

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.

Principle 5: Indicators

1. Teachers, schools, districts, states, and other assessment developers include students, family, and community members in planning, developing, reviewing, and evaluating assessment systems, instruments, and practices.
2. Schools and districts educate parents and community members to participate effectively in developing and reviewing assessment systems and practices.
3. Teachers, schools and districts educate parents and community members about the meaning and interpretation of assessment results.
4. Those developing assessments ensure that meeting times and places are accessible to all people who desire to participate in assessment development.
5. Schools and teachers provide parents the opportunity to discuss classroom assessment practices.
6. Students participate in discussing standards and planning both classroom and large-scale assessments.
7. Teachers, school administrators, and other school personnel from a variety of subject areas, grade levels, and demographic backgrounds play a prominent role in designing, administering, and scoring any assessments mandated by the school, district, state, or federal government.
8. Assessment, curriculum, and content experts work together with school-based educators to develop assessments that support important learning, are compatible with how students learn, and promote effective instruction.

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, schools, districts, and states communicate, clearly and in ordinary language, the purposes, methods, and results of assessment. They focus their 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 in learning. They report achievement data in terms of learning standards and avoid comparing students or programs in ways that do not support good instructional practices. Teachers and schools also clearly inform parents and students about important assessments, including what the assessment is, when it will occur, and how the results will be used.

Schools, districts, and states make use of many avenues of communication (with appropriate protection for student privacy), including parent-teacher conferences, mass media, school papers, displays of student work in public spaces, and open meetings to view and discuss student work and assessment results. They also provide translations (written, oral, or signed) of important information into languages used by the families and communities served. Information on all students in the system is included in public reports by schools, districts, and states.

Teachers, schools, districts, and states establish avenues for comment and feedback from family and community members about the assessment processes. Educators and technical experts work with families and communities to improve reporting and plan how best to receive and use feedback to improve assessment practices. Specialized or technical information intended primarily for professional use is also readily available to the public.

Schools, districts, and states present assessment results in conjunction with other information about schooling, including information about:

- education programs, including curriculum, instructional practices, student placement practices, and class size;
- social data, including poverty indices and demographic data on students, staff, and community;
- resources, including funding and expenditures, staff qualifications, and available materials and equipment;
- school environment, including building quality and freedom from violence; and
- outcomes, including graduation rates, post-secondary education attendance, and other measures of long-term achievement and satisfaction.

Principle 6: Indicators

1. Survey results show that parents and other community members from different racial, ethnic, cultural, income, disability, and linguistic groups agree that reports:
 - are clear;
 - are sufficiently frequent; and
 - include sufficient examples of goals, standards, sample or actual assessments, rubrics or scoring guides, and examples of student products (with safeguards for privacy).
2. Parents, students, and other community members participate in determining the content, form, and frequency that reporting will take.
3. Translations enable all parents with limited or no English proficiency to receive information about the achievement of their children; and they enable all community members to receive data about student achievement in general at the school, district, and state levels.
4. Reports on schools, districts, or states include information on all students.
5. Schools, districts, and states report achievement information to the public in terms of agreed-upon learning standards.
6. Schools and teachers report individual student achievement information to students and families in terms of learning standards, individual growth and progress, student interests, and how the student learns.
7. School and teacher reports about student achievement focus on what students know and are able to do, what they need to learn to do, and what will be done to facilitate improvement.
8. Teachers and schools present information in a variety of ways, including written reports and conferences, to students and their families.
9. Teachers clearly inform students and parents about important assessments, including what, when, and how they are used.
10. Schools, districts, and states use many avenues of communication to inform the public.
11. All reports explain the meanings, limitations, and strengths of reported data.
12. Public reports present assessment information in the context of education programs, social data, resources, school environment, and other outcomes.
13. Technical and specialized reports are readily available to interested members of the public.

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. A periodic, comprehensive review is the basis for making decisions to alter all or part of the assessment system. In this review process, educators use these *Principles and Indicators*, including the “Foundations” section. An assessment review usually is integrated with a review of the educational system as a whole.

The ultimate value of an assessment system is its ability to enhance learning for all students. Reviews involve an inquiry process focused on two questions: Does the system provide information useful for making decisions and taking action? Are the actions taken educationally beneficial?

Reviewers consider how well the information provided by assessments helps in making decisions and improving schooling. They pay careful attention to any unintended consequences of the assessment system, particularly on teaching and learning, and especially for groups who suffer discrimination or the effects of previous discrimination. Reviewers consider how well the system adheres to each of the assessment principles. They also consider how well the parts of the assessment system combine to form a coherent whole. If only part of a total system is reviewed (e.g., one school’s assessments), the review is tailored to fit the purposes of that part.

To ensure that timely and effective reviews are conducted, a continuing group has responsibility for monitoring the review process. The primary reviewers of classroom assessments are school-based educators working collaboratively. Parents, students, and other educators and experts also provide feedback about classroom and school practices. Assessment reviews by schools are part of regular evaluations of school quality. Reviews of large-scale assessments and whole systems require broad participation from all stakeholder groups, including teachers and other educators; family and community members; advocacy, civil rights, higher education, business, labor and community groups; students; and assessment and curriculum specialists. Independent expert analysis of the system is included in the public review process.

Reviews include an analysis of the costs and benefits of the assessments to the education system as a whole. The most important criterion for cost-benefit analysis is that the assessment benefit and not harm important student learning.

Schools, districts, and states use review information to improve the system. Because new programs or fundamental changes take time to show results, school systems do not use assessment review information to make hasty decisions about programs; nor do they use difficulties in implementing new assessments that are consistent with these *Principles* as a reason to quickly discard them.

Principle 7: Indicators

1. The assessment system at all levels is reviewed regularly.
2. A continuing group has responsibility for monitoring the assessment review process.
3. Surveys show that stakeholders were able to participate in evaluating school, district, and state assessment systems.
4. Public review of the assessment system includes analysis by independent experts in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
5. Cost-benefit analyses of the assessment system focus on its effects on instruction and learning.
6. The review includes evidence of the use of assessment information in the educational planning and improvement process.
7. Reviewers evaluate:
 - adequacy of classroom assessment practices to support important learning for all students;
 - effects of assessments on curriculum, instruction, and learning;
 - adequacy of information for certification, program improvement, and accountability;
 - fairness for all students;
 - technical quality and rigor of assessments;
 - intended and unintended consequences of the assessment system, particularly those affecting learning and equity;
 - adequacy of professional development activities;
 - extent and quality of professional collaboration on assessment;
 - extent and quality of stakeholder involvement in developing and reviewing the assessment system;
 - adequacy of contextual information that is presented with assessment data and used to help understand student learning outcomes;
 - quality of communication with families and the public;
 - costs and benefits of the assessment system;
 - quality and usefulness of the review process itself; and
 - coherence of the assessment system.