learning goals, curriculum, instruction, and current knowledge of how students learn. Educators assess and document student learning through an appropriate balance of methods that can include structured and informal observations and interviews, projects and tasks, experiments, tests, performances and exhibitions, audio and video tapes, portfolios, and journals. The consequences of using an assessment or a particular method are evaluated regularly to ensure that its effects are, in fact, educationally beneficial.

Classroom assessment is the primary means through which assessment affects learning. It is integrated with curriculum and instruction so that teaching, learning and assessing flow in a continuous process. By documenting and evaluating student work over time, teachers obtain information for understanding student progress in ways that can guide future instruction. Assessment also provides opportunities for self-reflection and evaluation by the student.

Teachers are the primary users and developers of classroom assessments. They understand and apply, as appropriate for classroom work, current technical concepts of effective assessment practices, particularly validity and reliability. Individually and in groups, they analyze the impact of different assessments on student learning and use the results of their analyses to improve their assessment practices.

For classroom and large-scale assessments, scoring guides ("rubrics") for evaluating student work are stated in positive terms (what a student can do) and are appropriate to the work being done. They present a coherent picture of how students can develop and improve their performance.

No assessment method or practice is used that narrows or distorts the curriculum or instructional practices. Multiple-choice and short-answer methods, if used, constitute a limited part, in time or impact, of the total assessment system. History shows that their use, if too prominent, can skew instruction away from methods of teaching that support important learning.

In documenting student achievement, systems focus on providing information grounded in clearly defined learning goals for students and information about a student's progress. Therefore, assessments intended to rank order students or compare students with each other are not a significant part, in time or impact, of the total assessment system.

## Principle 1: Indicators

1. Assessments are based on curriculum and desired learning outcomes that are clearly understood by students, educators, and parents.
2. Assessment practices are compatible with current knowledge about how learning takes place and allow for variety in how students learn.
3. Assessment systems enable a process of continuous feedback for the student.
4. Most assessments allow students to demonstrate understanding by thoughtfully applying knowledge and constructing responses.
5. Assessment systems allow students multiple ways to demonstrate their learning.
6. Assessment systems include opportunities for individual and group work.
7. Classroom assessments are integrated with curriculum and instruction.
8. Teachers employ a variety of assessment methods and obtain multiple forms of evidence about student learning for planning and implementing instruction and for evaluating, working with, and making decisions about students.
9. Teachers can explain how their assessment practices and instruments help improve teaching and how they provide useful information for working with students.
10. Student self-reflection and evaluation are part of the assessment system.
11. Schools establish procedures for enabling classroom-based student assessment information to follow each student from year to year.
12. Assessment methods, samples of assessments, scoring guides or rubrics, and examples of work of varying kind and quality are discussed and understood by students.
13. Scoring guides (rubrics) state in positive terms what students can do and enable users to analyze student strengths and needs in order to plan further instruction.
14. Educators make clear to students the uses and consequences of each assessment.
15. Teachers use current principles and technical concepts of assessment, particularly validity and reliability, in developing and analyzing their classroom assessments.
16. Multiple-choice and short-answer methods are a limited part, in time or impact, of the total assessment system.
17. Assessments intended to rank order students or compare students with each other are not a significant part, in time or impact, of the total assessment system.

## 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.*

In order to support learning, assessment for these purposes conforms to the spirit and general requirements of Principle 1. When teachers, schools, districts, and states all use assessment practices and methods which are consistent with learning goals and current knowledge of how students learn, they establish the basis for a coherent system which meets a variety of purposes.

To report student learning to families, students and other educators, to certify student achievement, or to make important educational decisions, teachers analyze assessment information from ongoing school work and assessments. Important decisions about individuals, such as program placement, grade promotion, or graduation, are not made on the basis of any single assessment.

To provide information useful for school improvement, teachers and other school staff primarily rely on assessment information that is based on regular, continuing work by the school's students. External or large-scale assessments provide additional and corroborative information.

To provide information for accountability, the school, the district, and the state gather a variety of assessment information that they can use to inform the public, provide assistance to schools and districts, and make decisions about programs. This information can come from a combination of classroom-based assessment information (such as portfolio reviews) and external or large-scale assessments (such as examinations). To evaluate programs efficiently, districts and states rely on various forms of sampling, to the extent feasible. Technical standards for assessment are revised or developed to ensure they are adequate for the assessment purposes and methods, and they are used to help ensure high quality practices. Research is conducted to ensure that assessments are supporting and not harming important student learning. Because the context of learning affects student achievement and all students are held to the same high standards, accountability reports include contextual information about resources, school practices and quality, and other outcomes.

## Principle 2: Indicators

1. Teachers, schools, districts, or states make reports on and decisions about individuals on the basis of cumulative evidence of learning, using a variety of assessment information, not on the basis of any single assessment.
2. Assessment systems provide students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning.
3. Schools use assessment information to improve curriculum, instruction, and teacher effectiveness.
4. The evaluation of an accumulation of work and assessments done by students over time is a major component of accountability.
5. Information for accountability is obtained through sampling, to the extent feasible.
6. When classroom-based information is used in accountability, independent evaluations of the information, such as re-scoring a sample of the portfolios or exams, are conducted.
7. Teachers view assessments for accountability purposes as consistent with and not harmful to curriculum, instruction, and high quality classroom assessment.
8. Information from large-scale assessments is returned to the school and teachers in a form that they can use.
9. If programs, schools, districts, or states are compared, appropriate contextual information is provided.
10. Technical standards for assessment systems are developed and used to ensure that assessments provide accurate and comprehensive information, measure progress toward learning goals in ways that are consistent with how students learn, and are used appropriately.
11. Technical studies of large-scale assessments or those used across a number of classrooms or schools show that the assessments focus on important knowledge as defined in learning goals, are consistent with knowledge of how students learn, and are not biased against particular population groups.
12. Validity studies of large-scale assessments or those used across a number of classrooms or schools show that the assessments have beneficial, not harmful, effects on student learning and that actions taken based on assessment information are adequately supported by and are appropriate uses of that information.

## PRINCIPLE 3 Assessment Systems Are Fair to All Students

***Assessment systems, including policies, practices, instruments, and uses, are fair to all students.***

Assessment systems ensure that all students receive fair treatment in order not to limit students' present education and future opportunities. Assessment is fair when every student has received equitable and adequate schooling, including culturally sensitive curriculum, instruction, and assessment that encourage and support each student's learning, and when assessment systems meet these *Principles*. In particular:

Assessment results accurately reflect a student's actual knowledge, understanding and achievement. Assessments are designed to minimize the impact of biases on the student's performance, including:

- biases of persons developing or conducting the assessment, evaluating the performance, or interpreting or using the results;
- biases caused by basing assessments on the perspectives or experiences of one particular group; and
- biased format or content, including offensive language or stereotypes.

Educators and assessment and content experts construct assessment systems that support learning by all students in a diverse population with varying learning styles. Assessment developers and users recognize and build upon the benefits of diversity. Assessment systems allow for multiple methods, as stated in Principle 1, to assess student progress toward meeting learning goals and for multiple but equivalent ways for students to express knowledge and understanding. Assessments are administered under conditions that support high quality performance.

Assessments are created or adapted and accommodations are made to meet the specific needs of particular populations, while preserving the integrity and validity of the assessments. These populations include English language learners (also identified as limited English proficient students) and students with disabilities. Adaptations include, but are not limited to, physical accommodations, assessments in a student's primary language or language of instruction (written, oral or signed), and extra time. Advocates for specific groups help detail how to meet these assessment standards.

Students should not suffer adverse consequences simply because their backgrounds or school experiences may have made them less familiar with particular methods of assessment. Therefore, teachers and schools provide all students with instruction and practice in the assessment methods used to evaluate their progress, but do not engage in inappropriate coaching.

Assessment developers consider possible adverse consequences of using the assessment, particularly for those groups which currently suffer discrimination or the effects of previous discrimination. Assessments are modified as necessary to reduce harmful impacts while preserving accuracy. Assessments are used to provide students with optimal learning opportunities, rather than place them in tracks or programs which narrow curriculum options or foreclose educational opportunities.

## Principle 3: Indicators

1. Every student has the opportunity to perform on a variety of high quality assessments during the school year.
2. Schools prepare all students to perform well on assessments which meet these principles.
3. Assessment practices recognize and incorporate the variety of cultural backgrounds of students who are assessed.
4. Assessment practices incorporate the variety of different student learning styles.
5. Assessments, particularly for young children, are developmentally appropriate.
6. Assessments are created or adapted to meet the needs of students who are learning English.
7. Assessments are created or adapted and accommodations made to meet the needs of students who have a disability.
8. All students are knowledgeable and experienced in the assessment methods used to evaluate their work.
9. The group which designs or validates an assessment reflects, has experience with, and understands the particular needs and backgrounds of the student population, including race, culture, gender, socio-economic, language, age, and disability status.
10. Committees of persons knowledgeable about the diverse student population review large-scale assessments for bias and are able to modify, remove, or replace items, tasks, rubrics, or other elements of the assessment, if they find them biased or offensive.
11. Teacher education and continuing professional development prepare teachers to assess all students fairly.
12. Technical standards are developed and used to ensure that assessments do not have harmful consequences for student learning or teaching.
13. States and districts report their assessment data by racial, ethnic, gender, linguistic, disability, and socio-economic status groups for analysis of school, district, and state results, provided that doing so does not infringe upon student privacy rights.
14. Schools do not use assessments to track or place students in ways that narrow curriculum options or foreclose educational opportunities.

## PRINCIPLE 4 Professional Collaboration and Development Support Assessment

***Knowledgeable and fair educators are essential to high quality assessment systems and practices.***

Assessment systems depend on 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.

Teachers are the primary assessors. They:

- document, evaluate, and report student learning;
- construct, select, and use appropriate, high-quality methods and instruments to meet various assessment purposes; and
- participate in developing and scoring any district or state assessments and know how to use relevant information from them.

Schools of education assess their own students using methods they expect prospective teachers to learn to use. They prepare administrators to support, assist, and supervise teachers in high quality assessment practices. They prepare teachers to:

- integrate assessment with instruction and curriculum;
- use a variety of high quality methods for assessing the performance and development of a diverse student population; and
- communicate with families and students about the methods used and the information obtained from the assessments.

Educators, including teachers, administrators, teacher aides, school psychologists, and counselors, determine the types of individual and collective professional development that contribute to the quality of assessment practices. They actively participate in such professional development. They work together to improve their craft, meet regularly to discuss assessment and evaluate student work, and establish networks to discuss assessment issues and practices, particularly in the fields they teach. They engage in scoring and discussing portfolios, work samples, or performance examinations at the district or state level. They consult with families, the community, and various experts to shape professional development in assessment to meet the needs of all their students. Schools, states, and districts provide resources that educators can call on or use as appropriate to strengthen their assessment capabilities.

## Principle 4: Indicators

1. Teacher educators ensure that beginning teachers possess basic knowledge, skills, and experience for assessing their students with a variety of appropriate methods and communicating with parents and students.
2. Teacher educators practice appropriate assessment techniques.
3. Teachers perform well in their role as primary assessors of student learning.
4. Teachers regularly participate in setting performance standards, selecting examples of work of different quality, and scoring or re-scoring portfolios or performance assessments at the school, district, or state level.
5. Teachers and administrators know how to use the results of large-scale assessment information for program and school improvement.
6. Schools and districts provide regular, substantial meeting time for collaborative professional development that includes discussions of assessment, actual student work, and the relationship of assessment to instruction.
7. Educators work together to determine the professional development needed for improving their capabilities as assessors.
8. Educators actively participate in professional development for improving their capabilities as assessors.
9. Teachers and other school personnel consult with parents and other community members about professional development related to assessing all students in the school.
10. Schools, districts, and states provide adequate opportunities for administrators to engage in professional development that supports sound teacher and school assessment practices.
11. Schools and districts enable teacher aides, counselors, psychologists and other school personnel to participate with teachers, as appropriate, in professional development about assessment.
12. Districts and states provide resources needed 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.***

Parents, family members, and students contribute important information and knowledge to both classroom and large-scale assessments. This includes knowledge about how students learn, the communities and cultures in which they live, and how children can be prepared for assessment experiences. School systems educate family and community members to participate effectively in the assessment system and provide information about how parents can support their children in the assessment process. School systems also educate parents and the community about the meaning of assessment results. Schools, districts and other assessment developers create a supportive atmosphere, ensure accessible meeting times and places, and use language that encourages broad-based community participation in planning, designing, and evaluating the assessments.

In constructing, selecting, and using assessments for their classrooms, teachers incorporate and build on parent, family, community, and expert knowledge. Developers of large-scale assessments include teachers and other school-based educators in the development process.

Assessment, curriculum, and content experts continue to have a central role in developing large-scale assessments. They also have a responsibility to help teachers and schools develop and improve classroom assessment practices. Experts are particularly attuned to teachers' needs to improve assessments within the everyday constraints and challenges of teaching. Teachers and administrators, in turn, consider the insights provided and issues raised by the experts.

Other evaluators of students, such as counselors and psychologists, work with teachers, relying primarily on analysis of classroom activity to plan how best to educate each child.