

Assessment Vocabulary

This is a short compilation of some terms that frequently appear in conversations regarding assessment. A list of sources/resources appears at the end.

Term	Definition/Explanation
Achievement Test	A standardized test designed to measure skills and knowledge learned in a given grade level and often used to determine for what level of instruction a student is prepared.
Assessment	The process of obtaining information, usually in measurable terms, about knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs.
Assessment Method	Any one of several ways (deliberately selected) to collect information about student learning (e.g., selected response, constructed response, short answer, extended written response, performance, and personal communication).
Authentic Assessment	Assessments that are composed of performance tasks and activities designed to simulate or replicate important real-world challenges; should teach students what the “doing” of a subject looks like.
Benchmark Assessment	Assessment given periodically (at the end of every quarter or as frequently as once per month) throughout a school year to establish baseline achievement data and measure progress toward a standard. Typically these assessments are formal, computer-scored and administered instruments. They provide teachers with information about which content standards have been mastered well and which require additional instructional attention and may report the specific content standards mastered by each student, thereby identifying students’ strengths and needs. They can also be used to measure student growth over time.
Classroom Assessment	An assessment developed, administered, and scored by a teacher or set of teachers with the purpose of evaluating individual or classroom student performance on a topic. Ideally, the results of a classroom assessment are used to inform and influence instruction that helps students reach high standards. Students can develop these also.
Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT)	An assessment where an individual’s performance is compared to a specific learning objective or performance standard and not to the performance of other students. In criterion-referenced assessments, it is possible that none, or all, of the examinees will reach a particular goal or performance standard. [student-to-standard]
Curriculum Based-Measure (CBM)	Assessments that are valid and reliable indicators of generalized performance, used short in duration to facilitate frequent administration, focused on direct and repeated measures of student performance, include multiple forms, that are sensitive to changes in student achievement over time. CBMs have been used primarily in basic skill areas and elementary school grades.

Term	Definition/Explanation
Diagnostic Assessment	Tool that assesses student strengths and weaknesses to inform instructional decisions. Diagnostic assessments usually are administered in advance of instruction.
Formative Assessment	Formative assessment is a planned process where both students and teachers are continually gathering evidence of learning and using it to change and adapt what happens in the classroom minute-to-minute and day-by-day. Given during instruction, formative assessments provide educators and students with critical information about student and classroom progress, uncover opportunities for review, identify feedback and suggest adjustments to the teacher’s approach/student’s approach.
Interim Assessment	(See Benchmark Assessment) Useful in looking for patterns and trends, and helps identify needed resources.
Lexile	A score that identifies readability for students – what they can read and comprehend 75% of the time. Used to provide targeted reading experiences where texts are matched to a student’s appropriate level of difficulty.
Mean	The average of a set of scores.
Median	The middle score in a set of sequentially organized scores.
Mode	The score that appears most often in a list.
Norm-Referenced Tests (NRT)	An assessment where student performance or performances are compared to a larger group. Usually the larger group or “norm group” is a national sample representing a wide and diverse cross-section of students. Students, schools, districts, and even states are compared or rank-ordered in relation to the norm group. The purpose of a norm-referenced assessment is usually to sort students and not to measure achievement toward some criterion of performance. [student-to-student]
Percentage	Used to represent a fraction of the whole.
Percentile	Used in NRT to indicate a score below which a certain percentage falls. [Used to compare students to other students]
Performance Assessment	An assessment method that requires the person being assessed to “perform,” to produce or do something to demonstrate his/her learning. An evaluation in which authentic tasks and practical applications are used; students showing understanding by demonstrating the application of knowledge and skills.
RIT	Rasch Unit – a 10-point, equal interval scale used to show growth over time on the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments. Scale is consistent regardless of age or grade level. Provides instructional level information.

Term	Definition/Explanation
Screening Assessment	An assessment that helps identify potential, including attitudes, profiles, behaviors, or skills.
Self-Assessment	Students review and reflect upon their own work against a rubric, exemplar, or other criteria to identify strengths and needs for the purpose of improving their performance.
Standardized Test	Any test that uses uniform procedures for administration and scoring. This sometimes, but not always, means mass-produced, machine-scored tests.
Summative Assessment	A culminating assessment, which gives information on students' mastery of content, knowledge, or skills. A culminating experience that gives information about students' mastery of content. May provide proof of progress towards standards and typically measure grade-level proficiency. These may also be end-of-year subject or course exams.
Through-course Assessment	Assessment based on all standards for a subject, administered four to five times throughout the year such that the resulting scores should show progress toward the standards (25%, 50%, 75%, 90%, 100%).

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Clarke, S. (2005). *Formative Assessment in the Secondary Classroom*.

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Marzano, R. (2006). *Classroom Assessment & Grading that Work*.

Popham, J. (2008). *Transformative Assessment*.

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by Design*.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achievement_test

<http://lexile.com/about-lexile/lexile-overview/>

[http://www.nwea.org/about-nwea/faq/Measures%20of%20Academic%20Progress%20\(MAP\)#faq-192](http://www.nwea.org/about-nwea/faq/Measures%20of%20Academic%20Progress%20(MAP)#faq-192)