

Using Assessment Data to Improve Student Learning

Research has shown that teachers who use assessment data to inform instruction improve student learning more than teachers who don't use assessment data (Black and William, 1998). Using data to inform instruction is a critical part of the Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC) and occurs during Step 2: Reflect, of the TLC. Reflecting on assessment results provides teachers and administrators with information they can use in making important decisions about instruction and accountability. This resource is a 4-step process for reflecting on student achievement results.

- Step 1: Determine what the assessment measures.
- Step 2: Determine "how good is good enough."
- Step 3: Get the Big Picture: Profile the class.
- Step 4: Identify and group students for learning.

Step 1: Determine what the assessment measures. During this step, you will take a close look at your assessment to identify the specific reading skills that are being measured. When trying to determine what the assessment measures, you might consider:

- Identifying the overall concept or skill being measured by the assessment.
- Identifying the major constructs that make up the assessment.
- Identifying the reading skills that each construct measures.
- Identifying the number of items within each construct.

Example:

Letter Knowledge Assessment	
Total known upper and lower case letters	54
Preferred way of knowing letters	L / S / W

- From looking at the assessment, one can tell that the overall concept being measured is the alphabetic principle.
- The major constructs address how students know letters (e.g., letter name, sound, and/or word).
- Letter Knowledge measures the students' knowledge of letters and their preferred way of knowing those letters.
- Letter knowledge assessment has 54 items.

Step 2: Determine “how good is good enough”. This step identifies student achievement standards for the assessment. Setting achievement standards is a process of setting long-term performance expectations for student learning. It is not aimed at current student achievement levels but rather aims at where students are expected to be by the end of the school year. Two methods are suggested for setting student achievement expectations.

Method 1: Using Samples of Student Work

- Collect samples of student work.
- Gather a group of teachers together.
- Have teachers review student work and articulate criteria for work that meets expectations.
- Use established criteria to separate student work into four piles.
 - Exceeds expectations
 - Meets expectations
 - Nearly meets expectations
 - Does not meet expectations

Example: General rubrics with four achievement levels.

Independent	The student has mastered this benchmark. He/she can do the skill without error independently.
Transitional	The student has mastered the benchmark, but makes an occasional minor error.
Developing	The student shows some understanding of the skill, but makes frequent errors and needs prompting.
Beginning	The student is still learning the concept. He/she is unable to demonstrate the skill and makes frequent major errors.

Method 2: Using Curriculum Standards

- Identify what students are expected to know and be able to do by the end of the school year. (Refer to the Entity Alignment Tables)
- Based on expectations, create grade appropriate achievement levels.

Example: Rubrics with four achievement levels for Letter Knowledge Assessment for end of 1st Grade.

	Letter Knowledge (54)
Independent	54
Transitional	53
Developing	50–52
Beginning	0–49



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Step 3: Get the Big Picture: Profile the class. Once the learning targets have been identified and you have agreed on achievement levels you can focus on, analyzing the assessment results. In this step, you will learn how to gauge the general abilities of students in your class on a particular assessment. Some suggestions on how to proceed follow:

- Create a table that converts the students' overall scores into achievement levels.
- Report out the percentages of students that score in each achievement level.
 - What percent are rated Independent?
 - What percent are rated Transitional?
 - What percent are rated Developing?
 - What percent are rated Beginning?

Example: Table converting overall student scores on Letter Knowledge assessment into four achievement levels.

Student Name	Student Score	Achievement Level
Abe	54	Independent
Bess	53	Transitional
Cal	51	Developing
Dan	24	Beginning
Ellen	54	Independent

Example: Table reporting percentage of class scoring in each of the four achievement levels on Letter Knowledge assessment.

Achievement Level	Percent of Students
Independent	2/5 or 40%
Transitional	1/5 or 20%
Developing	1/5 or 20%
Beginning	1/5 or 20%



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Step 4: Identify and group students for learning. Now that students' assessment results have been converted into achievement scores, and a profile of your class has been created, you can use achievement levels to sort students into flexible instructional groups. Flexible grouping means students will change groups as they learn. Listed are some suggestions for grouping students.

- Group students based on similar needs. For example, students that score in the Independent level on the Letter knowledge assessment could be grouped together.
- Create support groups where students work together to learn new skills and concepts. For example, students in the Independent level on Letter Knowledge would be grouped with students in the Beginning level.
- Group students based on results of individual items within an assessment. For example, based on the Letter Knowledge assessment results, five students struggled to correctly identify the letters *b*, *d*, *p*. A small group of those five students could be formed that would allow the teacher to provide explicit instruction on those specific letters.