

presents a brief overview of mandated statewide assessments and concludes with a consideration of the technical quality of assessments to ensure that assessments yield accurate information for their intended purposes.

This chapter can be used in several ways. As a source of professional learning for teachers and school and district leaders, the chapter plays a critical role in strengthening educators' assessment literacy—their knowledge and understanding of assessment practices and appropriate uses of assessment evidence to shape powerful instruction. The chapter provides teachers and leaders a structure for examining the types of assessment practices and sources of assessment evidence currently in use in schools and for proposing needed additions and adjustments. This chapter features formative assessment as a process and recommends that it be the focus of in depth professional learning and support, including dialogue with peers, classroom practice of new approaches, and coaching.

Purposes of Assessment

Assessments are designed and used for different purposes. For example, an annual assessment designed to assess how well students have met a specific standard (e.g., CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy RI.4.8: *Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text*) does just that: It indicates whether students have met a specific standard. However, this assessment does not diagnose a particular reading difficulty a fourth-grade student is experiencing in achieving the standard. Nor does it provide substantive insights into how a student is beginning to understand what constitutes evidence in a specific text. In the use of any assessment, a central question is, "Is this assessment being used for the purpose for which it is intended?"

Assessment has two fundamental purposes: One is to provide information about student learning minute-by-minute, day-to-day, and week-to-week so that teachers continuously adapt instruction to meet students' specific needs and secure progress. This type of assessment is intended to assist learning and is often referred to as formative assessment or assessment **for** learning. Formative assessment occurs in real time—during instruction—while student learning is underway (Allal 2010; Black and William 1998; Bell and Cowie 2000; Heritage 2010; Shepard 2000, 2005b). For example, a third-grade teacher working with small groups of students on distinguishing their point of view from a particular author's viewpoint gains insights into students' developing skills through the use of strategic questions and uses students' responses to adjust instruction.

Although discussed further in the next section, formative assessment is briefly defined in figure 8.2.

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Figure 8.2. What is Formative Assessment?

What is formative assessment? Formative assessment is a *process* teachers and students use *during* instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching moves and learning tactics. It is *not* a tool or an event, nor a bank of test items or performance tasks. Well-supported by research evidence, it improves students' learning in time to achieve intended instructional outcomes. Key features include:

1. **Clear lesson-learning goals and success criteria**, so students understand what they are aiming for;
2. **Evidence of learning** gathered during lessons to determine where students are relative to goals;
3. **A pedagogical response to evidence, including descriptive feedback**, that supports learning by helping students answer: Where am I going? Where am I now? What are my next steps?
4. **Peer- and self-assessment** to strengthen students' learning, efficacy, confidence, and autonomy;
5. **A collaborative classroom culture** where students and teachers are partners in learning.

Source

Linquanti, Robert. 2014. *Supporting Formative Assessment for Deeper Learning: A Primer for Policymakers*. Paper prepared for the Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers/State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards, 2. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

A second purpose of assessment is to provide information on students' current levels of achievement after a period of learning has occurred. Such assessments—which may be classroom-based, districtwide, or statewide—serve a summative purpose and are sometimes referred to as assessments **of** learning. They help determine whether students have attained a certain level of competency after a more or less extended period of instruction and learning; such as the end of a

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unit which may last several weeks, the end of a quarter, or annually (National Research Council [NRC] 2001). Inferences made by teachers from the results of these assessments are used to make decisions about student placement, instruction, curricula, interventions, and to assign grades. For example, the current state assessment of English language proficiency, the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), measures an EL's annual progress in attaining proficiency. School districts use the results of the annual assessment to make decisions about the ongoing instructional placement or possible reclassification of ELs. The English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) are scheduled to replace the CELDT in 2017 or 2018. (See the section on English language proficiency assessments in this chapter.)

As part of a balanced and comprehensive assessment system, assessment **for** learning and assessment **of** learning are both important. While assessment(s) of learning usually involve a tool or event *after* a period of learning, assessment for learning is a process. Evidence-gathering strategies that are truly formative yield information that is *timely* and *specific* enough to assist learning as it occurs. Figure 8.3 presents the key dimensions of assessment for and of learning and highlights their differences.

Figure 8.3. Key Dimensions of Assessment for Learning and Assessment of Learning

Assessment: A Process of Reasoning from Evidence to Inform Teaching and Learning			
Dimension	Assessment for learning	Assessment of learning	
Method	Formative Assessment Process	Classroom Summative/ Interim/Benchmark Assessment*	Large-Scale Summative Assessment
Main Purpose	Assist immediate learning (in the moment)	Measure student achievement or progress (may also inform future teaching and learning)	Evaluate educational programs and measure multi-year progress
Focus	Teaching and learning	Measurement	Accountability
Locus	Individual student and classroom learning	Grade level/ department/school	School/district/state
Priority for Instruction	High	Medium	Low
Proximity to Learning	In-the-midst	Middle-distance	Distant
Timing	<i>During</i> immediate instruction or sequence of lessons	<i>After</i> teaching-learning cycle → <i>between</i> units/ periodic	<i>End</i> of year/course
Participants	Teacher and Student (T-S/S-S/Self)	Student (may later include T-S in conference)	Student
<p>*Assessment of learning may also be used for formative purposes <i>if</i> assessment evidence is used to shape future instruction. Such assessments include weekly quizzes; curriculum embedded within-unit tasks (e.g., oral presentations, writing projects, portfolios) or end-of-unit/culminating tasks; monthly writing samples, reading assessments (e.g., oral reading observation, periodic foundational skills assessments); and student reflections/self-assessments (e.g., rubric self-rating).</p>			
<p>Source Adapted from Linquanti, Robert. 2014. <i>Supporting Formative Assessment for Deeper Learning: A Primer for Policymakers</i>. Paper prepared for the Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers/State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards, 2. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.</p>			

As figure 8.3 illustrates, assessment for learning—comprising key practices of the formative assessment process—occurs during instruction (or while learning is happening) and addresses students’ immediate learning needs. Intertwined and inseparable from teachers’ pedagogical practice, formative assessment is a high priority. It is especially important as teachers assess and guide their students to develop and apply a broad range of language and literacy skills. The special note (*) in figure 8.3 indicates that some assessments of learning can be used for formative purposes. In other words, they can be used to inform future teaching and learning and not simply to report on achievement or progress. This is only the case *if* the evidence-gathering tool addresses *both* the focus of instruction of the previous unit *and* immediate future learning goals.

School leaders and professional learning providers consider the support that educators require to understand and implement the formative assessment process fully, as well as to use interim/benchmark and summative assessments effectively. Importantly, educators (classroom teachers, specialists, administrators, and others) interpret assessment evidence in order to plan instruction and respond pedagogically to emerging student learning.

Collaborative professional environments, such as communities of practice, are the nexus of learning, and the work teachers do relative to assessment evidence is part of an ongoing cycle of inquiry. (See chapter 11 in this *ELA/ELD Framework*.) To optimize instructional decision making relative to the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards, teachers and leaders make full use of assessment for both formative and summative purposes.

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Assessment Cycles

One way to consider assessment for different purposes is to conceptualize assessment as operating in different cycles: short, medium, and long (Wiliam 2006). Figure 8.4 presents a range of assessments within a comprehensive assessment system. Those assessments that are more proximate to student learning (i.e., minute-by-minute, daily, weekly) operate in a short cycle because they address a short period of teaching and learning. Short-cycle assessment serves a formative purpose because its intended use is to inform immediate teaching and learning. Assessments administered at the end of the year operate in a long cycle because they cover a much longer period of learning. Long-cycle assessments are primarily used for summative purposes.