Pittsford Schools

Assessment Philosophy
&
Glossary of Terms

As educational leaders with an uncompromising commitment and passion for excellence, we believe our assessment program must reflect these values. Our assessment program must be aligned to standards, use multiple data sources with multiple forms, be embedded in instruction, and deliberately involve students in relevant and authentic experiences. We believe that assessment is a system constructed with the learning destination in mind, designed to encourage, motivate, and challenge students. This system plans for the collection and analysis of data as evidence of progress towards learning, providing feedback and reflection for all stakeholders.

Key Attributes:

Aligned Assessment
- Is tied to significant and deliberate instructional outcomes, essential standards, state regulations, and district curriculum
- Provides a clear, data-driven destination for student success
- Provides consistent practices of assessing, scoring, and grading across classrooms, disciplines, and grade levels through a collaborative process

Balanced Assessment
- Measures progress toward content standards, enduring understandings, and instructional outcomes
- Maintains a balance among diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment
- Includes assessment methods that appeal to different learning styles and strengths

Varied Assessment
- Incorporates higher order thinking skills through the use of rigorous learning experiences and assessments
- Utilizes diverse methods of assessment that promote creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem solving and information fluency
- Integrates methods of assessment that are matched to the standards being assessed
- Reflects universal design principles by providing for multiple means of demonstration of understanding

Quality Assessment
- Is frequent, on-going, valid, and reliable
- Uses data to assist teachers and students, inform instruction, and promote learning
- Produces feedback that is specific and descriptive as well as evaluative
- Provides explicit evidence that results in nimble and responsive instruction

Student Engagement
- Promotes self-assessment, goal setting, and reflection
- Supports independent application of Next Generation Skills
- Encourages perseverance when faced with complex and challenging tasks

We believe that an exemplary assessment system positively impacts student motivation; creates an environment that nurtures intellectual risk-taking; cultivates a feeling of being valued; promotes confidence, hope, and a healthy attitude toward learning; and informs the student of progress toward specific learning goals.

Baseline

A student's current level of performance.

Benchmark

An expected performance level for a student at a particular point in time determined by standards based criteria; an identified content standard for a particular course, grade level, or developmental level at a specific point in time.

Benchmark Assessment

District-wide assessments of students during the school year to monitor progress relative to the standards. They are designed to provide immediate feedback on how students are progressing toward meeting academic standards, as well as to supplement classroom assessments and provide consistency across classrooms and grade levels. Regular use of benchmark assessments is seen by many as a tool to measure student growth and design curriculum to meet student learning needs.

Constructed Response Question

Assessment item for which students create or produce their own answer or response. Examples of constructed-response questions include short answer questions and extended written response/essay questions.

Criterion Referenced Goal

Assessments that compare a student's performance to a pre-defined set of criteria or a standard to determine whether or not the student has demonstrated mastery of a certain skill or set of skills.

Curriculum Based Measurement [CBM]

A method of monitoring student progress through direct assessment of academic skills. CBM can be used to measure basic skills in reading, mathematics, spelling, and written expression, as well as to monitor readiness skills. Administering a CBM involves giving the student brief, timed samples, or "probes," made up of academic skill based tasks that may be taken from the child's school curriculum or may be curriculum independent.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessments are assessments for learning. They are designed to provide information needed to adjust teaching and learning while they are happening. These assessments are used by teachers and students to determine what students have learned in order to plan further instruction.

- Unobtrusive formative assessments are those that do not interrupt the normal flow of activity and are a part of the instructional process; students may not even know they are being assessed.
- Obtrusive formative assessments interrupt the normal flow of activity in the classroom; however, they are used to diagnose where students are in their learning rather than summarize their progress.

Key Attributes of Formative Assessment include:

- A planned process that serves a pre-determined purpose
- Frequent, ongoing, and evidence-based
- Informs instruction to identify next steps
- Involves students as active participants in assessing their own learning
- Uses growth-producing feedback to support student learning

Norm Referenced Tests

Assessments that compare a student's performance to that of other students rather than to previously established criteria. Standardized examinations such as the SAT are norm-referenced tests.

Performance Assessment

Performance assessments are designed to measure what students know through their ability to perform certain tasks. In certain situations, performance assessments – sometimes called performance-based assessments – may provide a more accurate indication of what students can do than traditional assessments are able to provide. Performance-based assessments typically include exhibitions, investigations, creation of products, demonstrations, written or oral responses, journals, and portfolios.

Performance Indicators

The means by which an objective can be judged to have been achieved or not achieved. Indicators are tied to goals and objectives and measure the degree to which a goal has been achieved.

Pre-assessment

Assessments that gather and analyze baseline data about what students know and can do as they enter the learning experience.

Progress Monitoring

The practice of assessing student performance using measures on a repeated basis to determine how well a student is responding to instruction. Data obtained from progress monitoring helps staff to determine the extent to which students are benefiting from instruction and informs decisions about appropriate levels of intervention.

Selected Response Question

Assessment item for which students select a response from possible responses that are provided. Examples of selected-response questions include multiple-choice, true/false, and matching.

Student Learning Objective [SLO]

The NYS determined alternative for student growth goal-setting for teachers for whom there is no State-provided measure of student growth.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessments are assessments of learning. They are designed to document what students have learned at the end of a period of instruction relative to the standards.

Universal Screening

Assessments given to all students at a particular grade level or grade level span for the purpose of identifying students who are not making academic progress at expected rates. It is typically conducted three times per school year, in the fall, winter, and spring and administered to all students.

Quick Links:

NYLearns.org

Interventioncentral.org

EngageNY.org