Foundations

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Guiding Principles for Classroom Assessment

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Introduction

This document has been developed to guide Illinois educators as they create balanced assessment systems at the classroom, school, and district levels. Balanced assessment systems produce useful data that guide school improvement. In addition, this document provides guidance concerning the measurement of student growth as part of a valid and reliable performance evaluation plan.

What is Assessment?

Assessment is defined as a systematic process of collecting and interpreting information used to inform educators, students, and stakeholders. Engaging students in an ongoing system of interrelated assessments, that reveal changes in student learning over time, not only informs instructional practice but motivates and empowers students to take charge of their learning. This is the foundation for creating a balanced assessment system.

What is a Balanced Assessment System?

A balanced assessment system is the strategic use of assessment that informs decisions at the classroom, school, district, and state levels. A balanced assessment system is composed of formative, interim, and summative assessments:

- **Formative Assessment** is an assessment process used by educators and students during instruction for the purposes of informing teaching and improving learning.

- **Interim Assessments** are used by educators periodically throughout the school year for the purposes of predicting student success, evaluating ongoing programs, and informing teaching and improving learning.

- **Summative Assessments** are used for the purpose of evaluating student, program, or school success at an end point in time.

The *Guiding Principles for Classroom Assessment* has adapted the *Field Trial Draft of the Classroom Assessment Standards: Sound Assessment Practices for PK-12*, copyrighted to the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) Classroom Assessment Standards Development Task Force[1] (www.jcsee.org). The JCSEE has also published a final

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[1] The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) consists of the following sponsoring and cooperating organizations: American Counseling Association, American Educational Research Association, American Evaluation Association, American Indian Higher Education Consortium, American Psychological Association, Canadian Evaluation Society, Canadian Society for the Study of Education, Consortium for Research on Educational Accountability and Teacher Evaluation, Council of Chief State School Officers, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of School Psychologists, National Education Association, National Rural Education Association, National Council on Measurement in Education, National Legislative Program Evaluation Society, and National School Board Association.

document titled *Classroom Assessment Standards for PreK-12 Teachers: Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation*.

Overview
Classroom assessment practices are an integral part of teaching and learning. Without sound assessment practices, we may not know if students are progressing as planned. Further, we may not be able to effectively plan for students' future learning opportunities. The Classroom Assessment Standards contains a set of standards and related guidelines accepted by professional organizations as indicative of consistent and accurate classroom assessment practices. The standards and related guidelines identify the issues to consider when exercising the professional judgment required for fair and equitable classroom assessment for all students. The results from classroom assessments that adhere to these standards and guidelines can then be used with confidence by teachers, students, and, where appropriate, parents/guardians, to better foster student learning.

Prior to undertaking any form of assessment, it is essential that we develop a clear understanding of the following:

- Purpose of the assessment, including users, intent, and decisions to be influenced by the results.

- What is to be assessed, in terms of learning targets or expectations.

- The best method for conducting the assessment we have selected or developed, given the purpose and learning targets.

- How to best communicate the assessment results and to whom.

- How to involve students in the assessment process.

These five basic considerations must guide educators from the very start of planning the assessment and the instruction occurring alongside or leading up to it. The consideration of assessment purpose, learning expectations, assessment method, communication, and student involvement can positively benefit students' continuous learning.

Purposes and Nature of Classroom Assessment
Classroom assessments cover a range of purposes. The assessment of student learning might be used formatively to inform small adjustments or enhancements to ongoing instruction or used summatively to help measure overall curriculum and program effectiveness. The size and scope of the classroom assessment itself can vary, as can the degree of formality of the assessment. Three examples of classroom assessment practices that differ in their formality and consequences are:

- Formative assessment to inform teachers and students about progress on learning intentions and to inform and direct subsequent learning and teaching.
- Larger projects, such as an essay, a performance assessment, or a research project that may be used as interim or summative assessments may have significant formative components to support student learning along the way, such as regular self-assessment of progress, feedback from peers or teachers, and drafts before a final version or product is submitted.

- Summative assessments used to hold students accountable for demonstrating acquired knowledge or skills at the completion of a course can also be used in future planning.

When conducting an assessment, consideration should be given to the consequences of the decisions to be made. The outcomes of some assessments may be more critical than others. For example, misinterpretation of the level of performance on an end-of-unit test may result in incorrectly holding a student from proceeding to the next instructional unit in a continuous progress situation. In such "high-stakes" situations, every effort should be made to ensure that the assessment method will yield consistent and accurate results. Low-stakes assessments such as question/answer during class or homework designed to determine current understanding of an ongoing unit of study may be less stringent.

Regardless of the purpose of the classroom assessment, adherence to the standards and guidelines presented in the *Classroom Assessment Standards* will help ensure that the information obtained from the classroom assessment and the interpretation of the information are accurate, allowing for follow-up activities designed to support continuous evidence-based learning.

This current revision of the standards is the product of a comprehensive effort to reach consensus on what constitutes sound principles that guide the fair assessment of students and foster learning in PK–12 classrooms. The standards should be considered neither exhaustive nor mandatory. However, educational organizations, institutions, and individual professionals who support them and/or endorse their use are committing themselves to fair and equitable classroom assessment for all students.

Organization of the *Classroom Assessment Standards*
The *Classroom Assessment Standards* statements are organized into three broad domains:

- **Foundations**
  The standards begin with the foundations domain. The six foundation standards encompass the basis for developing and implementing sound and fair classroom assessment practices that are focused on the students to be assessed. Within any particular classroom assessment context, the teacher needs to begin the assessment process with a clear understanding of the purpose and objectives to be targeted. Based on this, the teacher selects the appropriate types and methods of classroom assessment

to meet that purpose. In addition, the teacher should determine who will use the assessment results and how they will use them.

- **Use**
  The four use standards align with the assessment process and follow a logical progression from the selection and development of classroom assessments to the communication of the assessment results. It is important to understand what learning targets will be assessed and how achievement will be assessed given the purpose of the assessment; how the students' responses will be analyzed; and how the results will be communicated and used. Additionally, it is important to have student involvement through all phases since students are also important decision makers in the classroom.

- **Quality**
  Teachers can use classroom assessment results with increased confidence when their classroom assessment practices meet the six quality standards. Quality assessments yield results that are accurate and reliable, are free of bias, and include all students. Additionally, it is important that teachers review their assessment practices and revise them so that they reflect current and best assessment practice.

Scope of the *Classroom Assessment Standards*
For the purposes of the *Classroom Assessment Standards*, the term "assessment" is used to encompass all of the strategies and techniques that a classroom teacher might use to collect information from students about their progress.

Uses of the *Classroom Assessment Standards*
The focus of the standards at the classroom level stems from the belief that strong and continuous learning requires consistent daily attention to gather, analyze, and effectively use accurate assessment information to guide instruction leading to student learning. The primary intended users are the PK-12 classroom teachers. Other users of these standards may include building-level and district-level administrators; staff developers; faculty in colleges of education and other pre-service programs for teachers; researchers in the field of assessment; and program evaluators; parents and guardians, while users of assessment information, will likely not use the standards themselves. Likewise, students may benefit from being involved in a self- or peer-assessment in their classroom, but they are unlikely to become independent users of the standards.

The standard statements alone are helpful but not sufficient. Regardless of the purpose or intent of the user, the supporting explanations and guidelines offer clarity and definition to the standard statements. Reliance on individual interpretation of standard statements without the support of the research-based explanations and guidelines may result in well intended but misguided applications of the standards. The explanations and guidelines are specific to each standard statement and provide the opportunity for educators to engage in rich discussions within the context of their school setting.

Examples of ways in which the standard statements, supported by their guidelines, can be used include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Individual teachers may use the *Classroom Assessment Standards* to select, develop, administer, evaluate, and interpret classroom assessments that will yield more accurate interpretations of their students' performances. This, in turn, can be used to foster their students' further learning and, where needed, make adjustments to instruction.

- Teacher groups, such as professional learning communities or learning teams, may use the *Classroom Assessment Standards* to evaluate their practices, shape plans for improvement, and share ideas for classroom assessment. The standards can provide a background for developing a common understanding among teachers as to appropriate strategies for the selection, development, use, and interpretation of classroom assessments.

- Teachers, curriculum facilitators, and administrators may use the standards to develop, strengthen, and reflect on teacher levels of expertise and performance in conducting classroom assessments. This may inform continued professional development efforts.

- Building- and district-level administrators may work with teacher leaders to use the standards to develop written classroom assessment policies and guidelines for assessing students in their schools.

- Colleges of education may use the standards to inform the development of courses for pre-service educators in the area of assessment.

- Instructors of in-service programs may use the standards to identify and teach the important aspects of effective classroom assessment practices.

- Staff developers and consultants may use the standards to align their professional training programs with sound methods of classroom assessment.

- Educational researchers and program evaluators may find the standards helpful in developing assessments to be used within their work.

How and by whom the *Classroom Assessment Standards* are used should be determined within the specific educational context by the professionals involved. Educational settings vary widely across student populations and regions. Professional judgment should be used to identify which standards are most appropriate for each classroom assessment situation. The JCSEE cautions that the individual standards are not equally applicable in all classroom assessment situations. Professional judgment should be used to identify which standards are most appropriate for each classroom assessment situation.

Foundations

Classroom assessment practices must be aligned with learning targets grounded in curriculum and expectations for individual student growth to provide accurate information about students' strengths and areas of need, while also fostering continued learning. Since the support of student learning is a key purpose of classroom assessment, it is necessary to use assessment results to inform instruction. The more students, teachers, and when appropriate, parents/guardians and others with a legitimate need to know, understand the intent of classroom assessment, the more likely they will be to support the assessment process and use the results.

F 1 Assessment Purpose: Classroom assessment practices should have a clear purpose that supports teaching and learning.

F 2 Learning Expectations: Classroom assessment practices should align with the appropriate learning expectations and instruction intended for each student.

F 3 Assessment Design: The types and methods of classroom assessment used should clearly allow students to demonstrate their learning.

F 4 Student Engagement: Students should be meaningfully engaged in the assessment process and use of the assessment evidence to enhance their learning.

F 5 Assessment Preparation: Adequate teacher and student preparation in terms of resources, time, and learning opportunities should be part of classroom assessment practices.

F 6 Informed Stakeholders: The purposes and uses of classroom assessment should be communicated to students and, when appropriate, parents/guardians.

F1   *Assessment Purpose*: Classroom assessment practices should have a clear purpose that supports teaching and learning.

EXPLANATION

The focus of classroom assessment practices whether summative, interim, or formative in nature is to support student learning. As a result, a clear purpose related to student learning enhances the effectiveness of an assessment process. Purposes for classroom assessment practices may range from obtaining diagnostic information at the start of instruction to determining student growth to be reported at the end of an instructional period. For example, purposes may include the following:

- Providing evidence of learning to inform instructional decisions and practice.

- Providing immediate feedback on current learning targets to students.

- Engaging students in self-assessment to develop an understanding of their own learning.

- Engaging students in peer assessment to support peers' learning and to deepen the learning of the students actively engaged in the peer assessment process.

- Informing students and parents/guardians about the level of achievement of the learning expectations for a defined period.

- Making diagnostic and assignment decisions to place students into appropriate instructional groups or to receive individualized instruction.

GUIDELINES

Consider the following questions to help identify the purpose(s) of a specific classroom assessment practice:

- Why is the assessment to be conducted?

    - For example, how will the assessment results be used to further students' learning and inform teaching?

- Who will be assessed?

    - For example, is the classroom assessment intended for all students in the classroom or for subgroups of students (e.g., students with special assessment needs or those with limited English language proficiency skills)?

- ○ What will be assessed, including learning expectations and state content curriculum expectations and interims, process skills (e.g., thinking and problem-solving skills), and performance skills?

F2 *Learning Expectations:* Classroom assessment practices should align with the appropriate learning expectations and instruction intended for each student.

EXPLANATION

Learning expectations refer to evidence related to the content standards that may be measured through assessment. Learning expectations may include clear statements of what students are to learn, lesson-by-lesson, or for overall units, and provide direction for both instruction and assessment. Learning expectations may be derived from national, state, or local content standards (e.g., New Illinois Learning Standards). Classroom assessment practices aligned with learning expectations, coupled with appropriate instructional approaches, will provide accurate information about students' strengths and areas of need to foster continuous learning.

GUIDELINES

- Align learning expectations with the full range of knowledge, skills, and abilities individual students are expected to demonstrate.

- Provide clear learning expectations in language students can understand.

- Provide a method to share the clear learning expectations with students for each lesson.

- Recognize that all learning expectations are not equally important and do not require similar assessments.

- Connect the evaluation criteria to learning expectations in a way that is easily understood by students.

- Share exemplars with students to illustrate what achievement of the learning expectations looks like.

- Use informal checks of students' progress toward the expectations at the end of a lesson or classroom assessment.

F3 *Assessment Design*: The types and methods of classroom assessment used should clearly allow students to demonstrate their learning.

EXPLANATION

Classroom assessment practices are more effective when careful attention is given to the structure and format of the assessment. For example, the instructions provided should maximize student performance. Sufficient time, space to enter answers, and when needed, technology, materials, and supplies should also be available to allow students to complete the classroom assessment tasks. Failure to attend to issues such as these will lead to incorrect interpretations of students' performance on the classroom assessment. It is of vital importance to select the right approach on the classroom assessment design as well as to know that all assessment designs have strengths and limitations. A variety of classroom assessment designs will provide a much better picture of students' learning.

GUIDELINES

- When selecting or developing classroom assessments delivered in a paper/pencil or computer-based format, consider:

    - Age-appropriateness of the classroom assessment
    - Text complexity
    - Amount of space for answers
    - Formatting of the questions or activities
    - Clarity of diagrams and illustrations
    - Method of delivery (e.g., paper/pencil, computer-administered)
    - Clarity of the verbal or written instructions

- When presenting classroom assessments in an oral form (e.g., class questioning), consider:

    - Complexity of word choice
    - Volume level of voice
    - Complexity of questions and directions (e.g., multi-step tasks)

- Provide opportunities for students to practice with new assessment formats and new assessment item types.

- Recognize that different classroom assessments may more effectively serve the intended purpose and that the effectiveness may vary across individual students or groups of students.

- Develop or select classroom assessments that are as engaging as possible to students, thus motivating students to show their best learning.

F4 *Student Engagement:* Students should be meaningfully engaged in the assessment process and use of the assessment evidence to enhance their learning.

EXPLANATION

Students benefit from opportunities to be involved in their assessments. For example, being able to assess their own learning is an important skill for students as they develop into life-long continuous learners. Several ways in which students can become engaged in the classroom assessment process include student involvement in setting assessment purposes, developing evaluation tools, student-led conferences (in which students lead their teachers and parents/guardians through work samples or portfolios), self-assessment, and peer-assessment. Self- and peer-assessments, in particular, provide students with opportunities for heightened levels of student engagement. For example, appropriate peer-assessment is valuable to both students receiving the feedback, as well as those students providing feedback. Additionally, students providing feedback may benefit since it enables them to deepen their own understanding of the success criteria and what they have done. When students gain experience in self- and peer-assessment, they will be better able to use their classroom assessment results to foster their own continued learning.

GUIDELINES

- Establish success criteria with students where appropriate by guiding students through a process to consider what a quality product of learning would look like.

- Engage students in the development of rubrics when appropriate.

- Provide students with age-appropriate, scaffolded learning experiences to help them develop self-assessment and self-regulation skills.

- Model for students how to give appropriate peer feedback while monitoring and supporting students as they give feedback to peers.

- Provide students with opportunities to evaluate their learning progress and check on the accuracy of their own self-evaluation.

- Provide students with opportunities to react to and use data/observations from either self- or peer-assessment so that learning continues beyond the assessment with an appropriate use of the information generated.

- Use student-led conferences as a way to engage students in self-reflection about their work and progress over a period of time by providing them with an audience (usually parents/guardians and teacher) to talk with about their learning.

- Allow self- and peer-assessments to guide instructional decisions when appropriate.

F5 *Assessment Preparation*: Adequate teacher and student preparation in terms of resources, time, and learning opportunities should be part of classroom assessment practices.

EXPLANATION

Classroom assessment practices require adequate preparation to obtain accurate information about student learning. This preparation includes sufficient time and opportunities for students to learn and prepare for classroom assessment and sufficient time and resources for teachers to develop/select and administer assessments. Consideration should also be given to the time and resources teachers need in order to complete such activities as evaluating student responses, recording results, developing feedback comments, preparing reports, reviewing student work collaboratively with colleagues, and using the results to inform instruction. Regardless of the activity, the preparation required should reflect the complexity, type, or method of the classroom assessment. For example, the preparation required for the evaluation of a portfolio assessment or a collection of student work may be extensive, while the preparation for a start-of-lesson or oral discussion to determine the base-line knowledge of a class before beginning a new topic may require less extensive preparation. In summary, the resources necessary for effective classroom assessments may include, but are not limited to, the following: time, assessment materials, software, computer access, administration instructions, and evaluation materials (e.g., rubrics, guides, keys).

GUIDELINES

- Consider the complexity of the learning the students will be required to demonstrate and the time and resources required for the learning to occur.

- Provide sufficient notice to students of upcoming classroom assessments.

- Prepare students for upcoming assessments.

- Obtain sufficient materials and resources (e.g., print and electronic resources, lab equipment and materials, art supplies) to complete assessment activities.

- Allow adequate time to develop or adapt assessments, prepare evaluation guides (keys, rubrics), complete evaluation, provide timely feedback to students, record results and/or prepare report cards in electronic or hard-copy format.

- Schedule time in the school for collaboration with colleagues on assessment practices (e.g., common planning time, learning communities).

F6 *Informed Stakeholders***:** The purposes and uses of classroom assessment should be communicated to students and, when appropriate, parents/guardians.

EXPLANATION

Clear communication of the purposes and uses of classroom assessments helps clarify the rationale for the ways in which these assessments can support teaching and learning. The more students and, when appropriate, parents/guardians and others with a legitimate need to know fully understand the purpose(s) and process(es) of classroom assessment, the more likely they will be to support the assessment process and understand and use the results. The level of information provided to students may need to be of greater detail and immediacy to actively engage them in the assessment process; whereas, parents/guardians and others may need broader information to understand and support the classroom assessment processes and results.

GUIDELINES

- Provide students, their parents/guardians and others who need to know with information about the reporting policies and practices that will be used during the instructional period (e.g., newsletters, websites, student/parent/teacher meetings, announcements).

- Describe the purpose of each classroom assessment to students, parents/guardians, and others with a need to know and provide opportunities for them to ask questions and to clarify their understanding of the purpose(s) and how the evidence will be used.

- Inform students about the classroom assessment practices to be used to support their learning and the expectations for them to engage in and use the evidence from these classroom assessments.

- Inform students about any classroom assessment that will be used for grading or preparing a summary comment. Provide them with information about how their performance will be evaluated along with the criteria that will be used.

- Provide clear evaluative expectations to students and their parents/guardians.

Use

Classroom assessment practices meet the standards of use when teachers can be confident the assessment results have supported students' learning. Careful analysis of student performance yields meaningful information and provides feedback and direction that influences subsequent teaching and learning. Further, the results of classroom assessments should be used to summarize students' learning and communicate this information to students, their parents/ guardians, and subsequent teachers.

U 1 Analysis of Student Performance: *The methods for analyzing evidence of student learning should be appropriate for the assessment purpose.*

U 2 Effective Feedback: *Classroom assessment practices should provide timely and targeted feedback to improve student learning.*

U 3 Instructional Planning: *Analysis of student performance should inform instructional planning and provide next steps to support ongoing student learning.*

U 4 Reporting: *Student assessment reports should be based on a sufficient body of evidence and provide a summary of student learning in a clear, timely, accurate, and useful manner.*

U1 ***Analysis of Student Performance:*** The methods for analyzing evidence of student learning should be appropriate for the assessment purpose and practice.

EXPLANATION

During the process of assessment, there is a need to evaluate (measure) the quality of students' responses. When consistent, fair, and accurate measurement of students' performances are aligned with the purposes of the assessment and the intended learning expectations, these measurements provide a sound indication of what students know and can do. Such measurements will support subsequent teaching and learning. The nature of the methods used to analyze student responses will vary depending on the nature of the assessment items and tasks. Some assessment practices only require a verbal or short descriptive comment to support student learning (e.g., in-class questions, peer- and self-assessment). Other assessments benefit from more formal methods of evaluation. For open ended, constructed-response formats, clearly developed evaluation tools such as rubrics are beneficial. For forced-choice, selected-response formats, a definitive set of correct answers (answer key) are necessary. The level of analysis may vary based on the purpose of the assessment. For example, the scope of analysis for formative assessments will likely be more narrowly focused and less formal. However, the standard or expectations of performance must be clear on all assessments.

GUIDELINES

- Align the methods of analysis of student performance with the purposes of assessment (e.g., quickly checking for understanding during instruction; carefully evaluating students' essays when the essays contribute to final grades).

- Determine the most effective and efficient methods to express students' responses given the purpose of the assessment. This may include written comments, ratings, categorizations, letters, or numbers, alone or in combination.

- Inform students about the criteria to be used to judge and evaluate their responses prior to the learning activity.

- Involve students, where appropriate, in establishing criteria to be used to evaluate students' responses.

- Collaborate with colleagues to develop and apply procedures for judging and evaluating student responses to constructed-response items, projects, and products.

- Develop clear evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics) to consistently and accurately evaluate students' responses to constructed-response items:

- ○ Focus on key aspects of learning. Provide clear descriptions that serve to clarify and differentiate the points for an analytical scale and performance levels for a rubric.

- ○ Weight, if needed, different components of performance according to importance as set out in the learning expectations for the assessment.

- ○ Modify evaluation methods and criteria in response to demonstrated problems with initial evaluation procedures (e.g., an unanticipated appropriate response; student lack of understanding of the instruction or writing prompt).

U2

Effective Feedback**:** Classroom assessment practices should provide timely and useful feedback to improve learning.

EXPLANATION

Students benefit from assessment feedback that describes features of their performance in relation to the specific learning expectations being measured. The feedback might be from formative, interim, and/or summative assessments. To be most effective, feedback should be timely to allow students and, where appropriate, parents/guardians to see what students know and can do currently, where they should be, and how they can improve their learning. When targeted feedback is effectively provided, students are more likely to use the information to build upon their strengths and address their areas of need. The student may obtain this feedback from personal self-assessment, other students during a peer-assessment or the teacher during and after instruction.

GUIDELINES

- Provide descriptive feedback that is specific and directly related to student performance on the assessment task or learning activity.

  ○ Feedback should target the key components of the assessment task or learning activity.

- Provide verbal or written descriptive comments rather than general positive or negative statements to clarify, support, and direct students' learning.

- Provide feedback that identifies a student's strengths, misconceptions, and areas of need and directs learning by providing strategies to address misconceptions and the areas of need while building on strengths.

  ○ Feedback should also address how students are progressing towards mastery of the content or task (i.e., learning progressions).

- Separate descriptive feedback from grading in order to encourage students to focus on the feedback to better support their learning (e.g., give feedback either without or prior to grades).

- Help students develop both self- and peer-assessment skills to provide feedback to support their learning through the use of modeling, scaffolding, appropriate structures, and monitoring.

- Provide students with opportunities for self-reflection, and help them use feedback to support and guide their own future learning.

- Provide students with opportunities, whenever possible, to use the feedback to revise their work accordingly.

- Share, when needed, specific feedback provided to a student during instruction with the student's parents/guardians in a timely manner so that they can also support their child's ongoing learning.

- Include regular discussions and conferences with students and, where appropriate, their parents/guardians so that the feedback is clearly understood and next steps are identified.

U3 ***Instructional Planning*:** Analysis of student performance should inform instructional planning and next steps to support ongoing student learning.

EXPLANATION

One of the most important benefits of assessment is a teacher's use of assessment results to help review and revise her/his instructional practices. Efforts to monitor students' developing knowledge and skills before, during, and after instruction should be used to inform ongoing instruction and revise future instructional plans. The revisions should be directed toward supporting students' efforts to build upon their strengths and address their areas of need. At the same time, students need to develop the skills to monitor their own learning and to set learning goals. Both types of activities help to close the gap between what students are expected to learn and what they have learned.

GUIDELINES

- Use assessment information to guide instruction and provide support for all students:

    o For some students, the evidence might suggest that they should be supported to move more quickly through material or to deepen their understanding beyond what is generally expected.

    o For other students, the evidence might suggest that they have not yet mastered the concept and may need support in the form of re-teaching or presenting a previous concept in a new way, the provision of an instructional activity to further support understanding, or engagement with peers to help develop understanding.

- Create future lessons based on assessment results to provide effective learning opportunities for current and future students (e.g., curriculum and instructional improvement).

- Involve students in planning follow-up activities and begin by clearly identifying the purpose and then setting out a plan of action to support further learning.

- Establish a plan to monitor the results of follow-up activities – check for possible negative impacts (e.g., a student concentrates on one activity to the detriment of other ongoing learning) and that students are working to build and improve upon their performance.

- Develop a formal support and/or intervention strategy for students who are promoted to the next grade but have not yet achieved the learning expectations in one or more areas by the end of the school instructional period. Where possible, the support and

intervention plan should involve the current teacher and the teacher for the next instructional period.

U4 *Reporting*: Student assessment reports should be based on a sufficient body of evidence and provide a summary of student learning in a clear, timely, accurate, and useful manner.

EXPLANATION

Students, their parents/guardians, and others with legitimate permission should be provided with assessment reports that accurately summarize what the students have learned in the classroom. Further, these reports should be communicated in a timely manner such that they can be used to support students' learning or inform important learning decisions. For example, students should be provided assessment information about how they are doing as they learn. These reports are often oral. More formal written reports or report cards should communicate clearly the level of student performance in relation to the attainment of the learning expectations for a reporting period. These reports have several important educational purposes, including the identification of student strengths and areas of need and informing decisions concerning future class placement, retention/promotion, and admission to specific programs. Report cards also provide a basis for reporting student achievement to other schools and post-secondary institutions a student may subsequently attend, or to prospective employers a student hopes to work for.

In addition, summative comments should accurately capture a student's mastery of specific curricular learning expectations. Grades alone cannot adequately summarize all aspects of learning. To more adequately and fairly summarize the different aspects of student performance, letter grades for achievement should be complemented or replaced with alternate summary forms (e.g., checklists, written comments) suitable for summarizing results related to other aspects of learning. Finally, reports, grades and summative comments should align to appropriate standards and learning expectations.

GUIDELINES
- Follow the formal student reporting plan for the school, and/or district.

- Recognize the need for different types of informal or formal reporting depending on the intent of the report.

- Report in a timely manner (quickly in case of formative assessment, at regular intervals for more formal reports such as report cards).

- Report both strengths and weaknesses of students so that strengths can be built upon and problem areas addressed.

- Report achievement, effort, attitude, and other behaviors separately.

- Use direct, easy-to-understand, jargon-free language.

- Take into account the needs of the different audiences that are to receive formal reports (e.g., students, parents, and, as appropriate, others such as school psychologists, post-secondary institutions, or employers).

- Modify reporting procedures for students with special needs based on their individual education plans and for students whose language of instruction is not English. Work with school or district administrators to address the needs of parents/guardians who may have limited-English language proficiency skills and/or literacy skills in order to facilitate these parents' understanding of their child's progress.

- Follow school or district policy to transfer assessment information and reports from the current school to the school the student will subsequently attend.

- Formulate comments in relation to the learned expectations and describe what the student knows and is able to do, areas of learning that require further attention, the ways the teacher is supporting the student's learning needs and, where appropriate, ways the student and the parents/guardians might support the student's learning.

- Do not publicly display students' work with visible grades or comments.

Quality

Classroom assessment practices meet the standards of quality when teachers can be confident that their assessment practices provide accurate and dependable information about students' learning. These practices are free of bias and are inclusive in nature. Reflection on and revision of assessment practices can support the ongoing improvement of these practices.

Q 1 Cultural and Linguistic Diversity: *Classroom assessment practices should be responsive to and respectful of the cultural and linguistic diversity of students and their communities.*

Q 2 Differentiation: *Classroom assessment practices should be appropriately differentiated to meet the specific educational needs of all students.*

Q 3 Fairness: *Classroom assessment practices and subsequent decisions should not be influenced by factors unrelated to the intended purposes of the assessment.*

Q 4 Validity: *Classroom assessment practices should provide adequate and appropriate information that supports sound decisions about each student's knowledge and skills.*

Q 5 Reliability: *Classroom assessment practices should provide consistent, dependable information that supports sound decisions about each student's knowledge and skills.*

Q 6 Reflection: *Classroom assessment practices should be monitored and revised to improve their overall quality.*

Q1 *Cultural and Linguistic Diversity*: Classroom assessment practices should be responsive to and respectful of the cultural and linguistic diversity of students and their communities.

EXPLANATION

Assessment practices should be appropriate for students who represent the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds present in schools. For example, a student's success in responding to a teacher's oral question, or answering questions on a test should not be unfairly hampered by her/his cultural background, knowledge, or tradition. If cultural and linguistic backgrounds are ignored, students may become alienated or disengaged from learning and the assessment process. Teachers need to be aware of how such backgrounds may impact students' learning and performance. Teachers should be ready to adjust their assessment practices where needed to ensure students have adequate opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do (e.g., extra time, dictionaries).

GUIDELINES
- Be sensitive to those aspects of an assessment practice that may hamper students with different cultures or whose language is not sufficient to respond to demonstrate their knowledge and what they can do.

- Acknowledge students' cultural backgrounds and differing linguistic abilities and develop procedures to prevent these backgrounds and abilities from unduly impacting their demonstration of learning.

- Adjust or scaffold assessment practices if necessary (e.g., use text-to-speech software on math prompts with complex text).

- Avoid content and language that would generally be viewed as culturally sensitive or offensive.

- Use assessment practices that allow students to accurately demonstrate their understanding by responding in ways that accommodate their linguistic abilities. For assessments not intended to measure linguistic abilities, consider:

  - Simplified instructions.
  - Modeling of instructions.
  - Simplified language in the assessment.
  - Provision of extra time.
  - Oral rather than written responses.
  - Use of an appropriate type of assessment.
  - Use of visual representations.

Q2 ***Differentiation*:** Classroom assessment practices should be appropriately differentiated to meet the specific educational needs of all students.

EXPLANATION

Students with disabilities receive special educational services to meet their learning needs. These students include those who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or have a Section 504 Plan. Assessment practices may need to be adjusted or differentiated to allow these students to best demonstrate their learning. Options include accommodations, modifications, and alternate assessments. Accommodations refer to changes in the way a student accesses the assessment. Modifications refer to changes to the instrument or evaluation procedure. An alternate assessment is used when students cannot participate in the regular assessment process. Typically, alternate assessments are appropriate for students whose instruction is adapted from grade-level content and reduced in depth, breadth, and complexity.

Differentiating the assessment process should also address those students who are gifted and talented. These students may require assessments that are intended to measure learning outcomes that are different from their grade-level peers in order to sufficiently challenge them and meet their learning needs.

GUIDELINES

- Use assessment accommodations, modifications, or alternate assessments that comply with local, state, and federal policies.

- Provide accommodations, modifications, or alternate assessments that are most appropriate for the student with special needs on a regular basis for all types of classroom assessments.

- Provide appropriate accommodations, modifications, and support for English learners (e.g., word banks, access to a dictionary, modeling instructions).

- Use formative, interim, and summative assessment practices that target the appropriate learning expectations for students with special needs.

- Work with support staff to provide appropriate assessments for students who have a need for differentiation of assessments.

- Modify grading procedures as needed for students with special needs so that it accurately reflects these students' individual education plans.

- Involve each student and their parents/guardians, whenever possible, in decisions about what accommodations/modifications work best for the student.

Q3 **Fairness:** Classroom assessment practices and subsequent decisions should not be influenced by factors unrelated to the intended purposes of the assessment.

EXPLANATION

Bias has a negative impact on classroom assessment because it results in the unfair treatment of individual or groups of students. Bias can result from systematic preconceptions, conscious or unconscious, that are unrelated to the purposes and uses of the assessment. For example, sometimes preconceptions regarding what a student can or cannot do may influence the evaluation of student work rather than relying only on the available assessment evidence. Preconceptions may stem from cultural and language differences, physical, mental, and developmental disabilities, previous experiences with other siblings or family members, gender, race, or socioeconomic status.

Bias can also occur due to a lack of alignment among the assessment, the instruction, and the learning expectations or to the presence of irrelevant factors in the assessment process (e.g., reading difficulty where reading is not the focus of the assessment). Recognize that differences in assessment may reflect real variations in student performance; however, these differences still need to be examined for the potential presence of bias. While it may not be possible to totally eliminate all forms of bias from classroom assessment, teachers should work to minimize these biases when assessing students.

GUIDELINES

- Revise or remove assessment items and tasks that promote stereotypes.

- Revise or remove assessments that may unfairly impact the performance of individuals or groups of students.

- Avoid language that is overly confusing or complex thus assessing unintended skills.

- Avoid assessment topics that may disturb or be too sensitive for students unless there is a prescribed requirement to assess these topics.

- Minimize all irrelevant factors that may affect the evaluation of student performance:

  - Stylistic factors such as handwriting, vocabulary, or sentence structure when the intent of a written assessment is to assess content and thinking alone.

  - Teacher bias that may result in a general tendency to be too generous or too severe.

  - The halo effect, where a general impression or previous rating influences the present rating.

- Counteract bias through collaboration, well-described evaluation tools, and thorough training.

- Avoid tendencies to be overly severe or generous due to personal values or opinions regarding individual or subgroups of students when evaluating student work or formulating summary comments.

Q4 *Validity***:** Classroom assessment practices should provide accurate information that supports sound decisions about each student's knowledge and skills.

EXPLANATION

Formative, interim, or summative, classroom assessment practices need to be accurate. These practices should lead to decisions that reflect students' knowledge and skills in relation to the intended learning expectations. Assessment practices should yield evidence so that students' strengths can be built upon and areas of need addressed. The evidence should be at the appropriate level of detail so that it can be used to further student learning and to inform instruction.

One way to think of validity is through the interplay among the following ideas:

- Learning expectations, curriculum, and instruction
- Assessment design
- Analysis of responses
- Decisions

When the connections between these ideas are weakened, the overall accuracy of the assessment results is lessened. Other issues that affect validity are described throughout the Foundation, Use, and Quality Standards.

GUIDELINES
- Choose assessment practices (types and methods) that are developmentally appropriate and aligned with learning expectations, curriculum, and instruction.

- Take into account the impact of unexpected events (e.g., fire alarm, tornado drills, student illness, unexpected personal event) that may have influenced student performance.

- Use multiple sources of evidence to obtain a more complete picture about each student's strengths and areas of need so that strengths can be built upon and areas of need addressed. Avoid over interpreting results from a single assessment.

- Do not include results from an assessment if the students' responses suggest flaws in the assessment itself that might jeopardize a fair and accurate judgment. The assessment should be revised before it is used again.

- Choose methods of evaluation (analytic or holistic evaluation, qualitative review) that are appropriate for the purpose of the assessment and the assessment design.

- Appropriately modified assessments are valid assessments. Assessment instruments translated into a second language, transferred from another context or location, or administered in a different mode (e.g., paper-based versus computer-based) should include evidence these modified instruments work as intended.

- Account for the backgrounds and learning experiences of each student, and note any problems that may arise when collecting and evaluating the student's responses and interpreting assessment results.

- Address the Foundation, Use and Quality Standards during each phase of assessment.

Q5 **_Reliability_:** Classroom assessment practices should provide consistent, dependable information that supports sound decisions about each student's knowledge and skills.

EXPLANATION

Reliability refers to the consistency of assessment evidence. Consider two summative assessments intended to measure the same concepts. If these assessments have high reliability, the students should receive similar, albeit not identical, evaluations regardless of version. In contrast, if these assessments have low reliability, student evaluations on each version will likely differ to a great degree. Assessments that have low reliability result in different interpretations of students' knowledge depending on which assessment is used. However, one does not have to calculate reliability to understand its implications. For example, during a classroom discussion, asking one student a question and generalizing from a correct or incorrect answer to the entire class would likely not be very reliable since the teacher does not have sufficient evidence for the entire class' understanding. Similarly, asking only three questions on a test that covers content for a full semester is not likely to produce reliable results. As the consequences of assessments increase, the need for high reliability increases. Greater reliability is required for information sources such as final examination evaluations that contribute heavily to final course grades. Teachers may determine reliability by considering two important principles: the consistency and sufficiency of evidence.

GUIDELINES

- Use formative assessment practices (e.g., observations, individual whiteboards, electronic clickers, entrance/exit slips, hand signals) to gather sufficient information from all students for an immediate sense of class knowledge and understanding.

- Provide clear instructions and, when necessary, provide practice, sample questions, activities, or tasks to support students' understanding of what will be required during the assessment.

- Follow the guidelines for sound analysis of student responses (Standard U 1), such as the following:

  o Well described evaluation tools (analytic scales, rubrics)

  o Exemplar papers (sample student work representing different performance levels)

  o Teacher moderation (collaborative evaluation of student work in order to increase consistency across teacher judgments)

- Recognize that the conditions in which classroom assessments are administered and evaluated may influence consistency of the results (e.g., time of day, unexpected events, heating/cooling of classroom, noise, evaluator fatigue).

- Take into account the body of evidence available about students when making instructional or other decisions: the higher the stakes the more evidence required.

    - Use multiple assessments to make decisions about students' knowledge and skills.

    - Use a variety of assessment types to make instructional decisions.

Q6

Reflection: Classroom assessment practices should be monitored and revised to improve their overall quality.

EXPLANATION

The effectiveness of formative, interim, and summative classroom assessment practices requires ongoing monitoring and review. Changes in student learning expectations and curriculum and changes in the nature of the student population over time may lead to the need for changes in classroom assessment practices. Further, given the evolving nature of assessment, new developments in classroom assessment practices such as computer-based assessments should be reviewed and used if found to be appropriate for the context in which the new assessment will be used. Consequently, sound classroom assessment practices include opportunities for reflection and changes to the assessment practices, both short-term and long-term. Flawed classroom assessment practices can lead to incorrect decisions and actions that impede the progress of students. The overarching question to be addressed is: "Are the decisions made from the information and data collected reasonable and accurate, and not open to misinterpretation?"

GUIDELINES

- Examine current classroom assessment practices to be sure they yield valid, reliable, and useful information to enhance students' learning and improve instruction. Types of questions to ask include:

  - What worked in the assessment and why?

  - Is the assessment practice clearly related to the learning expectations, in proportion to their importance, and compatible with instruction?

  - What evidence do I have that a student learned what was taught in the lesson or in today's classroom?

  - What are the instructional implications for the short or long term?

  - Do any students need additional support before moving on to the next lesson?

  - Does the assessment evidence reflect what students know and can do as opposed to reflecting problems in the assessment practice?

  - Do students' responses indicate that they misunderstood what was being asked on the assessment, suggesting that the wording of the instructions and/or items and tasks needs revision?

  - Is the assessment practice appropriate for all students?

- ○ Are the feedback students receive and the follow-up actions timely and specific?

- ○ Are student reports understandable and useful?

- ○ Is there a more effective way to assess students' knowledge and skills with respect to a specific learning expectation?

- Become knowledgeable and proficient in current classroom assessment practices (e.g., formative, interim, and summative assessments).

- Revise current classroom assessment practices as needed to meet the assessments' intended uses.

- Engage colleagues in professional learning communities to help explore ways to improve assessments and students' responses to assessments.

Resources

Balanced Assessment

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Videos and Other Resources

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