

Assessment 101: Glossary of Assessment Terms

Accommodations: Adaptations in assessment tools and standards to permit children with disabilities or English Language Learners to show what they know and can do. Adjustments may be made, for example, in the way a test is administered or presented, in the timing, in the language, or in how the child responds. The nature of the adjustment determines whether or not what is being measured or the comparability of scores is affected. (National Research Council adopted from the Council of Chief State School Officers)

Analytic Rubric: A method of grading that evaluates components of the product individually to produce multiple scores, as opposed to the evaluating the product as a whole.

Assessment: The systematic process of specifying educational objectives, gathering, using, and analyzing information about student learning outcomes to make decisions about programs, individual student achievement and progress, or accountability. (Erwin, 1991)

Authentic Curriculum: A set of learning goals that are achieved by tailoring instruction to be student-centered, connected both to the microcosm of the learner's world and to the macrocosm of the larger world appropriate to the content area. Authentic curriculum includes but is not limited to acquiring knowledge, synthesizing information, applying understanding to existing real-world problems, and anticipating real-world problems that are, as yet, unimagined.

Benchmark Assessments: Tests that are administered throughout the year that measure the extent to which students are meeting academic standards.

Checklist: A method of assessment that includes a number of criteria that must be completed. A checklist allows the assessor to determine, using a yes/no format, if individual criteria have been met.

Composite Score: Also referred to as a total score, this is calculated by combining subtests or individual items of a test.

Assessment 101: Glossary of Assessment Terms

Comprehensive Assessment System: Designed to include formative, interim, summative assessments, and other evaluation materials and procedures teachers use during the course of their instruction to evaluate student progress, and to plan and adjust instruction and assessment accordingly.

Construct: The set of concepts, procedures, and practices that define a domain. In the context of assessment, a construct is often the target of measurement.

Constructed Response: A question type that requires students to provide an answer, as opposed to selecting an answer. It includes short responses as well as extended responses that require complex, critical thinking.

Criterion-referenced Scores: An assessment that produces a score that measures student performance against a predetermined set of criteria.

Critical Thinking: The cognitive process of using content knowledge and comprehension to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information to guide judgment, beliefs, and/or actions. Critical thinking may include, but is not limited to, skills of metacognition (including self reflection), logic, testing hypotheses, drawing conclusions, and creativity.

Curriculum Model; Curriculum Module; Curriculum Unit: Generally defined as a set of self-contained instructional sequences, the length of a “quarter” or grading period, which is composed of smaller units that are focused on key advances in standards and identifies benchmarks to show progression of student learning throughout the year. Often include daily lesson plans, curricular maps, handouts, practical applications for students, scaffolding strategies, selected texts, and performance tasks.

Developmentally Appropriate: Informed by what is known about child development and learning, what is known about each child as an individual, and what is known about the social and cultural contexts in which children live. (National Research Council and the National Association for the Education of Young Children)

Diagnostic Assessment: An evaluation process that provides a teacher with student information on the knowledge and skills a student brings to a learning experience and

Assessment 101: Glossary of Assessment Terms

the student's continuous development in the knowledge and skill areas. Diagnostic assessment may identify strengths and specific learning needs of individual students and/or groups of students and should be used by the teacher to adapt and/or modify instruction.

Distractor: An incorrect option in a multiple-choice question.

Embedded Assessment: An ongoing form of assessment that is integrated in instruction; it is often difficult to differentiate this type of assessment from instruction itself.

Equity: A strategy that is used to promote fairness in which individuals are given what they need to be successful. In assessment, it requires that all students are provided with the opportunity to show what they know and can do.

Formative Assessment: Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes.

Holistic Rubric: A method of grading that evaluates the product as a whole to produce one score, as opposed to the evaluating the product by its individual components.

Interim Assessment: The assessments that fall between formative and summative assessment, including the medium-scale, medium-cycle assessments currently in wide use. Interim assessments (1) evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic goals, typically within a limited time frame, and (2) are designed to inform decisions at both the classroom and beyond the classroom level, such as the school or district level.

Item: A question or task that is included in an assessment.

Language Acquisition: A process by which students develop the ability to recognize, distinguish, construct, and use words to understand, learn, and communicate. Language acquisition involves the development of these skills within each content area.

Assessment 101: Glossary of Assessment Terms

Learning Environment; Classroom: The terms “learning environment” and “classroom” are used interchangeably and refer to any setting where learning within or across content areas occurs. Settings may include, but are not limited to, a library, museum, gymnasium, auditorium, laboratory, classroom, metal shop, kitchen, stage, music room, and/or field trip destination.

Mean: The average of a set of numbers.

Median: The middle value of a set of numbers; 50% of the scores fall above this value.

Mode: The value that occurs most often in a set of numbers.

Multiple Choice: A question type that allows an examinee to select the correct choice from a set of possible answers.

Norm-referenced score: A score from an assessment that describes student performance against the performance of his/her peers.

Percentage: A representation of a proportion out of one hundred.

Percentile: A score that indicates the percent of scores (or student performances) in a group that are at or below it. For example, the 60th percentile indicates that 60% of the scores fall at or below it.

Performance Indicators: Measurable actions that provide evidence of the application of a teacher’s knowledge and skills in practice. Performance indicators may be measured through various methods, including, but not limited to, principal and/or peer observations, teacher evidence binders, classroom observations, student artifacts, and/or teacher and student surveys.

Performance Assessment: An assessment that requires students to perform tasks such as writing an argumentative essay or conducting a scientific inquiry. Usually uses tasks as close as possible to real-life, practical, and intellectual challenges. (National Research Council)

Assessment 101: Glossary of Assessment Terms

Performance Level: A description of the knowledge and skills that an examinee can demonstrate at a particular level of performance.

Performance Task: A concluding activity by a student that provides evidence of learning in relation to predefined criteria aligned with content standards. A performance task requires a student to show new knowledge and skills. Examples may include, but are not limited to, creating a product, illustration, or display, and/or performing or demonstrating to a target audience. Teacher and/or student assessment of learning is measured through the use of a rubric.

Portfolio: A method of assessment that documents student learning through a collection of student-created artifacts.

Predictive Assessment (also known as Preparatory Exams for Summative Assessments): Tests that districts or schools give to prepare students for summative assessments such as those required of the No Child Left Behind Federal legislation. These assessments are usually aligned to the test blueprint of the assessments they are designed to predict, and scores are interpreted as “predictions” of how students will score on the actual corresponding summative assessment.

Project Based Learning: A teaching method in which students gain deeper knowledge, understanding, and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge.

Raw Score: The total number of points that a student earns on a test or subtests.

Reliability: The extent to which an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results.

Scale Score: The value that results after converting a raw test score to a common scale; a scale score allows for comparison between students over time.

Screening: The use of a brief procedure or instrument designed to identify, from within a large population of children, those who may need further assessment to verify developmental and/or health risks.

Assessment 101: Glossary of Assessment Terms

Selected Response: A type of assessment question that requires a student to choose the correct answer from a list of possible answers. Multiple choice items are a common example.

Standards: Narrative statements representing broad areas of knowledge and skills that provide a framework for what individuals should know and be able to do within an academic discipline area and grade..

Standard Deviation: A statistical term that refers to the spread of a set of numbers.

Standard Setting: A procedure that is used in order to determine the cut score(s) (i.e., performance levels) for a test.

Standardized Assessment: A method of assessing students in a uniform manner with respect to tasks, administration conditions and scoring.

Stem: The beginning part of a test question that is presented to an examinee as a problem to be solved. For instance, a multiple choice questions contains a stem and typically four possible options.

Summative Assessment: Assessments that are generally given one time at the end of some unit of time such as the semester or school year to evaluate students' performance against a defined set of content standards.

Through-Course Assessment: The intent of through-course assessments is that these assessments occur with less frequency than formative assessments (e.g., once every six weeks) and serve to cover more material than assessments taken at the end of a course.

Validity: The accuracy of inferences drawn from assessment results and the appropriateness of the uses of assessment results.

. ###