



Time: 14 minutes 24 seconds

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Lesson Overview

In this lesson you'll be introduced to:

- the four essential components of a balanced assessment system – including formative, interim, and summative components – and to issues associated with them;
- how the components of a balanced assessment system work together to improve teaching and learning;
- suggestions for teachers and instructional leaders to develop a balanced assessment system; and,
- recommended activities and resources (which are expanded on in this facilitator guide).

Video Outline

- Introduction (0:00-2:02)
- Four Components of a Balanced Assessment System (2:03-7:38)
 - Classroom Formative Assessment
 - Classroom Summative Assessment
 - External Interim Assessment
 - External Summative Assessment
- Putting It All Together (7:39-9:49)
- Tips for Your Role (9:50-13:06)
 - Teachers
 - Instructional leaders and administrators
- Activities and Resources (13:07-14:24)
 - Recommended Activities
 - Suggested Resources

Your Learning Objectives

Record your objectives and points to focus on.

Your Stops

Make notes on stopping points and content discussion you would like the participants to take part in.

Stopping Point	Content Discussion	Notes

Suggested Discussion Questions

- Identify the main purpose or purposes of each of the four components of a balanced assessment system.
- Explain at least three ways in which a district's assessment system can and should be balanced.
- What are some ways that a teacher can address imbalances in an assessment system, and what are some imbalances that may not be under their control?
- What has resonated with you during Lesson 1?
- Did you have any A-ha moments while you listened to Lesson 1?
- Will you change your practice after listening to Lesson 1? How?

Recommended Activities

- Make a list of all the different kinds of academic assessments taken by your students during the course of a school year.
- For each of the assessment types listed on the Participant Notes handout indicate if and how it can be improved in terms of some type(s) of balance.

- Explain how you think a better balance might be achieved across the assessment types you listed.
- Lesson reflection: Three key ideas I want to remember from Lesson 1 (can use Participant Notes handout).

Suggested Resources

Herman, J. (2016). *Comprehensive Standards-Based Assessment Systems Supporting Learning*. The Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation, WestEd, San Francisco. https://cresst.org/wp-content/uploads/CAS_SupportingLearning.pdf

- This article, by Joan Herman, is a helpful reference on the components of a balanced assessment system and how they work together. Notice, the author also discusses clinical/diagnostic assessments identifying learning disabilities. This lesson is focused on assessment types that pertain to all students.

Marion, S., Thompson, J., Evans, C., Martineau, J., Dadey, N. *A Tricky Balance: The Challenges and Opportunities of Balanced Systems of Assessment*, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Measurement in Education, Toronto, April 2019. <https://www.nciea.org/library/tricky-balance-challenges-and-opportunities-balanced-systems-assessment>

- This resource, by Scott Marion and colleagues at the Center for Assessment, is a comprehensive paper on balance assessment systems for a variety of audiences. For the purposes of this lesson, you may find the section “Criteria for Balanced Assessment Systems” (pp. 3-7) most useful. It provides information on the multiple balances that are desirable in an assessment system, all relevant to local educators.

Script

Slide 1

- Welcome to Lesson 1.

Slide 2

- In a balanced assessment system, different assessment components or “levels” work together to inform educational decision-making. The different components yield meaningful information that is easily understood by a range of stakeholders who make decisions about instruction and instructional programs.
- A balanced assessment system incorporates formative, summative, and interim components - each stemming from the same set of curriculum standards.
- In this lesson you’ll be introduced to the four essential components of a balanced assessment system and to issues associated with them.
- As you will see in future lessons, challenges arise when assessments are used too often or for purposes they were not intended for and are ill suited.

- When each component is used appropriately and done well, they work together and rely on one another. First, they should address common learning goals. And second, their results are used to improve student learning, albeit in different ways.

Slide 3

- A better understanding of balanced assessment systems can
 - help promote improved instruction and monitoring of learning,
 - help mitigate relevant challenges such as over testing, the misuse of tests and test results, and the use of low-quality assessment tools and techniques, and
 - lay the foundation for the subsequent lessons in this course.

Slide 4

- This lesson has two parts
 - In part one, we will define the four components of a balanced assessment system. However, it should also become clear in this part that there is far more to understand about a balanced assessment system than just the names of its components.
 - In part two, we'll discuss your role as a teacher, leader, or administrator in strengthening your district's assessment system.

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- Classroom formative assessment, the first component of a balanced assessment system, is a multi-step instructional process focused on specific learning targets.
- Research shows that classroom formative assessment, effectively implemented, can lead to achievement gains equivalent to those from individual tutoring. This is especially true for lower performing students.

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- So, what occurs during the classroom formative assessment process?
- Students are made aware of what they will be learning and what successful learning looks like.
- They are then engaged in instructional activity during which evidence of their learning is gathered on an ongoing basis.
- Students are provided with descriptive feedback about their learning, including information on gaps in their learning that exist relative to the learning targets.
- This information is used to determine whether to revisit prerequisite knowledge and skills, address the learning target in a different way, or move on to new learning targets.
- Also important is the use of students as instructional resources. Through self assessment, students reflect on their own learning. Students can also assess the work of their peers. This

allows students to get feedback on their learning in a low stress way. It also can be a time saver for teachers.

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- Classroom summative assessment, the second component of a balanced assessment system, is a process that leads to the documentation and certification of student performance.
- It occurs after the learning.
- And it is the basis of students' grades.

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- While classroom formative and summative assessments are based on and address the same standards, there are a number of differences.
- Formative assessment occurs during the learning process, while summative assessment occurs after the learning, for instance, as a unit or marking period test.
- Much of formative assessment evidence should not be graded. The purpose of formative assessment is to facilitate the learning of particular learning targets during instruction. This occurs prior to summative assessment.
- And, finally, a greater variety of formal and informal measures are used in formative assessment, including ungraded quizzes, homework assignments, observation of students working, and questioning techniques. In comparison, summative assessment typically refers to tests and other graded student work.

Slide 10

- External interim assessments make up the third component of a balanced assessment system.
 - External refers to assessments that districts get from the state or commercial test publishers. In other words, they are from sources external to the classroom, not created by the classroom teacher.
 - Interim indicates these are tests administered a few times during the course of the school year.

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- Interim general achievement measures sample from a full year's subject area content, just as end-of-year state tests do. These can be used for "early warning" to identify students or areas within the curriculum that need additional attention.
- Interim benchmark assessments cover recently taught material, a portion of a year's content. These can be used to identify individual students' remedial needs. The scores of successive benchmark tests can be combined, in some cases taking the place of an end-of-year summative measure.

Slide 12

- As the topic of formative assessment grew in popularity in the first decade of this millennium, many publishers promoted their interim measures, suggesting to local educators that they would result in the same gains the research said formative assessment could produce.
- External interim assessment generally occurs *after* the learning and in that sense is summative, but may be useful for identifying remedial needs.
- True formative assessment, the process done well, minimizes the need for remediation because it leads to intervention by the teacher *during* the learning.

Slide 13

- The fourth and final component of a balanced assessment system is external summative assessment, which involves end-of-year tests. The most well known external summative assessment instruments are administered by states as required by the Every Student Succeeds Act.
- External summative measures, with sparse sampling of a year's worth of content, are not designed to provide immediately actionable information to teachers. Rather, they are best suited for program evaluation and accountability purposes.
- Educators should rely on their own testing, not external summative tests, for specific information about student learning gaps and academic strengths and weakness.
- In other words, don't rely on state accountability tests for what they can't do. Rather, use state tests to identify general strengths and weaknesses of the instructional program.
- For instance, why did our school perform worse in this area of math than expected based on state performance? Why did our students in this subgroup perform worse than their counterparts in schools across the state? Teams of teachers can then investigate further to understand and take actions based on these results to improve instruction for a new group of students in the next year.

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- This graphic depicts the process of instructional activity . . .
- formative assessment evidence gathering . . .
- and feedback for instruction.
- In other words, formative assessment evidence gathering is embedded in and informs instruction.

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- Here we add various classroom summative assessments which count toward grades and can also inform remediation and program changes.
- This depicts where different types of classroom assessment, both summative and formative, might fit into a balanced assessment system.

- Classroom summative tests should focus on the same curriculum standards (for instance, content and skills) as formative assessment evidence gathering
- And this is one type of balance!
- Students should not be surprised by what they see on a summative test, and teachers should not be surprised by their results because students shouldn't be taking the test until formative assessment says that they are ready.

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- Here we add external interim assessment . . .
- Ideally external interim assessments are closely aligned to the same curriculum standards as internal assessments.
- It's important that the external interim assessments chosen provide useful information beyond what internal assessments provide.
- Unnecessary or over testing is an imbalance.

Slide 18

- And finally external summative assessment in the form of the state test, which is designed for program evaluation and improvement.
- All assessment types – formative, interim, summative.....internal and external – *used properly*, can, in their own ways, improve teaching and learning, which should be the ultimate purpose of testing.
- These components can maximize learning when they are aligned and work together.

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- A teacher's primary role in contributing to a balanced assessment system is through proper classroom formative and summative assessment practices.
- In this section we provide some tips for teachers and advice for administrators in how to support them.

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- Teachers need to have an in-depth understanding of the process of formative assessment and may need support in implementing it effectively.
- Formative assessment is a proven instructional process by which teachers can ensure that students are learning what they are expected to learn.
- Formative assessment is *not* just frequent testing; it's a multi-step instructional process in which evidence gathering during instruction is one step.
- All of the steps in the process must be done well in order to yield rich information on students' strengths and weaknesses relative to learning targets – not just number correct on quizzes – so that teachers can provide the most helpful descriptive feedback and make appropriate decisions about next steps.

- Understanding the difference between formative and classroom summative assessment is essential. Grading practices, discussed in later lessons, are important because they can impact student motivation to learn in both positive and negative ways.

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- As we said in the introduction, there is more to a balanced assessment system than just the names of its four components. There is balance within each component.
- The quality of teacher-made summative tests matters, and certain balances contribute to that quality – for example, balancing the representation of knowledge and skills within a subject area domain. There is a lot of content in a unit or marking period, so it’s important to sample it well during classroom summative assessment so that students’ grades accurately reflect their level of achievement or growth.
- This balance also includes appropriate attention to both basic knowledge and skills and higher order thinking through the use of item and task types that effectively measure these skills.
- For example, because actual student work is the best evidence of students’ thinking, extended constructed-response questions are better measures of higher order thinking skills than multiple-choice items. It’s important to test both basic knowledge and skills and higher order thinking.

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- Teachers should expect the following from instructional leaders and administrators:
 - periodic monitoring of the quality of teachers’ assessment practices and tools . . .
 - support of professional development in the area of student assessment, . . .
 - professional development that is on-the-job, ongoing, and collaborative . . .
 - time for teacher teams to collaborate – at least a 90-minute block of time weekly . . .
 - schoolwide grading practices or requirements that are fair and promote student motivation to learn rather than inhibiting it . . .
 - and, collaboration with teachers in the selection and use of external assessments taking particular care to avoid unnecessary testing and over testing

Slide 23

- These activities provide teachers with the opportunity to apply the information learned in this lesson. They should be started individually and then in conjunction with instructional leaders and administrators.
- The next slide contains additional resources that will support your progress.

Slide 24

- The first article, by Joan Herman, is a helpful reference on the components of a balanced assessment system and how they work together. Notice, the author also discusses clinical/diagnostic assessments identifying learning disabilities. This lesson is focused on assessment types that pertain to all students.

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