

# Components of an Equitable Assessment System



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# Purpose

Integral to meaningful assessment is equitable assessment wherein schools help all students achieve ambitious outcomes through a bias-free, balanced approach to assessment that honors the unique strengths, talents, and identities of all students. Inspired by Transcend Education’s [“Leaps for Equitable 21st Century Learning.”](#) the Michigan Assessment Consortium (MAC) has identified Components of an Equitable Assessment System ([see table in appendix](#)).

The [Components of an Equitable Assessment System](#) described in this brief are necessarily supported by a learning environment that promotes equitable learning opportunities wherein all learners are provided equitable access to high-quality, differentiated instruction by qualified educators who hold and communicate high expectations for all learners and provide them with sufficient time and opportunities to achieve ambitious outcomes.

The purpose of delineating and describing ten components with examples and recommended resources is to help guide educators in implementing assessment practices and systems necessary to support all children. We are eager for feedback on the described components and interested in locating and elevating additional examples of these components at work in schools. This work is part of our continuing commitment to create an equitable assessment environment for all students by ensuring the assessment literacy of all learners and their families, educators, and policymakers.

See [MAC’s Assessment Literacy Standards](#).

We invite you to provide feedback on the MAC’s Components of an Equitable Assessment System by completing [this form](#).

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Purpose</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Statement: Components of an Equitable Assessment System</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Foundational Convictions for an Equitable Learning System</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Components of an Equitable Assessment System at work</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Component 1: High Quality Classroom Assessment by Skilled Educators</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Component 2: Assessment for the Whole Child</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>Component 3: Assessment of Deeper Learning</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>Component 4: Authentic Assessment</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Component 5: Reflective Self- &amp; Peer Assessment</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Component 6: Socially-Conscious Assessment</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>Component 7: Collaborative Learning and Assessment</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>Component 8: Differentiated Assessment</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>Component 9: Student-Driven Assessment</b> .....	<b>43</b>
<b>Component 10: Student-Centered Assessment</b> .....	<b>46</b>
<b>Appendix: Table – Leaps for Equitable, 21st-Century Learning and Assessing</b> ..	<b>48</b>
<b>Notes</b> .....	<b>49</b>

## Components of an Equitable Assessment System

The Michigan Assessment Consortium (MAC) is a nonpartisan and nonprofit professional association of educators who believe that all children deserve a quality education that prepares them for success. Quality education depends on the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and meaningful assessment that verifies and advances learning.

### Where We Stand

The MAC also believes that all learners can achieve rigorous, ambitious academic outcomes when they are provided with sufficient learning opportunities supported through meaningful assessment processes. Integral to meaningful assessment is equitable assessment wherein schools help all students achieve ambitious outcomes through a bias-free, balanced approach to assessment that honors the unique strengths, talents, and identities of all students.

### Foundational Convictions

We assert that a learning environment that promotes equitable learning opportunities is one where all learners are provided equitable access to high-quality, differentiated instruction by qualified educators who hold and communicate high expectations for all learners and provide them sufficient time and opportunities to achieve ambitious outcomes. Such an education environment includes all of the following features:

#### High Expectations for All Students

Educators hold and communicate high expectations for all learners and believe they are capable of showing proficiency in the most rigorous outcomes when given enough time and formative support to do so.

#### Sufficient Opportunities to Learn

All learners are individually provided sufficient time and opportunities to learn the knowledge and skills expected by teachers, recognizing that time is an important factor in promoting ambitious outcomes for all students.

#### High-Quality Instruction

All learners are provided equitable access to instruction by qualified teachers who understand their discipline deeply and know how to provide differentiated instruction within that discipline to support all learners.

### Summary Statement

The Michigan Assessment Consortium believes that integral to meaningful assessment is equitable assessment that promotes all the following:

- High-quality assessment by skilled educators
- Assessment for the whole child
- Assessment of deeper learning
- Authentic assessment
- Reflective self & peer assessment
- Socially-conscious assessment
- Collaborative learning and assessment
- Differentiated assessment
- Student-driven assessment
- Student-centered assessment

To that end, we commit to:

- Collaboratively engage with Michigan education stakeholders in the work of advancing assessment literacy and advocating for excellence and equity in assessment practices and systems.

## MAC's Components of an Equitable Assessment System, cont.

We endeavor to create an equitable assessment environment for all students by ensuring the assessment literacy of all learners and their families, educators, and policymakers while promoting the following:

### High-Quality Assessment by Skilled Educators

All learners have equitable access to educators who use a variety of high-quality assessment methods to demonstrate proficiency and who are skilled in using both assessment of and assessment for learning throughout the learning cycle.

### Assessment for the Whole Child

Assessment systems advance the totality of cognitive, emotional, and physical factors that impact the child's learning, development, and overall health and well-being.

### Assessment of Deeper Learning

Assessment is based on learner ability to apply, analyze, and use understanding in relevant ways, across multiple contexts.

### Authentic Assessment

All learners have opportunities to demonstrate and apply what they understand and know by engaging in new, novel, real-world contexts for genuine audiences.

### Reflective Self- and Peer Assessment

All learners have opportunities to reflect and monitor their own progress towards instructional and social and emotional learning (SEL) outcomes. The learning community engages in constructive peer feedback around learning targets and success criteria.

### Socially-Conscious Assessment

The assessment process incorporates empathy and understanding, by taking into account individuals' culture and experiences, thereby adjusting to support all learners' success.

### Collaborative Learning and Assessment

A systemic, facilitated process for assessment builds meaningful relationships and establishes a community of learners that nurtures empathy, fosters belonging, supports well-being, and creates social capital.

### Differentiated Assessment

The focus, timing, and method of (both formative and summative) assessment, as well as the resources and supports provided, are tailored to each learner's identity, prior knowledge, development, learning styles, and life experiences.

### Student-Driven Assessments

All learners have an active voice in when and how they are assessed using methods that encourage student ownership of their learning and meaningfully draw on their interest and prior knowledge.

### Student-Centered Assessment

Assessments are aligned with and consider each learner's experiences and goals, community context, and perspective.

## Conclusion

Equity is demonstrated when all students are supported to achieve at a rigorous level. The Michigan Assessment Consortium believes that assessment is a positive, essential, ongoing tool to guide teaching and learning cycles. We will continue to collaboratively engage with Michigan education stakeholders in the work of advancing assessment literacy and advocating for excellence and equity in assessment practices and systems.

Note: Components on this page are inspired by [Transcend's "Leaps for Equitable 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning."](#)



# Foundational Convictions for an Equitable Learning System

The MAC believes that all learners can achieve rigorous, ambitious academic outcomes when they are provided with sufficient learning opportunities supported through meaningful assessment processes. Integral to meaningful assessment is equitable assessment wherein schools help all students achieve ambitious outcomes through a bias-free, balanced approach to assessment that honors the unique strengths, talents, and identities of all students. Additionally, equity requires qualified educators to help all students achieve high expectations for learning.

We assert that a learning environment that promotes equitable learning opportunities is one where all learners are provided equitable access to **high-quality, differentiated instruction** by qualified educators who hold and communicate **high expectations for all learners** and provide them **sufficient time and opportunities** to achieve ambitious outcomes.

Such an education environment includes all of the following features:

## High Expectations for All Students

Educators hold and communicate high expectations for all learners. They believe that all students are capable of showing proficiency on the most rigorous outcomes, when given sufficient time and support to do so.

**“Whether you think they can, or you think they can’t, you’re probably right.”  
—Henry Ford, 1912**

“All children can learn” is commonly expressed when we are asked how well students will do in classrooms. When stated almost 50 years ago as a theme for statewide assessment conferences in Michigan, it was an emphatic statement designed to contradict and challenge the frequently-spoken (and believed) narrative that some students, perhaps due to factors outside of their or their family’s control, would not or could not achieve what other students would achieve. The mindset that some children can and will learn while others cannot or will not was widely held at the time and persists today.

When the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was signed into law, it mandated that “No Child be Left Behind”—in other words, all students needed to and could achieve proficiency of rigorous content being taught. Was NCLB met with an enthusiastic endorsement of the concept of high achievement by all students? No! Instead, some experts and practitioners declared this goal to be both unrealistic and unattainable (Linn, 2008; Linn, 2005; Sunderman, 2007). It’s tempting to cling strongly to the belief that high expectations for all students is unrealistic and unachievable. A low level of expectations serves, unfortunately, as a self-fulfilling negative prophecy, since instructional actions may have reflected their belief in the inability of some students to achieve rigorous outcomes.

So, why are high expectations so important? First, our expectations are communicated

directly and indirectly to students and their families. This leads some students to understand that they can do well even if the learning is challenging, and others come to see themselves as academically inept. Second, achievement expectations of teachers and students are a key to how each group reacts when students fail to initially achieve the targets for instruction set by the teacher. As Jan Chappuis (2023) stated, citing the work of John Hattie (2009):

Teacher expectations can enhance or inhibit achievement:

- Students can tell when a teacher expects different achievement from different students.
- When teachers treat all students like high achievers and aim to develop all students' learning capabilities, achievement is significantly higher.
- When teachers believe that students' achievement levels are difficult to change (having a fixed mindset about achievement), students achieve at lower levels
- Parents' expectations can enhance or inhibit achievement:
  - Parents' hopes and expectations for their student's level of achievement is the most powerful contributing factor to high achievement across all home variables.
  - Students talking with parents about work and progress increases parents' expectations for their children's achievement.
- Lowered expectations (for participation, for performance, for meeting standards) for certain groups of students can influence their own assessment of their capabilities, which impacts their expectations for themselves. (Chappuis, 2023)

“Failure” is inevitable in the process of learning; some students will achieve the targets by learning quickly and easily, while others will take more time and struggle to achieve proficiency. If we continue to hold the expectation that struggling learners will eventually achieve proficiency, those students will be afforded continued learning opportunities. If we, on the other hand, hold low expectations, we might fail to provide such added learning opportunities, and might even justify this on the basis of “not wanting to frustrate the student.”

Thus, expectations (intentionally or unintentionally) conveyed to students help to determine whether all students or only some students achieve the rigorous outcomes set for our students. If we hope that all students will achieve those rigorous outcomes, then it is incumbent on educators to examine our beliefs to determine if more than lip service is being given to the belief that all students can learn, by acting on this belief in high expectations for all students through the actions we take daily in classrooms.



## Sufficient Opportunities to Learn

All learners are individually provided sufficient time and opportunities to learn the knowledge and skills expected by teachers, recognizing that time is an important factor in promoting ambitious outcomes for all students.

**“Learners have sufficient access to learning opportunities they need to achieve excellence, meaning students with more learning challenges are given the additional learning time—and supports—they need to achieve rigorous outcomes.” —Edward Roeber**

A related key to student success is the time teachers and students spend on learning. A logic argument can be stated that if teachers and students believe that high achievement is possible and that it will and must occur, then initial learning challenges are not only expected, but they also oblige educators to adjust and extend instructional strategies, schools to develop supportive structures, and students to adjust and extend their learning tactics.

For educators with high expectations for achievement by all students, this can be depicted as:



This can reinforce in the minds of students and their teachers that high expectations and sufficient opportunities to learn can lead to higher achievement by all students.

For educators with low expectations for achievement by some students, this can be depicted as:



This can reinforce in the minds of students and their teachers that high achievement is not possible for some students.

When instructional time is held constant for all students, differences in student achievement are evident. For all students to achieve excellent, rigorous outcomes, different amounts of learning time must be offered for different students. This type of “mastery learning” is something that Benjamin Bloom (1998) wrote about, as Tom Guskey (2005) noted in a review of Bloom’s work:

Bloom argued [1998] that to reduce variation in students’ achievement and to have all students learn well, we must *increase variation in instructional approaches and learning time* [emphasis added]. The key element in this effort was well constructed, formative classroom assessments. Bloom outlined a specific strategy for using formative classroom assessments to guide teachers in differentiating their instruction and labeled it “mastery learning” (Guskey, 2005).

One modern Mastery Learning model, also known as “Learning for Mastery (LFM),” works cyclically through five stages: pre-assessment, instruction, formative assessment, correction or enrichment instruction, and summative grading or assessment (Otus, 2023).

**Pre-Assessment:** Ensure students have previously mastered the skills or knowledge necessary to move into the current material. If the students do not have the needed competencies, the teacher moves backward to ensure students master the previous material before moving forward.

**Instruction:** Once students have exhibited competency in the foundational skills or knowledge necessary for the current material, the teacher will begin instruction. Clearly communicate the mastery grading scale they will use to determine if students have achieved competency.

**Formative Assessment:** Throughout the instruction stage, teachers will assess students' skills and knowledge through formative assessment. Formative assessment can measure student competencies through a variety of methods, from exit tickets to homework assignments to classroom polls.\*

**Correction or Enrichment Instruction:** Students who demonstrate high competency can continue to grow their knowledge and skill set through personalized enrichment instruction, while those who have not demonstrated mastery can receive additional personalized instruction and practice opportunities from the teacher.

**Summative Assessment:** Once a teacher believes all students are at or close to mastery, they offer a cumulative test, essay, or project to assess if each student has mastered the content.

Advocates of Mastery Learning describe three benefits (Otus, 2023):

1. It sets students up for success: A mastery learning model focuses on every student and their journey toward growth, and ideally, mastery. It provides students with as much time and intervention as needed, so each student is ready to move on to the next level.
2. It inspires a love of learning: Learning is far more collaborative, and teachers often report that students engaged in Mastery Learning begin to explore the content for a love of learning, not for fear of a bad grade.
3. It puts learning in the hands of students: Students can no longer blame bad grades on bad teaching; rather, they are given as much time and as many opportunities as they need until they master the content.

In a system that provides equitable opportunities to learn, each student is afforded the learning time he or she needs in order to achieve proficiency. Ultimately, this may mean more learning time for students who are lower achievers, since to hold learning time constant means that we know in advance that some students will fail to learn in the time allotted. Of course, it also matters how teachers use this extra time, such as providing formative feedback to students that assist student to move their learning forward.

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\*Refer to the *Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME)* program for the Michigan Assessment Consortium's comprehensive conception of the formative assessment process.

## High Quality Instruction

All learners are provided equitable access to instruction by qualified, experienced teachers who understand their discipline deeply and know how to provide differentiated instruction within that discipline to support all learners.

***“But the fact is, no matter how good the teacher, how small the class, how focused on quality the education the school may be, none of this matters if we ignore the individual needs of our students.” —Roy Barnes, American Political Figure***

High Quality Instruction is the delivery of curricular content that is effective, engaging, and beneficial for each and every child within an educational setting. One research-based approach to high-quality instruction is Ambitious Teaching.

Ambitious Teaching emphasizes high, but appropriate, learning expectations and success criteria that have been clearly articulated for both teachers and students. It encourages collaborative engagements among students where they are exploring, thinking creatively, problem solving and engaging in dialogue. In Ambitious Teaching, students are encouraged to engage in inquiry-based tasks to learn, not only the content, but how the content connects to their own life experiences and deepens their understanding through authentic applications. Student ownership and differentiation of learning is a hallmark of Ambitious Teaching.

Ambitious Teaching requires teachers to have deep knowledge of their discipline, a deep understanding of the way students learn their discipline and a fundamental understanding of Assessment for Learning.

In addition, Ambitious Teaching results in an equitable approach to assessment when braided tightly with Assessment for Learning or the formative assessment process.

As described by Michigan’s Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) program, the formative assessment process has several Components and Elements that, at their heart, are a specific set of instructional practices:

- Planning
- Learning target Use
  - Learning targets/success criteria
  - Learning progressions
  - Exemplars
- Eliciting evidence
  - Activating prior knowledge

### High-Quality Instruction develops each and every student to become:

- ▶ Attentive Listeners
- ▶ Collaborators
- ▶ Creative
- ▶ Critical Thinkers
- ▶ Curious
- ▶ Discoverers
- ▶ Experimenters
- ▶ Explorers
- ▶ Life-Long Learners
- ▶ Peer Assessors
- ▶ Problem Solvers
- ▶ Self-Reflectors

- Aligned tasks
- Use of questions
- Formative feedback
  - Teacher feedback
  - Peer feedback
  - Self-assessment
- Instructional/learning decisions
  - Adjusting teaching
  - Adjusting learning

When coupled with the elements of ambitious teaching, **10 bold practices** emerge:

1. Build safe and supportive relationships that engage learners.
2. Plan for the formative assessment process.
3. Develop and use clear learning targets and success criteria that encourage students to become proficient in their understanding of content knowledge, skills and processes.
4. Use exemplars and rubrics to guide success.
5. Engage in rich, productive learning activities and tasks that involve meaningful collaboration and discourse.
6. Use authentic & appropriately rigorous assessment opportunities to gather evidence of student understanding
7. Employ quality teacher questioning and feedback strategies.
8. Engage students in peer and self-assessment.
9. Use collected evidence to determine “next steps” for both teaching and learning as appropriate.
10. Reflect on our practice.

Braiding the elements of Ambitious Teaching with the formative assessment process creates a learning environment where high quality instruction and assessment provide inclusive, equitable learning opportunities and expectations for all students to achieve regardless of their background, abilities, and or challenges.

## Resources

### for High Expectations for All Students

*Pygmalion in the classroom: Teacher expectations and pupils' intellectual development*, by Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson. (1968). New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

“The effects of teacher expectation interventions on teachers’ expectations and

student achievement: narrative review and meta-analysis,” by Hester DeBoer, Anneke C. Timmermans & Margaretha P.C. van der Werf. Educational Research and Evaluation, 24:3-5, 180-200, DOI: [10.1080/13803611.2018.1550834](https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2018.1550834)

### for Sufficient Opportunities to Learn

Give our Students the Gift of Confidence, by Rick Stiggins (Corwin 2023)

[“Learning for Mastery.”](https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED053419.pdf) by Benjamin S. Bloom, 1968 files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED053419.pdf

[What is Mastery Learning?](https://www.khanacademy.com/what-is-mastery-learning) Created by Khan Academy bit.ly/3Kruvv0

### for High Quality Instruction

#### Learning Points:

[What is ambitious teaching?](https://bit.ly/LP-AmbitiousTeaching) bit.ly/LP-AmbitiousTeaching

[What is the relationship between ambitious teaching and formative assessment?](https://bit.ly/LP-AmbitiousTeachingandFAP)  
bit.ly/LP-AmbitiousTeachingandFAP

#### Learning Moment videos:

[How ambitious teaching and formative assessment support every student.](#)

[Supporting students to become agents in their own learning.](#)

[How to support teachers in their ambitious teaching and formative assessment.](#)

Position Paper: [The Future We Want](#), OECD 2018

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Guskey, T.R. (2005). Formative Classroom Assessment and Benjamin S. Bloom: Theory, Research, and Implications. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada. April 2005.

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Roeber, E. (2006) *Instructional and assessment systems of successful schools*. Lansing, MI: Michigan Department of Education.

Stiggins, R. (2023). *Give-Our-Students-Gift-Confidence: It's Essential for Learning Success*. Corwin

Sunderman, G.L. "A provocative examination of NCLB and how it can be improved." Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. 2007

# Components of an Equitable Assessment System at work

Equity is demonstrated when all students are supported to achieve at a rigorous level. The MAC's Components of an Equitable Assessment System serve to guide educators in implementing assessment as a positive, essential, ongoing tool to guide teaching and learning cycles.

- The 10 Components of an Equitable Assessment System that follow are not meant to be used in isolation.
- The ten Components function best within an interconnected and balanced assessment system.
- Throughout the ten Component descriptions, you will see certain assessment principles and practices repeat, since they support a complex assessment system.

Through our [diverse professional networks](#) and [robust professional development](#) based on state-endorsed [Assessment Literacy Standards](#), the MAC remains committed to creating an equitable assessment environment for all students by ensuring the assessment literacy of all learners and their families, educators, and policymakers.

## Complete list of components:

**Component 1 — High Quality Classroom Assessment by Skilled Educators**

**Component 2 — Assessment for the Whole Child**

**Component 3 — Assessment of Deeper Learning**

**Component 4 — Authentic Assessment**

**Component 5 — Reflective Self- & Peer Assessment**

**Component 6 — Socially-Conscious Assessment**

**Component 7 — Collaborative Learning and Assessment**

**Component 8 — Differentiated Assessment**

**Component 9 — Student-Driven Assessment**

**Component 10 — Student-Centered Assessment**





## COMPONENT 1

# High Quality Classroom Assessment by Skilled Educators

All learners have equitable access to educators who use a variety of high-quality assessment methods to demonstrate proficiency and who are skilled in using both assessment of and assessment for learning throughout the learning cycle.

*“[Quality] assessment practices rely on a foundation of accurate information: no accuracy, no gain. If the information from an assessment is inaccurate—if it offers a distorted picture of what students have and have not learned—any decision we make has the potential to harm learning.” —Chappuis, Stiggins, CASL 2020*

### This component means . . .

Educators need to learn more about assessment and become assessment literate. To become assessment literate, they must possess the knowledge and skills needed to use a variety of assessment types (assessment **of** and **for** learning), either by selecting the most suitable assessment tool for the purpose at hand or by developing them from scratch. They must collect information about student achievement and know how to **use** the information to improve student learning and ultimately come to the belief that quality assessment practices are tightly tied to achieving equitable student outcomes.

Assessment literate educators provide opportunities for all students to show what they know in meaningful ways, using accurate tools intentionally and purposefully selected to provide the most reliable, authentic, fair and, therefore, valid evidence possible. Then and only then can accurate decisions be made about students and their learning.

### High Quality Classroom Assessment **of** and **for** Learning:

<b>Classroom Summative Assessment (Assessment OF Learning)</b>	<b>Formative Assessment Process (Assessment FOR Learning)</b>
Clear Purpose	Planning
Clear Learning Targets	Learning Target Use
Sound Assessment Design	Eliciting Evidence of Student Understanding
Effective Communication of Results	Formative Feedback

Classroom Summative Assessment (Assessment OF Learning)	Formative Assessment Process (Assessment FOR Learning)
Student Involvement in the Assessment Process	Instructional and Learning Decisions

## High-Quality Classroom Summative Assessment

One crucial prerequisite to high-quality classroom assessment is the tools being used to gather the evidence. Are they giving us the information we need, aligned with both the content and the rigor, to make accurate decisions about students' learning and ultimately their futures?

Assessment experts Rick Stiggins, Steve Chappuis, and Jan Chappuis urge assessment literate educators to attend to **5-Keys to Quality Classroom Assessment:**

**Key 1: Clear Purpose**—Be sure you have a clear purpose as to why you are gathering the assessment evidence, who will use the evidence, and for what decision.

- Are you looking to gather evidence **during** the learning process to **nudge** learning along? (assessment **for** learning/**formative assessment**), or
- Are you looking to gather evidence of students' understanding at the **end** of the learning process to **certify or judge** their learning? (assessment **of** learning/**summative assessment**).

**Key 2: Clear Targets/Success Criteria**—Having clarity in terms of **what will be assessed** and **what success looks (sounds & feels) like** in relation to that outcome(s) will most certainly provide a more clear understanding of **HOW best** to assess. Ensuring there is alignment between the written, taught, and assessed curriculum is imperative to equitable assessment practices. The **nouns** and **verbs** embedded in the state standards matter as do the context in which they are implemented in classrooms. The more clarity teachers have, the more clarity students will have. This will allow **all** students the opportunity to rise to high expectations. Having clarity around what needs to be assessed is essential to both assessment **for** and **of** learning.

**Key 3: Sound Design**—With that clarity also comes the information we need to determine the most efficient and effective way to gather evidence of student understanding. Educators know that there are various types of standards that **learning targets** are derived from:

- Knowledge—the facts and concepts we want students to know and remember easily.
- Reasoning—the ability for students to think deeply about what they know, i.e., compare/contrast, categorize, analyze, evaluate, and or synthesize.
- Skills—the ability to use knowledge and reasoning to act skillfully.
- Product—the ability to use knowledge, reasoning, and skills to create a concrete artifact.

They also recognize 4 basic **methods** to assess students:

- Observations/Performance
- Conversations
- Constructed Responses
- Selected Responses

It is important to consider both the target and the method when determining the tool used to gather evidence of student understanding. Keeping this in mind when selecting the evidence gathering tool (for both assessment for and of learning) and then ensuring the tool is of high quality, will provide the accuracy needed to make important decisions about student learning.

**Key 4: Sound Communication**—Keep accurate records of student understanding from both formative and summative assessment practices to report on student progress, growth, and achievement. It is appropriate to record scores for summative efforts and report those grades to whomever has the need to know. Educators might tailor reports to assessment purposes and the audiences to whom the information is being communicated.

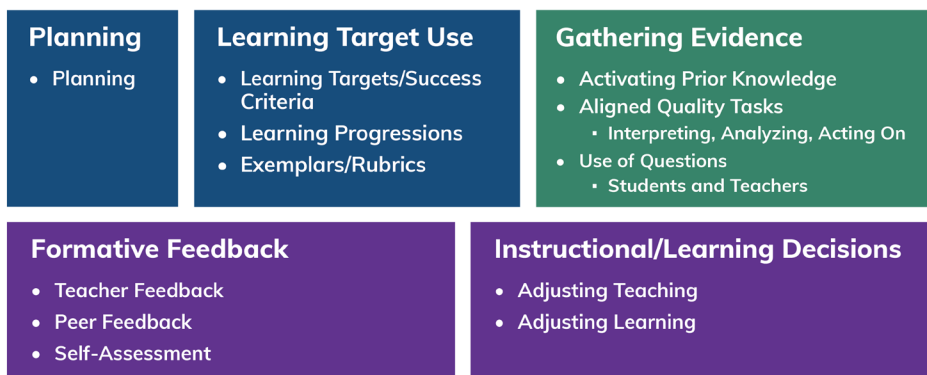
**Key 5: Student Involvement**—Students should be the **primary users** of all assessment evidence collected at the classroom level. What **students do and think about themselves** based on the assessment evidence has a much **greater impact on where they will go next** in their learning. Will they know how to proceed with confidence, or will they give up in hopelessness?

When attended to and implemented well in a classroom setting these Keys can also provide clarity to inform Assessment **For** Learning or the Formative Assessment Process.

### High Quality Formative Assessment Process

When engaging in the formative assessment process, educators need to ensure they are implementing the process in a systemic, informative way that is intentional and purposeful. The FAME Components and Elements help teachers visualize what this “looks” like when implemented with fidelity in a classroom setting.

## Formative Assessment Instructional Components & Elements



## Formative Assessment Component 1: Planning

Planning for formative assessment is different from traditional lesson planning. When planning for the formative assessment process teachers need to consider...

- What will the students be learning?
- How will the teacher and students know where they are in their learning?
- What tool will be used to gather accurate, quality evidence of their current understanding?
- What will students say, do make or write to show proficiency on their learning targets and success criteria?
- What feedback might they need to further their understanding?
- What opportunities will be provided for reflection on given feedback?

Planning is a necessary first step for the successful implementation of the formative assessment process.

## Formative Assessment Component 2: Learning Target Use

Students need to have a clear understanding of what they will be learning, what success looks like, and how they will be asked to demonstrate proficiency. Clear learning targets that are embedded in the teaching and learning process lead to better clarity and therefore higher achievement for all students. Learning targets and success criteria can be focused on:

- Learning a new concept/skill/analytic practice
- Building on/extending concept/skill to deepen it
- Applying a concept/skill/analytic practice
- Transfer of concept/skill/analytic practice to a new context

When learning targets and success criteria are developed around a logical learning progression, they become the roadmap for students and teachers follow to achieve proficiency on state standards. Rubrics and exemplars might also be utilized to provide clarity to both halves of the classroom.

## Formative Assessment Component 3: Gathering Evidence of Student Understanding

A variety of tools and strategies may be used to gather evidence of student understanding during the learning.

These usually fall into 3 main categories:

- **Conversations** (Teacher/Student Questions)
- **Observations** (Actions related to Learning Target/Success Criteria)
- **Examination of Artifacts** (Pre-Assessments, Tasks, Assignments, Projects)

What is most important is that the evidence gathered is **aligned with the stated learning target and success criteria** and therefore provides **accurate, quality information** about the students' current level of understanding.

It is equally important, in the formative assessment process, that the evidence is then **used, during the learning, to move learning forward and provides clear next steps** for the student to engage in to **further and/or deepen their learning**.

#### **Formative Assessment Component 4: Formative Feedback**

Formative feedback, which can be written or verbal, is descriptive and actionable. It provides students information that lets them know what they have done well, in relation to the learning target and success criteria, and also provides a “next step” to encourage the students to further or deepen their understanding. Formative feedback can be given to individual students or to a group of students when similar patterns and trends in learning are noted.

Formative feedback can be provided by teachers, the student themselves and or peers.

Formative feedback must be timely and directly related to the learning target and success criteria.

When done well, formative assessment takes the place of grades as it is given while the learning is still occurring and there is no expectation that the students have completed or solidified their understanding.

Feedback is about words...not marks or other symbols.

#### **Formative Assessment Component 5: Instructional and Learning Decisions**

When thinking about making decisions on the effectiveness of instruction, educators must base their thinking on the collection, analysis and interpretation of the evidence collected. Teachers also realize that adjustments or next steps need to take place during the learning, oftentimes in the learning moment, not after the students leave the classroom, and certainly not after the lesson or unit is complete.

Teachers may ask themselves:

- What might I do if students don't demonstrate learning?
- What are the next steps I can assist students in taking?
- What might I do if students already know this?
- How might I dig deeper into where students are in their learning, so I know best what to plan for tomorrow?
- How can I assist students in adjusting their learning tactics, if current ones are not working for them?

Students also make decisions about their learning and make adjustment based on the evidence collected and the feedback provided.

Students may ask themselves:

- What might I do if I don't demonstrate learning?
- What are the next steps I can take?
- What might I do if I already know this?

- How might I dig deeper into where I am in my learning, so I know how to move forward?
- How can I adjust my learning tactics, if current ones are not working for me?

The formative assessment process is a well-researched approach to teaching and learning that when implemented with fidelity can double the speed of learning. It has also been documented to be most effective with lower achieving students.

When skilled educators implement High-Quality Assessment Of and For Learning in their classrooms, that work in tandem with one another, they are ensuring a comprehensive, balanced, equitable assessment system.

## High-quality assessment by skilled educators might look like this...

Ms. Jones is thinking about an upcoming lesson she will be teaching. Knowing that past students have struggled when she gets to a particular section, she decides she needs to gather some evidence during the next lesson to determine if her initial teaching was sufficient, or if she might need to scaffold additional learning opportunities into the following lesson(s).<sup>1</sup>

Knowing she needs to be intentional and purposeful in her evidence collection, Ms. Jones uses an evidence-gathering template (see example below).

Using a template, Ms. Jones carefully plans out how she would be gathering evidence of student understanding, being sure to keep the 5 Keys to Quality Assessment in mind. The completed example shown in Figure 1 helps ensure she stays true to her intent and gets the information necessary for her and her students to make decisions about their learning and move forward in their thinking.

**Figure 2: Gathering Evidence During the Formative Assessment Process**  
**EXAMPLE**

<b>Standard:</b> Construct a function to model a linear relationship between two quantities	
<b>Learning Target(s):</b> Analyze patterns and Represent Functions: Make conjecture about relationships among patterns	
<b>Success Criteria:</b> Understand what functions are. Represent functions in a variety of ways. Notice important math functions. Develop a conjecture based on patterns.	
<b>How will I gather evidence of student understanding?</b> Check all that apply: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Products/Tasks <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Observations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conversations <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<b>What tool will I use to gather evidence of student understanding?</b> Name the evidence gathering tool used: <input type="checkbox"/> Handout with specific math problem (see below) <input type="checkbox"/> Questions/Conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Observations <input type="checkbox"/> Exit Ticket at the end of the lesson
<b>What will I be looking for in the collected evidence that will help me determine the students' current level of understanding related to the learning target &amp; success criteria?</b> Evidence of deep mathematical reasoning as they recognize that the rate of change for all growing patterns is 4. Look for structure and recognize that the formula is always going to start with $y = 4x$ . Solving problem 3 knowing they will need to use a negative number. Use of color coding to help organize their thinking. Development of a conjecture through a graphical representation.	
<b>What might be some common misunderstandings/misconceptions I might expect to see in the evidence collected?</b> Using negative numbers Recognizing patterns in math problems Solving problems with no stated beginning	
<b>What might be some next steps (for myself and the student(s), if the collected evidence does not reflect proficiency, yet?)</b> Additional time Use of exit ticket to determine where they were in their thinking at the end of the lesson Self-Reflection based on use of Mathematical Practices	
<b>Other thoughts and/or observations:</b> All problems on the handout have the same rate of change (increase by 4) All problems had a different y intercept (starting place) The 3 <sup>rd</sup> problem had no beginning provided	

<sup>1</sup> Example based on Teaching Channel Video Conjecturing About Functions with Audra McPhillips. 2013  
<https://learn.teachingchannel.com/video/conjecture-lesson-plan>

## Resources

*Classroom Assessment for Student Learning: Doing It Right—Using It Well (3rd Edition)*, by Jan Chappuis, and Rick Stiggins (Pearson 2019).

### Learning Points:

[What is ambitious teaching?](https://bit.ly/LP-AmbitiousTeaching) [bit.ly/LP-AmbitiousTeaching](https://bit.ly/LP-AmbitiousTeaching)

[What is the relationship between ambitious teaching and formative assessment?](https://bit.ly/LP-AmbitiousTeachingandFAP)  
[bit.ly/LP-AmbitiousTeachingandFAP](https://bit.ly/LP-AmbitiousTeachingandFAP)

[What is Gathering Evidence of student understanding?](#)

[How do we design assessment systems for modern learning?](#)

### Learning Moment Videos:

Jan Chappuis

[5 Keys to Quality for a better assessment future](#)

[High-Quality, Equitable Assessment Design and Practice](#)

Margaret Heritage and Caroline Wylie

[How ambitious teaching and formative assessment support every student.](#)

[Supporting students to become agents in their own learning.](#)

[How to support teachers in their ambitious teaching and formative assessment practice.](#)





## COMPONENT 2

# Assessment for the Whole Child

Assessment systems advance the totality of cognitive, emotional, and physical factors that impact the child’s learning, development, and overall health and well-being

**“The U.S. education system was built on a factory model of education in which teachers deliver instruction to passive students, content areas are siloed, and learning is primarily defined by multiple-choice test scores. This model stands in stark contrast to the growing knowledge base of How People Learn through authentic learning experiences that actively engage students, help students develop higher-order thinking skills, ask students to apply what they have learned, and treat all students as equally capable of success.” —Whole child Policy Toolkit, Learning Policy Institute**

## This component means...

The demands of the 21st century require an education for children that fully prepares them for college, careers, and citizenship, and this requires a comprehensive understanding of the contexts and circumstances that support physical, emotional, and cognitive development and well-being. For our assessment practice and systems this means an approach that advances the totality of cognitive, emotional, and physical factors that impact the child’s learning, development, and overall health and well-being.

Nearly twenty years ago, ASCD launched its [Whole Child Framework](#) to change the conversation about education from a narrow focus on academic achievement to one that promotes long term development and success for learners. The Five Tenets of the Whole Child Framework suggest five assessment corollaries.

### Healthy Assessment

A healthy school assessment environment would engage students in assessment (especially any assessment with high stakes) under optimal physical circumstances, (e.g. sufficient nutrition, rest, sufficient time, attentiveness to duration and in relationship to the age of the student, lack of distractions, etc.). Teachers and students would receive training in how to self-regulate one’s nervous system, so that the body can support the mind to engage in assessment.

### Safe Assessment

A safe assessment environment uses assessment information to positively support individual student growth and development and to improve curriculum, instruction, or school programming. A safe assessment environment provides opportunity for widely diverse learners to show what they know and can do through a variety of cultural contexts. A safe assessment environment reflects proven cognitive science that suggests mindset is not fixed and can be positively developed to support learning through assessment that connects the student to self-agency.

## Engaging Assessment

An engaging assessment approach that connects students to their school and community will capitalize on the funds of knowledge students bring to school. Assessment approaches that offer active engagement such as inquiry or project- and problem-based methods can originate from student interests and aptitudes and engender caring and interested dispositions toward the school community.

## Supportive Assessment

A comprehensive assessment approach that supports personalized learning addresses academics, social, civic, ethical, and emotional development. It requires knowledgeable, caring, skilled educators who are assessment literate, including about the growing field of measures of social and emotional learning (SEL) and how these measures and their results should and should not be used. Educators also must be knowledgeable about child development and deeply skilled in their discipline.

## Challenging Assessment

Challenging assessment approaches employ a learning target, assessment method, matching protocol that efficiently assess factual and procedural knowledge, but also engage students in higher-level expectations and provide opportunities to demonstrate their learning and abilities by requiring them to apply performances and skills to new and novel situations.

## Assessment for the Whole Child might look like this...

Learning occurs when educators articulate and build systems that integrate the Whole Child Tenets into their school structures so that they are **sustained and sustaining** for children and their community. We might expect an assessment system for the whole child to be supported with a written theory of action that:

- Affirms that the purpose of public education is to educate the whole child,
- Articulates a balanced approach to assessment that prioritizes the needs of the learner, and
- Organizes its collection of progress and achievement evidence to reflect the expressed aims for the whole child.

And the district or building's evaluation and reporting system would align to development of a set of capacities that includes academic, non-academic, social, and civic knowledge and skills.

**Midtown West School** in NYC is a collaboration between Community School District Two and The Bank Street College of Education. It centers social studies in the elementary curriculum to guide civic development of young learners. Its school handbook references several aspects of practice and systems we might hope to see in a building or district organized around the education and development of the whole child and attention to whole child assessment.

[Midtown West Handbook](#)

[Midtown West School](#)

**Eagle Rock School**, a philanthropic project initiated by American Honda 30 years ago was envisioned as a school that would intervene in the lives of at-risk teens by promoting community, integrity, and democracy. The assessment corollaries to the five Whole Child Tenets can be found in operationalized examples of the school's adopted [approaches to learning models and demonstration of academic achievement](#) and [personal growth curriculum](#).

## [Eagle Rock School](#)

## Resources

[Whole Child Policy Toolkit](#), by Learning Policy Institute. [www.wholechildpolicy.org](http://www.wholechildpolicy.org)

[Educating the Whole Child: Improving School Climate to Support Student Success, by Science of Learning and Development Alliance](#)

<https://soldalliance.org/partner-post/educating-the-whole-child-improving-school-climate-to-support-student-success>

## References

[How People Learn II Contexts and Cultures](#), 2018 NAEd

<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/24783/how-people-learn-ii-learners-contexts-and-cultures>

[ASCD Whole Child Action Plan Guide](#)

<https://library.ascd.org/m/1f2720c1c2296a94/original/ASCD-Whole-Child-Action-Plan-Guide.pdf>

[www.ascd.org/whole-child](http://www.ascd.org/whole-child)



## COMPONENT 3

# Assessment of Deeper Learning

Assessment based on learner ability to apply, analyze, and use student understanding in relevant ways, across multiple contexts.

*“The point of school is not to get good at school but to effectively parlay what we learned in school in other learning and in life.” —Grant Wiggins*

## This component means....

Assessment of deeper learning means using assessment strategies that provide evidence that students can apply their learning in school and in life. Instead of just “covering a topic,” deeper learning ensures a learner becomes capable of taking what was learned in one situation and applying it to a new situation.

When students are engaged in deeper learning, they are making meaning of conceptually large ideas and abstract processes through the manipulation of content; they engage higher-order thinking skills.

Traditional quizzes and tests can assess knowledge, concepts, and skills, similar to the way in which athletes can memorize the movements described in a team’s play book. However, the real test of an athlete’s learning is through the application of those skills during a scrimmage or the game. This is true for classroom learning as well. An equitable assessment system includes strategies that go beyond measuring rote learning to include those that ask students to demonstrate critical thinking skills to apply, analyze, and use their knowledge in creative ways across a range of contexts.

One effective strategy for measuring deeper learning is the use of performance assessment, through which students demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding. Karin Hess (2018) suggests performance assessments can be understood along a continuum from least to more complex. At the least complex end of the Performance Assessment Continuum,

## Four Characteristics of Performance Tasks

Research has described four characteristics of performance tasks for assessing deeper learning (McTighe, Doughty, & Carbaugh, 2020):

1. Performance assessment tasks call for students to apply their learning in some context and explain what they have done.
2. Any performance assessment of deeper learning needs to engage the student in transferring their learning to a novel situation, different from that in which it was initially learned.
3. An effective performance task engages students in complex thinking. (The Depth of Knowledge framework developed by Norman Webb and his colleagues (2005) can be a useful support when analyzing the cognitive complexity of any task.)
4. The best performance tasks establish a “real world” context for application, when learners can effectively apply (i.e., transfer) their learning to realistic situations.

multiple performance trials inform the teacher and student's next steps. At the most complex end of the continuum, performance tasks frequently engage students in extended learning over a unit or course and yield a tangible product or performance that serves as evidence that students are indeed learning deeply—and are able to apply that learning in school and life (see the Authentic Assessment resource for additional information). And performance tasks that support deeper learning would typically include an accompanying rubric or performance scale.

A useful tool to developers of performance assessments designed to assess deeper learning is the Hess Cognitive Rigor Matrices (Hess et al. 2009, Hess 2018), which assist teachers in applying what cognitive demand might look like in the classroom on test items and performance tasks. The matrix combines two popular indices of cognitive complexity: the updated Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's Depth-of-Knowledge (DOK) levels.

## Assessment of deeper learning might look like this...

The [Michigan Arts Education Instruction and Assessment \(MAEIA\) Catalogue of Performance Assessments](#) enable arts educators to authentically assess students in the arts. Teachers are invited to embed selected performance events and tasks into their existing curriculum to engage students in aspects of the creative process (through creating, performing/presenting, and responding to art) through assessment of deeper learning.

The MAEIA Catalogue includes 360 performance tasks and events for use in dance, music, theater and visual arts K-12 classrooms. Since their release in 2016, the program has grown to feature the formative assessment process, culturally responsible assessment, and an understanding of social and emotional learning—all issues that are important to supporting an equitable assessment system.

The Catalogue includes two types of performance assessments: performance tasks and performance events. Tasks typically require extended periods of time, multiple class periods, and in some cases a full year. Performance Events are considered “on-demand” requiring students to construct a response in a brief period of time, with little or no advance preparation or rehearsal. The assessment types and their properties are described in Arts Education Assessment Specifications: Dance, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts (MAC 2016).

The MAEIA Performance Assessment Catalogue was commissioned by the Michigan Department of Education and is supported by the Michigan Assessment Consortium. The MAEIA performance assessments are aligned to National Core Arts standards and are available online to any arts educator at [maeia-artsednetwork.org](http://maeia-artsednetwork.org). The site also includes important technical support for teachers related to the use of performance assessments including the process of collaboratively scoring student work and using performance assessments as part of a plan to demonstrate educator effectiveness.

## Resources

*A Local Assessment Toolkit to Promote Deeper Learning*, by Karin Hess

*Assessing Student Learning by Design*, by Jay McTighe

[Assessing Deeper Learning after a Year of Change](http://www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/Assessing-Deeper-Learning-ASCD.pdf), by Jay McTighe and Chris Gareis  
www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/Assessing-Deeper-Learning-ASCD.pdf

*Deeper Competency-Based Learning: Making Equitable, Student-Centered, Sustainable Shifts*, by Karin Hess, Rose Colby, and Daniel Joseph

*Designing Authentic Performance Tasks and Projects*, by Jay McTighe, Kristina J. Doubet and Eric M. Carbaugh

[Three Key Questions on Measuring Learning](#), by Jay McTighe. Educational Leadership, February 2018 | Volume 75 | Number 5

[MAEIA-artsednetwork.org](http://MAEIA-artsednetwork.org)

This Open Education Resource (OER) features the extensive resources associated with the Michigan Arts Education Instruction and Assessment (MAEIA) program. The downloadable MAEIA Performance Assessments are available at no cost and have been field tested by Michigan classroom teachers.

## References

Andrews, E., Cochran, J.S., Gollan, C., Poole, C., Taggart, C. Roeber, E. (2016) Arts Education Assessment Specifications: Dance Music, Theatre and Visual Arts, Lansing, MI: MAEIA.

Hess, K.K. (2018). *A Local Assessment Toolkit to Promote Deeper Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin

Hess, K.K., Carlock, D., Jones, B., Walkup, J.R. (2009) *What exactly do “fewer, clearer, and higher standards” really look like in the classroom? Using a cognitive rigor matrix to analyze curriculum, plan lessons, and implement assessments.*

McTighe, J., Doubet, K., & Carbaugh, E. (2020). *Designing authentic performance tasks and projects: Tools for meaningful learning and assessment*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

McTighe, J., & Gareis, C. [“Assessing deeper learning after a year of change.”](#) ASCD Express, Vol. 16, No. 19.





## COMPONENT 4

# Authentic Assessment

All learners have to demonstrate and apply what they understand and know by engaging in new, novel, real-world contexts for genuine audiences.

*“What gets assessed—and how it gets assessed—is a determiner of how students are taught and how they learn.” —Edward Roeber*

## This component means...

Traditional assessments often measure relatively low-level skills in order to assign students' grades. Today's educators—especially those using competency-based education (CBE) models—are much more interested in measuring student *applications* of their classroom learning in novel situations. The most engaging ways assessing applications of learning is through the use of [performance assessments](#) that present authentic situations in which students can apply their knowledge and skills.

**Authentic assessments are characterized by several quality criteria:**

- Problems are situated in real life contexts (as experienced by students or adults they know).
- A real-life problem is posed within this real-life situation.
- The problem can be resolved or solved in multiple ways.
- Students can be asked to justify/defend their proposed solution/resolution.

**Authentic assessments have several advantages:**

- They are more motivating to students (since they will be based in real-life situations they may encounter as a student or later as an adult).
- They are more engaging for students (since they don't present contrived situations or problems).
- They might win students more engagement from family members or tutors (who can verify the need to solve similar real-world situations).

## Quality Performance Assessments

There are several parts to a quality performance assessment (one that is well thought out in advance and standardized):

- ▶ Use a prompt that explains what the student is supposed to do (thus standardizing the directions for all students). Make sure that this prompt permits all students to engage it in such a way that their individuality is encouraged.
- ▶ Include stimulus materials such as a reading text, videos, or other resources to stimulate student thinking or provide information about the issue to be addressed.
- ▶ Require students to do, create demonstrate, critique, or perform something.
- ▶ Collect evidence of student work in writing, or using audio or video recordings.
- ▶ Judge student work using scoring guides or rubrics.

The best performance assessments are those that are authentic in nature. Authentic assessments share many of the characteristics, advantages, and challenges of performance assessments. Because they take time to address, only a few such problems can be used in any assessment.

### Teachers can address the challenge of time constraints by:

- reviewing the learning targets for the lesson or unit of study to be assessed,
- identifying the most important, most enduring aspects of the lesson, and
- selecting or developing an authentic performance assessment around those specific enduring aspects.

Authentic assessment can be an exceptional way in which students are asked to show what they know and can do, and they should be part of every teacher’s assessment “toolkit.”

### Authentic Assessment might look like this...



Fourth grade students investigated the cleanliness of water in a stream near their elementary school.



A state assessment of physical education/physical fitness asked fourth, seventh, and tenth grade students to run or walk a mile in order to gauge their level of physical fitness.



As part of the interactive mathematics program, high school students were asked to apply critical path analyses to solving simulated mathematics problems.



A visual arts assessment asks students to design the name, slogan, and graphic for a pop (soda) in the style of an artist. Example Artist – Jackson Pollack; Name of Pop – Splat; Graphic – Multi-colored paint thrown against a canvas.

## Resources

### Learning Points

[Performance assessment – What is it and why is it useful?](https://bit.ly/Perf-Assess) [bit.ly/Perf-Assess](https://bit.ly/Perf-Assess)

[How do we design assessment systems for modern learning?](https://bit.ly/LP-modern-learning) [bit.ly/LP-modern-learning](https://bit.ly/LP-modern-learning)

[Performance assessment in the visual arts classroom](https://bit.ly/Perf-Assessment-VA) [bit.ly/Perf-Assessment-VA](https://bit.ly/Perf-Assessment-VA)

“[Authentic Assessments](#),” by Nicole Messier. Center for the Advancement of Teaching Excellence (CATE), August 15, 2022. University of Illinois, Chicago.

<https://teaching.uic.edu/cate-teaching-guides/assessment-grading-practices/authentic-assessments/#what>

“[Defining Authentic Classroom Assessment](#),” by Bruce B. Frey, Vicki L. Schmitt, and Justin P. Allen. Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation: Vol. 17, Article 2. (November 2019)

<https://scholarworks.umass.edu/pare/vol17/iss1/2>

## References

Roeber, Edward. (1978) Personal communication with Dale Carlson



## COMPONENT 5

# Reflective Self- & Peer Assessment

All learners have opportunities to reflect and monitor their own progress towards instructional and social and emotional learning (SEL) outcomes. The learning community engages in constructive peer feedback around learning targets and success criteria.

*“What we’ve discovered is that formative peer assessment, where students are helping each other improve their work has benefits for the person that receives feedback but also has benefits for the person who gives the feedback.” —Dylan Wiliam*

## This component means...

**Self-assessment** is defined as the process a student engages in as they reflect and monitor their own learning and understanding in relation to stated academic learning and emotional learning outcomes. This requires students to:

- recognize the intended learning goal(s) for the lesson,
- use appropriate strategies and behaviors to monitor and evaluate how well they are attending to and moving toward proficiency on the learning goal(s),
- determine when they have successfully closed the gap between their current placement along the trajectory of understanding and the desired outcome, and
- pursue additional learning when needed.

**Peer assessment** follows a similar pathway and allows students to engage in dialogue and discussion with a colleague to make meaning of their learning and the processes and behaviors that have helped them move themselves forward. Oftentimes, peer feedback can positively impact self-assessment and vice-versa.

Using self-assessment and peer feedback strategies students begin to develop the skills and processes needed to form a unique and positive sense of who

## Self- and peer feedback should be...

- Modeled for students
- Planned
- Focused
  - ▶ Task oriented
  - ▶ Process oriented
    - Learning tactics
  - ▶ Behavior (self-regulation) oriented
    - Organization Techniques
    - Time Management
    - Study Habits
- Structured around a specific feedback protocol
  - ▶ 2 Stars and a Wish
  - ▶ Stop Lighting
  - ▶ Color Coding
  - ▶ Use of Rubrics/ Exemplars
- A seamless part of the teaching and learning culture; reflection is just what we do!

they are as learners and what they have to offer others in the classroom. Through reflection, conversation, and collaboration they can develop a respect for diverse identities, varying viewpoints, and different learning styles.

Engaging students in these reflective processes around specific learning outcomes—and the learning processes and behaviors they **used** along the way—can aid students, not only in their attainment of the learning outcomes, but also in becoming more affirming of themselves and others.

Susan Brookhart wrote that “good feedback feeds forward.” If we want students to stay engaged and motivated in the learning process, and in many ways determine their own identity as a learner, self-assessment and peer feedback is essential. It provides the bridge from where students are to where they need to be. Without feedback, there is no movement forward; and being stuck is not engaging or motivating to anyone.

Self-assessment and peer feedback are equitable assessment components that can benefit every student in our classrooms.

## Reflective Self- & Peer Assessment might look like this...

We are in a second-grade classroom in Los Angeles, California. Most of the students do not speak English as their first language.

Students are engaged in reading activities.

The learning outcomes are identified and displayed in a plastic sign holder in the middle of each table.

They Read:

**Learning Goal:** Read aloud fluently.

**Success Criteria:**

Read with meaning!

Read with expression!

Read at a steady pace.

Read smoothly.

Students are sitting with a partner and have a handout with a short reading text on it.

The first student reads the passage and then waits while their partner provides feedback.

The feedback is given in relation to the four success criteria listed above and in a specific format:

Stars—What did they do well?

Steps—What might they need to do to improve?

After feedback is given, the student giving the feedback asks two questions:

1. Do you agree with my feedback?
2. Do you understand my feedback?

This provides an opportunity for self-assessment as well as clarification of the feedback given.

The process is then repeated.

### Watch Reflective Self- & Peer Assessment in action!



qr.codes/5MXBkf

Video of students engaged in process (source: Margaret Heritage, Heritage Consulting)

### Resources

#### Learning Points

[What is student self-assessment?](https://bit.ly/3zEzOHj) bit.ly/3zEzOHj

[What is feedback from peers?](https://bit.ly/3KmoWxl) bit.ly/3KmoWxl

#### Learning Moment video

[Supporting students to become agents in their own learning](https://vimeo.com/681045224) vimeo.com/681045224





## COMPONENT 6

# Socially-Conscious Assessment

The assessment process demonstrates empathy and understanding, by taking into account individuals' culture and experiences, thereby adjusting to support all learners' success.

*“Students have multiple identities based on intersections of race, gender, home language, income, special needs, and other variables. This diversity has the potential to create rich instructional contexts for all students.”*

—Catherine Taylor (2022)

## This component means...

**Socially-conscious assessment** compels educators to consider the ways in which assessment design and practices can honor individual student assets and funds of knowledge in order to promote a greater sense of student agency in the learning process. The complexity in social consciousness is activating and elevating the students' understanding of their own identity and cultural background. Identity is a complex intersection of many different dimensions. Socially-conscious assessment draws upon this complexity to push educators to design powerful assessment experiences that invite students into deepening their understanding of themselves and the world around them. Socially-conscious assessment, therefore, has the dual purpose of developing learning content and developing the learners themselves.

At first glance, Socially-conscious assessment may appear to be in conflict with prevailing understandings of what high-quality assessment should be. Since the passage of No Child Left Behind in 2001, much of the public dialogue around assessment has been dominated by standardized assessment—the practice of using the same assessment instrument (typically criterion-referenced select response tests) to all students under the same testing conditions. The aim of standardized assessment is to provide a logical scheme to compare the achievement of individual students, groups of students, schools, and districts. These comparisons allow policymakers to see trends and patterns in student performance, in order to inform decisions on prioritizing support to improve student learning.

While standardized assessment may be a valuable tool for policymakers, the current emphasis on these tests begs the question: is the comparison of student performance the sole purpose of assessment? Are policymakers the sole users of assessment data? Assessment Literate educators understand that quality assessment has many different designs, purposes, and users.

There are a number of commercially developed tests available to schools and districts for measuring student learning. But it's impossible for any national vendor to make assessments individualized to student culture and local context. This work—developing individual and community consciousness—must be done at the local level. “The best way to teach this consciousness is to create classrooms and schools that function as caring communities” (Berman, 1990).

Skillful educators, with support, can and should design meaningful assessment experiences that draw upon students as the ultimate designers and users of the assessment process. Many educators already operationalize this in their classroom practice by using learning targets, derived from content standards. Socially-conscious assessment invites educators to intentionally use the cultural assets of the students they serve in the formulation of these learning targets, and it permits students to be co-designers with teachers in what assessment methods can best measure achievement of those targets.

Students can demonstrate high levels of learning in a manner that does not require commercially developed, criterion-referenced select response tests. Doing so requires educators to be culturally proficient in the backgrounds of the students they teach as well to possess a deep knowledge of the content they teach. This powerful combination of learner assets and content area expertise can drive teachers and students to collaboratively design real-world products or authentic performance tasks that help deepen the students' understanding of who they are as learners and push the boundaries of what learning is possible.

## Socially-conscious assessment might look like this...

### The power of performance assessments: Oakland unified's graduate capstone project

Learning Policy Institute



qr.codes/BgCJOp

## Resources

Presentation slides: [Socially Just Assessment: Theory & Practice](http://www.necche.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/145pm-Socially-Just-Assessment.pdf)  
[www.necche.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/145pm-Socially-Just-Assessment.pdf](http://www.necche.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/145pm-Socially-Just-Assessment.pdf)

Recorded webinar: [Starting to Problematize your Assessment](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZd5ML8wINy)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZd5ML8wINy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZd5ML8wINy)

## References

Berman, S. (1990). *Educating for Social Responsibility*. Association for the Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Taylor, C. (2022). *Culturally and Socially Responsible Assessment: Theory, Research, and Practice*. Multicultural Education Series.

## COMPONENT 7

# Collaborative Learning and Assessment

A systemic, facilitated process for assessment builds meaningful relationships and establishes a community of learners that nurtures empathy, fosters belonging, supports well-being and creates social capital.

*“Studies of the social context of learning show that in a responsive social setting, learners can adopt the criteria for competence they see in others and then use this information to judge and perfect the adequacy of their own performance. Shared performance promotes a sense of goal orientation as learning becomes attuned to the constraints and resources of the environment. In the context of school, students also develop a facility in giving and accepting help (and stimulations) from others. Social contexts for learning make the thinking of the learner apparent to teachers and other students so it can be examined, questioned and built upon as part of constructive learning.”*  
—How People Learn (2001)

## This component means...

The classroom that establishes a community of learners who support one another’s learning journey has several key features that promote collaborative learning and assessment:

- Use of learning-focused language
- Encouragement for student-offered thinking and understanding
- Established norms and routines for collaboration and sharing of materials
- Flexible student grouping
- Acknowledgement of emerging understandings and conceptions that are essential for learning to occur
- Celebration of and support for the risks and rewards associated with learning

When students feel they belong and are supported in their classroom by their teacher and their peers, they have the capacity to give, receive and use feedback, and engage in dialogue that contributes to both them and to the community’s development and achievement.

## Collaborative learning and assessment might look like this...

The elements, practices, or routines we might see in a classroom that strives to use assessment effectively to develop a collaborative community of learning and learners could include any or all the elements described in Table 1. Assessment Elements in a Collaborative Classroom

**Table 1. Assessment Elements in a Collaborative Classroom**

Element, Practice or Routine	Example or Description	Why Important
Use of learning-focused language	Use terms like learning targets and goals, criteria, analysis, understanding, practice, rehearse, feedback, assessment (formative and summative).	Students have access to and use the basic language that illuminates how we approach learning, not just the content we expect them to learn.
Encouragement for student-offered thinking and understanding	<p>Invite dialogue as a regular part of classroom interaction.</p> <p>Teach students to provide peer feedback, using techniques such as written peer feedback scaffolded with the use of feedback forms, and feedback with dialogue between peers.</p> <p>All include a focus on learning goals and criteria associated with the task.</p>	<p>Students need to feel they are welcome to contribute ideas and try out options and make decisions.</p> <p>Peers can offer good ideas for improving work that the author of the work doesn't see.</p> <p>Learning is a social act. Students benefit from opportunities to share their learning.</p>
Established norms and routines for classroom collaboration and sharing of materials	<p>Create Norms (for safe thinking):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All opinions count,</li> <li>• No sarcasm or put-downs,</li> <li>• Everyone has a voice and can be heard,</li> <li>• Mistakes help us learn,</li> <li>• There are no dumb questions.</li> </ul> <p>Develop additional norms and routines that support paired or small group collaboration.</p> <p>Create routines and procedures for behaviors contributing to organizing, sharing materials.</p>	<p>When routines and norms are established, observed, and practiced, we establish a sense of predictability and safety for students that is essential for the brain to learn.</p> <p>We know from brain research that people need to interact daily with others and that learning occurs in a socio-cultural context. This is why students need facilitated opportunities to collaborate with partners, small groups, and in the context of a community of learners.</p>
Flexible student grouping	Flexible student grouping is a system of organizing students with intentionality and fluidly for different learning experiences and over a short period of time. Decisions about size, membership, and longevity are guided by recent classroom assessment information and align with specific goals and instructional purposes.	When decisions about instructional grouping are based on a variety of student learning needs and we ensure groups change frequently and purposefully, group work can foster growth, provide access to equitable learning experiences, strengthen student capacity for collaboration, combat status differences, and build empathy.

Element, Practice or Routine	Example or Description	Why Important
<p>Acknowledgement of emerging understandings and conceptions that are essential for learning to occur</p>	<p>Teach the learning techniques that are necessary to be productive with multiple tries, as student thinking is emerging and not yet “there.”</p> <p>Sample techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine multiple results</li> <li>• Identify similarities and differences</li> <li>• Notice patterns</li> <li>• Reflect on “ahas” or anomalies</li> <li>• Create, test, and modify hypotheses</li> <li>• Develop schemata such as templates</li> </ul>	<p>Students do not all “get it” on the same day and in the same way and we do not want them to carry incorrect understanding or concepts too long. The brain needs to be allowed to reprogram and strengthen the correct neural connections so they can fire together.</p> <p>A growth mindset is necessary to support a student’s ability to persist and not give up.</p>
<p>Celebration of and support for the risks and rewards associated with learning</p>	<p>Engage students in classroom strategies that celebrate mistakes.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make a classroom norm about sharing mistakes publicly; talk about how mistakes contribute to brain growth; and give work that encourages mistakes. <a href="https://www.mindsetkit.org/topics/celebrate-mistakes">https://www.mindsetkit.org/topics/celebrate-mistakes</a></li> <li>2. Use self- and peer feedback in the course of the formative assessment process, especially focusing on growth as students are learning. For example students assess their own progress toward learning goals and peers’ progress toward learning goals.</li> <li>3. Frame challenging problems as an opportunity to learn as a class or small group together</li> </ol> <p>This site provides some examples to up the challenge for students in mathematics and discusses how the students interacted.</p> <p><a href="http://blog.mrmeyer.com/category/makeovermonday">blog.mrmeyer.com/category/makeovermonday</a></p>	<p>Challenging work (which we want to engage students in) means they will make mistakes. If we celebrate, rather than punish, students for making mistakes, we make the (mistakes) visible for students and their peers to learn from and we are promoting a growth mindset.</p> <p>Reflection and feedback are powerful tools when we use assessment for learning along with practices and routines that build the climate of a collaborative learning community.</p>

## Resources

*Culturally and Socially Responsible Assessment*, by Catherine S. Taylor and Susan Bobbitt Nolen (Teacher's College Press, 2022)

*Mindset*, by Carol Dweck (Ballentine Books, 2008)

[MindsetKit](http://www.mindsetkit.org), a free online set of lessons and practices to help educators teach and foster adaptive beliefs about learning, by Carol Dweck, Jo Boaler and others. [www.mindsetkit.org](http://www.mindsetkit.org)

*The Flexibly Grouped Classroom: How to Organize Learning for Equity and Growth*, by Kristina J. Doubet (ASCD, 2022)

*The Motivated Brain: Improving Student Attention, Engagement and Perseverance* by Gayle Gregory and Martha Kaufeldt (ASCD, 2015)

*Visible Learning: Feedback*, by John Hattie and Shirley Clarke (Corwin, 2018)

## References

National Research Council. 2000. [How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School](https://doi.org/10.17226/9853) Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/9853>

## COMPONENT 8

# Differentiated Assessment

The focus, timing, and method of (both formative and summative) assessment, as well as the resources and supports provided, are tailored to each learner’s identity, prior knowledge, development, learning styles, and life experiences.

*“Differentiation means recognizing that you cannot have a “one tool fits all” approach to assessing.” —Ellen Vorenkamp*

## This component means...

Differentiated assessment is an ongoing process of gathering evidence of student understanding collected before, during, and after instruction using a variety of methods, with varied timing and focus based on each student’s needs. The assessment’s outcomes are clearly articulated, visible to the students, and similar in expectation. The key feature of differentiated assessment is that students can demonstrate their proficiency using methods most fitting and effective for each learner.

Differentiated assessment recognizes that all students do not fit into a “one size fits all” mold. It recognizes that students have differences in past achievement, varied learning styles, strengths, and areas for improvement. It also accounts for the cultural background and diverse life experiences that students bring to our classrooms.

## Key features of differentiated assessment include:

**Student Focused**—Differentiated assessment allows students to choose the best way to show their understanding of their learning in ways that are meaningful and relevant to them. This may mean completing an essay or a project instead of a traditional quiz or completing a performance assessment as an alternative to a more traditional assessment method. Allowing students’ voice and choice in how they show us what they know and can do is empowering and often results in more authentic and engaging assessment results.

**Flexible Timing**—Differentiated assessment allows for flexibility in the timing of assessment depending on the readiness of the students involved. Some students may need more time to complete their learning and demonstrate their proficiency, while others might be ready to move forward sooner. Assessing students when they determine themselves to be most ready is an ideal way of ensuring success and gathering more accurate information concerning students’ current level of understanding. Giving students the gift of individualized learning time can be an example of differentiated assessment.

**Varied Assessment Methods**—Differentiated assessment allows for a variety of assessment methods to gather evidence of student understanding and proficiency. Students are presented with a wide variety of assessment types that they may engage in to demonstrate their learning. Students are presented with choices for a wide variety of assessment types that they may engage in to demonstrate their learning. These may include traditional quizzes and tests but are not limited to them. Assessment types might include projects,

journals, conversations, debates, presentations, collaborative efforts, observations, portfolios, etc. The table below, developed by Jay McTighe, is a good reminder of the vast array of assessment methods teachers and students have at their disposal to use when differentiating assessment.

### Ways of Assessing: Adapted–Jay McTighe

Selected Response	Constructed Response	Performance Tasks/ Event	Observation/ Conversation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple-choice</li> <li>• True-false</li> <li>• Matching</li> <li>• Gridded response</li> <li>• Fill in the blank</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-answer               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sentence</li> <li>– Paragraph</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Learning log</li> <li>• Show your work</li> <li>• Essay</li> <li>• Visual representation               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Web</li> <li>– Concept map</li> <li>– Flow chart</li> <li>– Graph/table</li> <li>– Matrix</li> <li>– Illustration</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Research paper</li> <li>• Journal</li> <li>• Lab report</li> <li>• Play/story/poem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral presentation</li> <li>• Dance or movement</li> <li>• Dramatic performance</li> <li>• Musical performance</li> <li>• Work of art</li> <li>• Science lab experiment</li> <li>• Athletic performance</li> <li>• Enactment</li> <li>• Role playing</li> <li>• Group discussion</li> <li>• Debate</li> <li>• Oral reading</li> <li>• Science project</li> <li>• Service-learning activity</li> <li>• Model</li> <li>• Videotape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral questioning</li> <li>• Oral examination</li> <li>• Observation (structured)</li> <li>• Observation (unstructured)</li> <li>• Interview</li> <li>• Conference</li> <li>• Process description</li> <li>• “Think aloud”</li> </ul>

Adapted from McTighe and Associates workshop materials (1999-2000, 2011) by Ellen Vorenkamp to reflect revised formatting and additional examples (2020). See also Resources for this component McTighe and Ferrar (2021).

Differentiated assessment works well in both assessment for and assessment of learning as it aims to promote an equitable environment through student success. By tailoring assessment practices to celebrate and honor diverse learners, we acknowledge that not all students can or need to demonstrate their understanding in the same way at the same time. Differentiated assessment is about enabling all learners to reach their full potential in ways that are meaningful and relevant to them.



## Differentiated Assessment might look like this...

As a culminating assessment for an Art History course, the art teacher decided to allow for differentiation.

He presented the following choice board to the students, and allowed students to choose which assessment task they wanted to engage in. Based on their own preferences, students selected the task and began working on showing proficiency around various aspects of art history.

### Assessment Choice Board: ART HISTORY

<b>Choose an artist or art period and complete one of the following:</b>		
Develop a presentation on the life, works, and major contributions to the world of art of the artist you chose. Present to the class.	Write a research paper of the artist; reflecting their life, works and major contributions to art history.	Write a song, chant or rap about your artist or art period. Be sure to include key events and/or characteristics of the life of the art or art period. Present the song, chant or rap to the class.
Research the chosen artist or art period. Write a play about the artist or art period. Recruit classmates to record your play before or after school or present live to the class.	Write a research paper of the art period; reflecting major characteristics of the period, artist of the period and contributions to art history.	Choose an artist whose art represents your favorite part of nature. Create a piece of art in the style of this artist. Present your art to the class and describe why you choose this artist.
Choose a work of art from your favorite artist. Recreate the piece. As you do, keep a journal of your journey outlining the process... include your techniques, successes, failures, etc. When finished write a summary of your process in relation to how you think the real artist might have worked, felt when completing the original.	Choose your favorite art period. Write a self-reflection paper supporting why the art period is your favorite, then Compare and Contrast your favorite art period with your least favorite art period.	Create an art history flipchart using ActivInspire. Choose an artist, your favorite work of art they created, and write two paragraphs describing the art and artist. Present your Flipchart to the class.

Adapted: Cassidy Reinken, July 2012 – [theartofeducation.edu/2012/07/how-to-use-choice-boards-to-differentiate-learning](http://theartofeducation.edu/2012/07/how-to-use-choice-boards-to-differentiate-learning)

## Resources

*Reconcilable Differences: Standards-Based Teaching and Differentiation*, by Carol Ann Tomlinson (ASCD 2000).

*Leading and Managing a Differentiated Classroom*, by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Marcia B. Imbeau (2010).

*Assessment and Student Success in a Differentiated Classroom*, by Carol Ann Tomlinson (2013)

*Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessing and Grading in the Differentiated Classroom*, by Rick Wormeli (2006)

*So all Can Learn: A Practical Guide to Differentiation*, by John McCarthy (2017)

*Assessing Student Learning by Design: Principles and Practices for Teachers and School Leaders*, by Jay McTighe and Steve Ferrara (Teachers College, 2021)

## COMPONENT 9

# Student-Driven Assessment

All learners have an active voice in when and how they are assessed using methods that encourage student ownership of their learning and meaningfully draw on their interest and prior knowledge.

*“The autonomy of choice is motivating and empowering. Making a choice elicits a commitment to the task. It’s hard to say, ‘I won’t do this’ or ‘I can’t do this’ when the student has chosen it.” —Gregory and Kaufeldt (2015)*

## This component means...

The idea of assessing **with** students is a student-centered approach to assessment. Students assume ownership for their learning and understand assessment as an interpretive act. It is a process that supports their learning when:

- students are assessed using methods that meaningfully draw on their interests and prior knowledge;
- students have opportunities to exercise voice and choice to demonstrate their understanding; and
- students engage in assessment methods and practices designed to achieve learner agency.

A classroom environment that capitalizes on student-driven assessment to develop capable learners acknowledges the importance of and leverages the use of three key features of student-driven assessment.

### Key feature 1 – Assessment methods that elicit student interests and prior knowledge.

Many pre-assessment methods are designed for the purpose of assessing prior knowledge, interests, attitudes, and personal connections. Commonly used examples include oral questioning and introductory discussions, brainstorming, KWL<sup>1</sup> charts, concept maps, Venn diagrams, journal or quick write prompts, and Interest Inventories. These assessments can be used by teachers to gauge where students are as they start their learning to achieve the targets of instruction.

Ongoing data collection methods such as data binders can be used with young learners to capture observations and anecdotal information offered by students, their parents, and their teachers. These may include insights about student interests and, especially the funds of knowledge students bring to school from their home and community. (See the ELAS Guide and Funds of Knowledge Toolkit in Resources below).

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<sup>1</sup> “Know,” “Want to Know,” and “Learned.”

## Key feature 2 – Opportunities for students to exercise voice and choice in the tasks they engage in to demonstrate their learning and understanding.

Offering students choices of problems and issues to address in the subject areas taught in school that affect or will affect a student’s world, now or in the future, can be motivating and engender engagement in assessment. And, designing performance tasks along a scale from less structure to more can ensure that students have at least some choices in aspects of the performance task. For example, teachers can identify the problem, the student can pose a problem, or the teacher can provide problems that the student can choose from. Similarly, performances or products can be chosen by the student, dictated by the teacher, or chosen from a list of teacher-suggested options. Finally, strategies and materials used (or adapted) to solve a problem can be directed by the teacher, selected by the student, or chosen from a list of teacher-suggested strategies and materials (see How to Design Questions and Tasks to Assess Student Thinking in Resources below).

## Key feature 3 – Assessment methods and practices designed to achieve learner-agency.

The research suggesting assessment can be used to develop learner-agency, resulting in capable learners, is understood internationally as assessment **for** learning (AfL). A set of established practices encourage development of learner agency in AfL:

- **Safe and supportive social relationships in the classroom**, including routines for collaboration
- **Working with exemplars**, so that students can see examples of quality and can interrogate, compare, visualize, and articulate criteria
- **Learning intentions and success criteria**. When learning goals are negotiated and connected with personal interests or collected to show a trajectory of learning over time, students recognize strengths and can gain confidence to make changes to their learning tactics.
- **Peer assessment and then self-assessment**. An understanding of quality expectations from observing peers and giving and receiving feedback against criteria feeds self-assessment skills. And self-assessment using rubrics can help students gain increasing control over the quality of their evidence of learning.
- **Questioning and feedback**. Posing questions, recognizing, and making choices through giving and receiving formative feedback can help to build learner confidence.
- **Authentic assessment**. Regular engagement with authentic assessments tasks can help a student become more expert and come to see themselves as belonging to a community of practice e.g., writers, scientists, engineers.

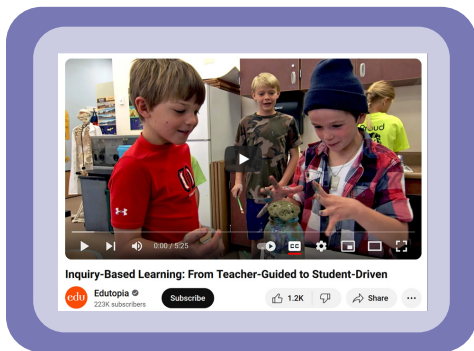
## Student-driven assessment might look like this...

**Eagle Rock High School** combines academic learning modes, including project-based learning, social-emotional learning, group learning, work-based learning, and experiential learning with demonstrations of learning that include portfolios, exhibitions, performances,

projects, and presentations. Assessment Examples highlighted on their website provide student perspectives about the three key features associated with student-driven assessment.

[www.eaglerockschool.org/curriculum/academics](http://www.eaglerockschool.org/curriculum/academics)

**Ralston Elementary School** (Golden, Colorado) students explore the concept of student-driven assessment through inquiry-based learning. The video “Inquiry-Based Learning: From Teacher-Guided to Student-Driven” emphasizes a shift from traditional teacher-centered instruction to a more student-driven approach. It highlights the benefits of encouraging students to ask questions, engage in research, and actively participate in their learning process, which then allows teachers and students the opportunity to assess student understanding “in the learning moment” and make immediate decisions on “next steps.”



qr.codes/YE436x

## Resources

*Classroom Assessment Essentials*, by Susan Brookhart (ASCD, 2024)

[Early Literacy Assessment Systems that Support Learning: A Guide to Developing Implementing and Supporting District Assessment Systems](#), 2020, MDE/MAC Mason, MI

[Funds of Knowledge Toolkit](#), by Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

[https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2023-10/funds\\_of\\_knowledge\\_toolkit.pdf](https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2023-10/funds_of_knowledge_toolkit.pdf)

*How to Design Questions and Tasks to Assess Student Thinking* by, Susan Brookhart (ASCD, 2014)

## Learning Moment

[Jill Willis: Implied theory of action in Assessment for Learning model](#) (MAC 2019)  
vimeo.com/338978951/07c515fad8

## Learning Point

[What is learner-agency?](#) (MAC, 2019)

*The Motivated Brain Improving Student Attention, Engagement and Perseverance*, by Gayle Gregory and Martha Kaufeldt (ASCD, 2015)



## COMPONENT 10

# Student-Centered Assessment

All learners have an active voice in when and how they are assessed using methods that encourage student ownership of their learning and meaningfully draw on their interest and prior knowledge.

*“On assessment: measure what you value instead of valuing only what you can measure.” —Andy Hargreaves*

### This component means...

Assessment is not simply about measuring what a student knows or understands at a particular point in time, it’s about understanding each student’s learning journey and using that information, with them, to support their growth and development. This often happens inside the four walls of a classroom setting, but many times it can happen beyond.

Traditional models of educational assessment shape how schooling is structured and delivered, resulting in teachers prioritizing test results over learning. They also fail to provide all students with full and fair descriptions of their knowledge, competencies, and abilities. This can serve to limit some students’ opportunities, whatever their capabilities. “Considerable talent is overlooked or lost with the impact weighing most heavily on the poorest and most marginalized youth” (Washor and Boldt, 2023).

For teachers to truly engage in student-centered assessment, they need to have a strong understanding of who their students are and what they bring to the learning and assessing environment. This deepened understanding can occur when teachers draw on a student’s own **funds of knowledge** and integrate these sets of abilities and experiences into the teaching, learning, and assessing process.

According to research conducted by Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005), a student’s funds of knowledge can be described as:

- academic and personal background knowledge,
- accumulated life experiences,
- skills and knowledge used to navigate everyday social contexts, and
- world views structured by broader historically and politically influenced social forces

These funds of knowledge are formed outside the classroom through the student’s engagement with their family, friends, church, culture, and/or community.

When educators have a better sense of who their students are, it allows them to integrate familiar learning experiences for each and every student. This helps students connect the learning to their own lives, thereby ensuring the content is understood on a deeper, more personal level.

## Key principles of student-centered learning

When implementing student-centered learning, each student's unique funds of knowledge are recognized and valued. In a post for Thirds Space Learning (2024), Samantha Cleaver identifies key principles of student-centered learning:

- Constructivism
- Student Voice
- Empowerment
- Collaboration
- Active Learning
- Authenticity
- Adaptability

This type of student-centered learning then leads to deeper more thoughtful assessment practices that go beyond what students can memorize and regurgitate to meaningful experiences of students showing what they know in ways that connect to their own uniqueness and lives.

## Assessing student-centered learning

**Formative assessment**— Formative Assessment is an approach to instruction that keeps students focused on their learning to help them determine their next steps. Formative assessment occurs during the learning process and allows students an active role in defining learning targets and success criteria from which they will be assessed. It also engages them in gathering in-time evidence (often using tools of their choosing) to determine what they understand and know at any specific moment in time and aids them in discovering where there might need some additional learning. This process of gathering, reviewing, and acting on evidence using reflection and feedback—in relation to targets and success criteria—is a vital assessment process that keeps students at the heart and allows them to drive their own learning through feedback, goal-setting, and intentional, focused learning.

**Competency-based assessment**— Competency-based learning models require an approach to assessing student learning that focuses on the demonstration of specific skills, knowledge, and abilities, rather than time spent in class or completion of traditional coursework. This type of assessment ensures that students understand and then meet predefined competencies before progressing, emphasizing mastery and practical application of skills. Competency-based assessment might take place outside a classroom setting and can allow for interaction with community members, experts in a specific field, and others who provide feedback to students concerning their level of competence. This works particularly well for students who might be engaged in online learning and/or work based (CTE) learning programs.

**Performance assessment**— Performance allows students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities through active, hands-on, and sometimes collaborative tasks and events. Often, students have voice and choice in the development and selection of the various performance assessment opportunities. Student-centered performance assessments are



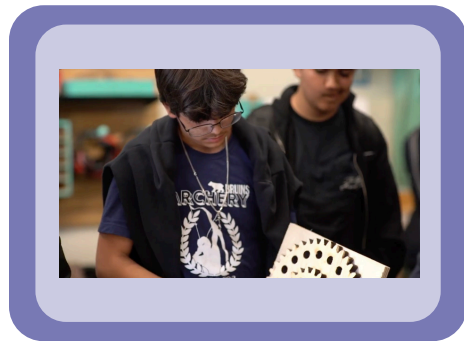
designed to measure students' application of what they've learned in more complex and meaningful ways, while giving them the opportunity to engage in real-world challenges and problem-solving that relate back to their own lived experiences. Performance assessments might be presented to a panel of outside experts and/or interested community members, making these experiences more authentic and real-world in nature.

In a world of high-stakes, teacher- and system-driven assessment—where we are asking students to perform, perform, perform—we need to get back to remembering what we value. Assessment is not just measuring what students can remember and regurgitate, but rather determining their ability to connect new knowledge and skills to their own lived experiences in order to make deeper meaning of the content and use it for future learning and growing. Allowing students to be the center of the assessment process is what we value in an equitable assessment system.

## Student Centered Assessment might look like this...

### Student Centered Assessment

High Tech High Unboxed



[qr.link/iM37s4](https://qr.link/iM37s4)

### How to Do Student Centered Assessment

High Tech Unboxed



[qr.codes/958YmD](https://qr.codes/958YmD)

## How Assessments Enable Student Centered Learning

McGraw Hill PreK–12



qr.codes/MqT1UO

### Resources

#### Learning Points:

[What types of assessment methods can support student-centered instruction?](https://bit.ly/42IEjyZ) (MAC, 2022)

<https://bit.ly/42IEjyZ>

[How performance assessments strengthen the formative assessment process and help promote student-centered instruction](https://bit.ly/42MLSzn) (MAC, 2023)

<https://bit.ly/42MLSzn>

#### Books:

*Giving Students a Say: Smarter Assessment Practices to Empower and Engage*, by Myron Dueck. (ASCD, 2021)

*Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, by Zaretta Hammond. (Corwin Press, 2014)

*Developing Assessment-Capable Visible Learners*, by Nancy Frey, John Hattie, Douglas Fisher. (Corwin Press, 2018)

*Learning to Leave: How Real-World Learning Transforms Education*, by Elliot Washor. (Big Picture Learning, 2023)

#### Websites:

[Big Picture Learning](http://www.bigpicture.org): [www.bigpicture.org](http://www.bigpicture.org)

[Education Reimagined](http://education-reimagined.org/learning-to-leave-qa-with-elliott-washor/): [education-reimagined.org/learning-to-leave-qa-with-elliott-washor/](http://education-reimagined.org/learning-to-leave-qa-with-elliott-washor/)

[High Tech High](http://www.hightechhigh.org): [www.hightechhigh.org](http://www.hightechhigh.org)

[Students at the Center](http://www.studentsatthecenter.org): [www.studentsatthecenter.org](http://www.studentsatthecenter.org)

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Rhodes, K. (2023). *Student-centered assessment literacy: A conversation between two teachers*. NWEA.

Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Education. *Funds of Knowledge Toolkit*

Washor, E., Boldt S. (2023) *Learning to leave: How real-world learning transforms education*



# Leaps for Equitable, 21st-Century Learning and Assessing

Transcend's [Leaps for Equitable, 21st-Century Learning](https://transcendeducation.org/leaps-for-equitable-21st-century-learning/)<sup>●</sup> describes the key ways they believe the student experience must change so that schools can prepare all young people to thrive in and transform the world. Inspired by Transcend's work, the Michigan Assessment Consortium launched an effort to describe the [Components of an Equitable Assessment System](https://bit.ly/3Rzzo6F)<sup>●</sup> that would support their 21st-century learning experience.

Components of Equitable INSTRUCTION (Transcend)		Components of an Equitable ASSESSMENT System (MAC)
Inequitable, Industrial Era Learning	Equitable, 21st-Century Learning	Equitable, 21st-Century Assessment
Unequal Expectations & Opportunities	High Expectations with Unlimited Opportunities	High-Quality Assessment by Skilled Educators
Narrow Focus	Whole-Child Focus	Assessment for the Whole Child
Rote Activities	Rigorous Learning	Assessment of Deeper Learning
Irrelevance	Relevance	Authentic Assessment
Assimilation & Marginalization	Affirmation of Self & Others	Reflective Self & Peer Assessment
Reinforcement of the Status Quo	Social Consciousness & Action	Socially-Conscious Assessment
Isolation	Connection & Community	Collaborative Learning and Assessment
Inflexible Systems	Customization	Differentiated Assessment
Passive Compliance	Active Self-Direction	Student-Driven Assessments
Siloed Schooling	Anytime, Anywhere Learning	Student-Centered Assessment

● <https://transcendeducation.org/leaps-for-equitable-21st-century-learning/>  
 Transcend's Leaps for Equitable, 21st Century Learning are informed by the science of learning and development; equity in education; and contemporary societal, political, economic, and scientific trends  
 ● <https://bit.ly/3Rzzo6F>





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