Fact Sheet #8 - Performance Standard 6: Assessment Uses

ASSESSMENT USES

The teacher systematically gathers, analyzes, and uses relevant data to measure student progress, to inform instructional content and delivery methods, and to provide timely and constructive feedback to both students and parents.

Effective teachers not only assess student learning, but also they use the results of student assessment systematically and intelligently. That is a commonly adopted strategy by effective teachers and an integral attribute of their instruction. Using assessment means assessment of student learning is not just the end, but also the means to reach an end by continuously monitoring success and step-by-step moving to desired learning outcomes. Assessment is a waste of time and effort if its results are shelved and collect dust. The essence of assessment is how it can lead to improvements in teaching and learning.[1] Assessment use can be defined as the practice that helps teachers use student performance data to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and make more informed instructional decisions.[2] The purposes of assessment use include:[3]

- Gathering important information about student understanding to make prompt instructional modification - evidence of students' knowledge and understanding.
- Providing timely and informative feedback to students - the nature of feedback given to students.
- Enabling students to set and attain meaningful goals - shifts in the way that students learn.

A review of research by Natriello[4] and Crooks[5] and more recently by Black and Wiliam[6] has demonstrated that substantial student learning gains are possible when teachers introduce assessment results into their classroom practice. Assessment data can be used for tasks such as setting annual, intermediate, and ongoing goals. Assessment results also can be used to visually depict goals and visions, motivate students, and celebrate achievements and progress.[7] Effective teachers provide instruction and support that leads to quality learning opportunities on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, an experimental study reached the following conclusions for teachers who monitored their students' progress on a regular basis:

- They effected greater student achievement than those who used conventional monitoring methods.
- They had more improvement in their instructional structure.
- Their pedagogical decisions reflected greater realism and responsiveness to student progress.
- Their students were more knowledgeable of their own learning and more conscious of learning goals and progress.[8]

The practice of assessing and documenting student growth is essential for effective instruction and learning. It determines the effectiveness of a period of teaching (*e.g.,* a lesson, a unit, a semester, or a school year) in terms of student learning and provides a basis for continuing instruction. Collecting evidence of students' learning progress provides teachers with day-to-day data on students' mental preparedness for certain learning targets and facilitates teachers in making data-based decisions for instruction modification. The data can come from small-group discussion with the teacher and a few students, whole-class discussion, journal entries, portfolio entries, exit cards, skill inventories, pretests, homework assignments, student opinion, or interest surveys.[9] In addition, reviewing student work (*e.g.,* student writing samples and project-based

work) is also an important way of assessing student performance on curricular goals and identifying desired changes in instructional practices.

Student progress monitoring is a technique that can provide teachers with data on students' performance to evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction and make adjustments in their pedagogical behavior. Progress monitoring also can help teachers set meaningful student achievement goals to tap into greater student learning potential. Teachers who use progress monitoring also are better informed of the strengths and weaknesses in student learning and can better decide on what instructional modifications are necessary. Empirical research has found that when progress monitoring is combined with goal-raising, student learning profiles, and appropriate instructional modifications, it can help teachers build stronger instructional programs that are more varied and more responsive to students' learning needs, and effect better academic performance for students.[10] Stecker, Fuchs, and Fuchs noted that teachers effected significant growth in student learning with progress monitoring only when they modified instruction based on progress monitoring data; however, frequent progress monitoring alone did not boost student achievement.[11]

Effective teachers are often described as flexible and opportunistic. They use various techniques (such as questioning, classroom observation) to diagnose student learning and then adjust instruction promptly to close the gap between where the students are now and where the students should be. Effective teachers are aware that when students begin to indicate unengaged behaviors, that can be the result of poorly planned activities, inadequate scaffolding and modeling, or insufficient attention to developing norms and participation routines in the classroom.[12] To address student off-task behaviors, they not only use behavior control,

but also, more importantly, modify their instruction to make it more engaging. Effective teachers ask appropriate questions at appropriate times to solicit information regarding how well students have mastered the basic facts, skills, or ideas in a lesson. The technique of questioning not only provides students an opportunity to think critically and become more informed about their learning, it also provides important input for teachers to make instructional modifications.

An instructional technique that is complimentary to questioning is feedback. Questions and answers, from teachers to students and back again, represent much of the academic interaction that takes place in schools. This process supports student engagement in learning and enhances teachers' ability to monitor the learning process.[13] Feedback to students that focuses on developing skills, understanding, and mastery, and treat mistakes as opportunities to learn is particularly effective.[14] Effective feedback targets students' specific misconceptions or errors that occur in a content area or a skill set and that provide informative guidance on what they need to do to maximize their performance. Effective teachers avoid simple yes or no answers; rather, they provide informative explanations of what students are doing correctly, what they are not doing correctly, and how to fix it.[15] Students as well as teachers have strong beliefs about the importance of feedback. Students report that informative feedback makes them aware of their mistakes, highlights ways to make corrections, and informs them of teacher expectations. Teachers report that providing feedback can be arduous and painstaking, but also they feel that it is an important part of instruction.[16]

Based on a large-scale research review, Hattie found that compared to their ineffective colleagues, effective teachers were adept at monitoring student problems and assessing their level of understanding and progress, and they provided much more relevant, useful feedback.[17]

The research also shows that effective teachers are more adept at developing and testing hypotheses about learning difficulties or instructional strategies. Wenglinsky found that teachers' use of frequent assessment and constructive feedback had a positive effect on student mathematics and science achievement at all grade levels.[18] Some other characteristics of teachers' effective use of student assessment data include:

- Aligning intended learning outcomes, instruction, and assessment to effectively keep track of students' progress.[19]
- Using high-quality homework and classroom quizzes to review student performance on key knowledge and skills, and providing meaningful and timely feedback.[20]
- Targeting areas of strength and weakness to provide appropriate remediation.[21]

When teachers monitor students' ongoing learning and use student assessment data to inform their own teaching, they:

- Effect greater student achievement.
- Have more improvement in their instruction and make their pedagogical decisions more responsive to student learning.
- Exhibit greater concerns about learning and higher academic emphasis in their classroom practices.
- Are better at supervising the adequacy of student learning, identifying students in need of additional or different forms of instruction, and modifying practices to maximize student learning.[22]

Fuchs and Fuchs found that teacher use of ongoing student assessment data can be beneficial to student learning in many ways, such as:

- To identify students in need of additional or different forms of instruction.

- To enhance instructional decision-making by assessing the adequacy of student progress.
- To determine when instructional modifications are necessary.
- To prompt teachers to build stronger instructional programs that are more varied and responsive to student needs.[23]

Sample Performance Indicators for the Professional Knowledge of Teachers
- Uses diagnostic assessment data to develop learning goals for students, to differentiate instruction, and to document learning.
- Plans a variety of formal and informal assessments aligned with instructional results to measure student mastery of learning objectives.
- Uses assessment tools for both formative and summative purposes to inform, guide, and adjust instruction.
- Systematically analyzes and uses data to measure student progress, to design appropriate interventions, and to inform long- and short-term instructional decisions.
- Shares accurate results of student progress with students, parents, and key school personnel.
- Provides constructive and frequent feedback to students on their progress toward their learning goals.
- Teaches students how to self-assess and to use metacognitive strategies in support of lifelong learning.

Sample Student Evidence that the Teacher met the Criteria for Proficiency
- Recognize that the teacher tries to meet the needs of all students.
- Be engaged in learning and on task.
- Explain how they need to perform on most tasks to-meet standard
- Be aware that the teacher works individually with struggling students and high achieving ones on what they need to learn and where they need to focus their efforts.

- Have multiple opportunities to achieve mastery and improve grades.
- Articulate assessment procedures.

Sample Conference Prompts

- How do you use assessment data to plan instruction based on student and sub-group need?
- How do you contribute to the RTI process?
- How do you monitor students and use various types of data to assess student needs? What types of data do you use?
- Give an example of a student for whom you identified a need and provided an intervention?

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Georgia Department of Education
Teacher Keys Effectiveness System

Teacher Self-Assessment Checklist
Performance Standard 6: Assessment Uses

Quality		Level IV	Level III	Level II	Level I
Identify and Enhance Student learning	Use assessment data to check for understanding and adequacy of learning.				
	Return student work in a timely manner.				
	Assess, comment on, and discuss homework in class.				
	Give clear, timely, and informative oral or written feedback.				
	Document student progress and achievement over time.				
	Share progress reports with students and parents in a timely manner.				
	Remediate the learning of students who did not achieve mastery.				
	Provide differentiated instruction based on assessment analysis.				
	Interpret data of teacher-made assessment and standardized assessment accurately and make inferences about student progress and challenges.				
	Provide students with opportunities to reflect on their performance themselves and ask questions.				
	Provide opportunities for students to reengage with the content and skills of the curriculum, rather than focusing solely on the grades.				
	Use assessment data to set future achievement goals.				
Improve Instruction	Use assessment data to self-assess instructional effectiveness and identify areas of strengths and weaknesses.				
	Make instructional decisions based on student achievement data analysis.				
	Make pedagogical decisions more responsive to student learning needs.				
	Design appropriate interventions for students in need of additional or different forms of instruction.				
	Use information gained from ongoing assessment for remediation and instructional planning.				