

Using Summative Assessments to Raise and Document Student Achievement

Summative assessments (assessments of learning) measure the level of student learning at a particular point in time. Summative assessments also inform teachers about the effectiveness of instruction, prepare students for the challenge of standardized tests, and form a body of evidence for grading, reporting, promotion, and graduation. Students' mastery of knowledge and skills impacts their future opportunities. Mastery of content and skills also represents one important measure of achievement that must be communicated to the community, district, state, and other stakeholders.

For these reasons the EL Education model promotes choosing, creating and scheduling high-quality classroom assessments to get a complete and accurate picture of student learning throughout the year. Teachers and leaders also prepare students for interim assessments and high-stakes standardized tests. They analyze test results to inform action plans, make instructional adjustments, and set goals for improvement. Results are also analyzed by students and reported to families.

A. Choosing or Creating Quality Assessments

1. Teachers choose, adopt, or craft quality assessments in order to collect meaningful, accurate, and timely information about student learning. These include multiple choice or short answer tests, performance assessment tasks (e.g., tasks that enable students to demonstrate mathematical reasoning or physical coordination), on-demand assessments, and interim assessments
2. Teachers align summative assessments with required standards, and then plan backward to identify the sequence of assessments that will be used to measure mastery of concepts and skills incrementally and repeatedly throughout the year.
3. Teachers choose or design and test-drive major assessments as part of their initial planning for a unit to ensure that these assessments accurately and authentically capture desired learning targets.
4. Teachers select the type of assessment that is best matched to what they are assessing (e.g., multiple choice to assess factual knowledge, performance tasks to assess reasoning, skill, or character).
5. Teachers collaboratively create or choose common assessments for key skills or content. Common assessments improve consistency and reporting of student proficiency.
2. Teachers scaffold instruction to build students' knowledge, skills, and reasoning, supporting students to identify patterns and big ideas linked to guiding questions.
3. Teachers use formative assessment strategies (assessments for learning) to give students experience with summative assessment tasks, build their capacity to accurately self-assess, and gauge their readiness for summative assessments.
4. Students take responsibility for learning by studying, asking questions, and seeking support as they aim to master learning targets.

C. Leveraging On-Demand and Interim Assessments

1. Teachers use on-demand assessments to measure students' skills without the support of teachers. On-demand assessments are not necessarily timed, but they take place in a single sitting without opportunity for revision.
2. Teachers and school leaders create or select interim assessments that are closely aligned to required standards and standardized tests. They ensure that interim assessments match the rigor of the end-of-year or end-of-course assessment.
3. School leaders provide professional development to support teachers in implementing and analyzing on-demand and interim assessments.
4. School leaders provide parent education sessions to help families understand the purpose of on-demand and interim assessments and solicit parents' support in helping students to succeed.

B. Preparing for Summative Assessments

1. Teachers prepare students for academic and lifelong success by developing key cognitive strategies such as analysis, interpretation, problem solving, and reasoning.

5. Teachers and school leaders share on-demand and interim assessment results with students, parents, and the school community. Often students themselves explain the data to families in student-led conferences.

D. Making Standardized Tests Meaningful

1. Leaders and teachers articulate the value and purpose of standardized tests. They help families and students understand that criterion-referenced data allows educators to adjust curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of all students as they move up through the grades.
2. Teachers prepare students for standardized tests through ongoing, high-quality instruction and assessment that is explicitly aligned with standards.
3. Teachers prepare students for standardized tests throughout the school year, not as an isolated event just prior to a testing situation.
4. Teachers help students analyze the formats used on standardized tests (e.g., writing to prompts, multiple-choice questions, showing thinking in math and science) and teach them to respond to these formats by applying strategies such as using context clues.
5. Teachers give strategic practice tests to boost students' confidence with the test-taking format, timing, and procedures.
6. Teachers empower students to improve their performance by applying test-taking strategies, strengthening Habits of Scholarship (e.g., time management, perseverance, problem solving), and practicing self-care to reduce test anxiety (e.g., exercise, a healthy diet, sleep, meditation).

E. Analyzing Assessment Data

1. Teachers individually and collaboratively analyze assessment data. They deliberately and thoughtfully use assessment data to identify patterns in student responses to test items. This practice informs curriculum mapping and lesson planning, and helps teachers to evaluate, adjust, and differentiate instruction.
2. Students, with support from teachers, use summative assessment data to evaluate their own learning, determine readiness for next steps, and set long-range goals.
3. Leaders and leadership teams periodically analyze data as part of the school-improvement process. They use it both to set goals and create action plans for improvement and to document growth and achievement.