Types of assessments; characteristics of assessments; scoring assessments; uses of assessments; understanding of measurement theory and assessment-related issues; and interpreting and communicating results of assessments

Assessment Strategies

Assessment is the gathering of data for use in comparison against a standard. It can measure either product or process. The primary purpose of assessment is communication. Initially, it is a way for students to communicate to teachers about what they know or are able to do. It is also used as a tool to communicate information about student progress with parents, administrators, community and political leaders, other educational institutions, and to the students themselves. The more meaningful and defined our assessments are, the more useful they are as communication tools.

Assessment can be formal or informal. Informal assessment is constant and ongoing in an effective classroom. Formal assessment happens at designated times and at regular intervals, and often results in data that can be gathered and reported as a part of a status report, progress report, or grade.

There are a variety of ways to categorize the different types of assessments.

Some can be categorized by the standard of comparison used.

- **Norm-referenced** assessments use the others who have taken the test as the standard of comparison for reporting the scores. An example would be college entrance examinations.
- **Criterion-referenced** assessments use a set of content standards as the standard of comparison. Students’ scores are not related to how others do but to how well the students know the content or skills assessed.
- **Aptitude-referenced** assessments use the student’s own ability or aptitude as the standard of assessment. It is a measure of how the student’s scores relates to his or her potential on the skills or body of knowledge assessed.

Some can be categorized by the structure of the assessment.

- **Standardized tests** are those that are designed to compare scores across a broad spectrum of individuals. They are usually pre-prepared and given to students on a statewide or nationwide scale.
- **Performance assessments** are those assessments that use some type of task to assess knowledge or skill. Performance
Assessment tasks may be **direct task** assessment (authentic assessment) or **indirect task** assessment, and may include **open-response** and/or **closed-response** tasks.

Some are categorized by the time or purpose of the assessment.

- **Pre-assessment** is an assessment technique used to determine a student’s level of knowledge or skill prior to an instructional sequence.

- **Formative assessment** includes the variety of assessment techniques a teacher uses to determine how students are doing during an instructional sequence. Formative assessment is ongoing and often informal. The results of pre-assessment and formative assessment ought to have an impact on the planning of instruction.

- **Summative assessment** is used at the completion of an instructional sequence to assess a student’s level of knowledge or skill as well as the success level of the instructional sequence used. It is most often formal.

Effective assessments have both high **validity** and high **reliability**. They must assess that which they report to assess and they must assess it accurately. Effective assessment controls as best as possible for those factors that might confound the results of the assessment. This means that teachers must create and use assessment tools that are connected to their objectives and employ those tools in effective ways. Teachers need to seek ways to collect the most accurate information possible to make the best possible decisions.

Like instruction, assessment may need to be adjusted to meet the needs of specific students. This is most true of those students who are on an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The teacher always needs to take into account the requirements established in a student’s IEP when employing assessment strategies in his/her classroom.

Other assessment terms to know

- Mean
- Median
- Mode
- Standard Deviation
- Analytic rubrics
- Holistic rubrics

Terms related to the reporting of scores

- Raw score
- Standardized score
- Percentile rank
- Stanine
- Grade equivalent score