

PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

NARRATOR'S SCRIPT

CONTENTS

Introduction and Purpose	1
Key Concepts	1
Purposes of Assessment	1
Diagnostic Assessment	1
Formative Assessment	2
Summative Assessment	2
Interim Assessment	2
How to Use the Assessment Blueprint	2
Check for Understanding	3
Sources	5

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This module focuses on the multiple purposes of assessment.

By the end of this module, you should be able to identify the different purposes of assessment and understand how to use the assessment blueprint to document the primary purpose of an assessment.

KEY CONCEPTS

Purposes of Assessment

Now, let's get started.

We use assessments for four primary purposes: diagnostic, formative, interim and summative. If you've been in the classroom for a while, you're probably familiar with all four and how you can use them to inform your instruction and help your students.

Diagnostic Assessment

We use *diagnostic* assessments to determine our students' knowledge and skills before a unit of instruction. For example, pre-tests serve a diagnostic purpose, although there are many other formal and informal ways to gather baseline information. These include individual or group discussions with students, work completed by students before the unit of instruction and coursework from other related classes, among others.¹

¹ Education First, *A Primer on Common Core-Aligned Assessments* (2013).

Formative Assessment

We use *formative* assessments to monitor student learning and adjust ongoing instruction. For example, checks for understanding and quizzes usually serve a formative purpose.²

Summative Assessment

We use *summative* assessments to measure student mastery of standards at the end of a unit of instruction. For example, end-of-unit or term tests usually serve a summative purpose. Many State departments of education also administer annual summative assessments known as “State tests.”³

Interim Assessment

Interim assessments fall somewhere between formative and summative. They measure students’ knowledge and skills on a specific set of academic goals, typically within a particular time frame.⁴

We use interim assessments—such as district-wide benchmark assessments—for a *formative* purpose to adjust our instruction. School and district leaders also often use these assessments for a *summative* purpose to inform program or policy decisions.

An assessment can serve multiple purposes, depending on how you use it. For example, in the middle of a unit, you could ask your students to write an essay about the root causes of the Civil War to monitor their progress and inform your instruction. Or, instead, you could use the essay prompt at the end of a unit to assess your student’s mastery of standards. In the former case, the assessment would be formative. In the latter case, the assessment could be both summative and formative if you use the student work to inform how you plan your next instructional unit. The key takeaway is to determine the purpose of your assessment at the start of the design process.

Before you continue, consider pausing the video to think about what you have learned or rewinding the video to revisit key concepts. If you’re viewing the video with colleagues, feel free to pause the video and discuss any questions that you may have.

How to Use the Assessment Blueprint

Now let’s use the assessment blueprint and assessment blueprint example to apply what we’ve learned.⁵

Step 1 of the assessment blueprint asks you to determine the primary purpose of the assessment.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Adapted from Ohio Department of Education, “Assessment Literacy: Identifying and Developing Valid and Reliable Assessments” (2013).

Imagine that you are a fifth-grade teacher planning a unit focused on reading and writing about informational texts. You expect the unit to last approximately four weeks.⁶

At the end of the unit, you plan to use an assessment to measure how well your students have mastered the relevant college- and career-ready standards. Is the primary purpose of the assessment diagnostic, formative, interim or summative?

Pause this video if you want a few moments to think about your answer or discuss it with colleagues.

Because the primary purpose of your assessment is to measure student mastery of standards, the assessment will be summative. You could use the assessment in the middle of the unit to fulfill a formative purpose if your goal were to monitor student progress and adjust your instruction.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

We have addressed the key concepts in this module, so let's review our goals.

At the outset of the module, we set goals that you would be able to identify the different purposes of assessment and use the assessment blueprint to document the primary purpose of an assessment.

To determine whether we have achieved our goals, let's check your understanding with two assessment items.

Here's the first item:

Match each assessment in column A to its purpose in column B.

Column A lists summative, interim, diagnostic and formative.

Column B lists:

- To gauge students' knowledge and skills before a unit of instruction;
 - To monitor student learning and adjust ongoing instruction;
 - To measure student mastery of standards at the end of a unit of instruction; and
 - To measure student progress relative to an academic goal.
-

Pause this video if you want a few moments to think about your answer or discuss it with colleagues.

⁶ Ohio Department of Education, "Ohio's New Learning Standards: English Language Standards" (2010); Student Achievement Partners, "Mini-Assessment for *Who Was Marco Polo?* by Joan Holub and *The Adventures of Marco Polo* by Russell Freedman" (2014).

The correct answer to the first assessment item is:

- Summative assessments measure student mastery of standards at the end of a unit of instruction;
 - Interim assessments measure student progress relative to an academic goal;
 - Diagnostic assessments gauge students' knowledge and skills before a unit of instruction; and
 - Formative assessments monitor student learning and adjust ongoing instruction.
-

Here's the second item:

Describe a scenario in which a single assessment might serve multiple purposes.

Pause this video if you want a few moments to think about your answer or discuss it with colleagues.

A sample answer to the second item would be: I could ask my students to write an essay at the end of a unit to assess their mastery of standards. In this case, the primary purpose of the assessment would be summative. Because I could also use the results from the essay to inform how I plan my next instructional unit, a secondary purpose of the assessment would be formative.

Good work! Thank you for completing the module on the purposes of assessment. Please view additional modules to continue your learning.

SOURCES

Education First. *A Primer on Common Core-Aligned Assessments*. 2013. [http://www.education-first.com/files/A Primer on Common Core-Aligned Assessments Education First.pdf](http://www.education-first.com/files/A_Primer_on_Common_Core-Aligned_Assessments_Education_First.pdf).

Kansas State Department of Education. Assessment Literacy Project. <http://www.k-state.edu/ksde/alp>.

Ohio Department of Education. "Assessment Literacy: Identifying and Developing Valid and Reliable Assessments." 2013. <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Evaluation-System/How-to-Design-and-Select-Quality-Assessments/AL-Training-PPT-FINAL-for-Distribution.pdf.aspx>.

Relay Graduate School of Education. *Designing and Evaluating Assessments*. 2014.

Rhode Island Department of Education. "Deepening Assessment Literacy." Accessed March 23, 2015. http://media.ride.ri.gov/PD/Eval/Deepening_Assessment_Literacy_output/story.html.

Student Achievement Partners. "Mini-Assessment for *Who Was Marco Polo?* by Joan Holub and *The Adventures of Marco Polo* by Russell Freedman." 2014. <http://achievethecore.org/page/502/mini-assessment-for-who-was-marco-polo-by-joan-holub-and-the-adventure-of-marco-polo-by-russell-freedman-detail-pg>.