Assessment Strategies
to Inform Instruction
In 2020-2021

August, 2020

Purpose

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is committed to every student receiving an equitable education — regardless of learning environment — so all students have the knowledge, skills, and habits to graduate career and college ready. Students will return to school this fall having encountered a variety of distance learning experiences. Educators should lean on the structures and processes within their equitable multi-level system of supports to identify and address students' unfinished learning. They should also consider students' social emotional needs and the barriers that some students may face including access to remote learning, materials and instruction.

In order to provide Effective Instruction as part of DPI's educational equity vision, this resource provides considerations for district and school leaders to use in identifying initial student needs and monitoring ongoing student learning from an equity lens to ensure every student has what they need to learn when they need it. It offers a process and sources of data to identify and align the unfinished learning students need to advance on grade-level standards within the current/upcoming unit of study.

Introduction

Given the disruption that both students and educators have experienced, high quality assessment strategies are key, and *formative assessment is more important than ever*. It is critical upon the return to school that educators identify high quality assessment strategies to produce expedient, asset-based information to determine students' access points to learning. Student learning progress should be monitored using multiple data sources, which can include: teachers, families, and students; embedded formative assessments; classroom summative assessments; and district-wide interim/benchmark assessments. All of these data, with *emphasis on formative assessment data*, should be used together to design instruction, adjust curriculum, identify targeted supports, and develop flexible groups to ensure that both the in-depth grade level instruction and just-in-time learning of essential content from the prior grade occur simultaneously.

Assessments Should:

- look ahead to provide just-in-time information to help teachers identify how to help each student access grade-level learning
- identify and build on student assets
- take an approach specific to each content area and grade band
- provide information that is instructionally relevant
- provide teachers, students, and families with specific, actionable, and immediate feedback about learning
- allow opportunities for student self-reflection on progress towards learning goals
- have structures and curriculum connections that are familiar to students
- occur after relationships have been established between the teacher and students

Assessment Considerations

Assessments are an embedded part of classroom teaching and learning and provide data on grade-level priority content and practices. Schools have access to multiple data sources including data and work samples from previous teachers, formative assessment practices, and universal screeners/progress monitoring tools to name a few. These data sources, used together, can provide evidence of student learning progress.

Universal Screening Considerations:

Universal screeners are standardized measures that are administered and scored in a consistent manner, which make it possible to compare the performance of individual students, subgroups of students, and/or all students in a class or grade level. This data source can be one of many helpful data points of student learning. There are a variety of assessment options including vendor tools and locally developed common assessments.

Prior to screening, consider the following:
- Prioritize universal instruction for all students.
- Establish relationships between teachers and students prior to administering assessments.
- Use classroom formative assessment practices to adjust initial instruction.
- Use flexible small group or class-wide interventions (Screeners identifying student knowledge and skills may also identify unfinished learning from the previous school year. Unfinished learning by itself is not a reason for intervention or remediation. Instead, teachers should use that data to determine what scaffolds are needed so that each student can access grade-level priority content and practices).
- Select a short window to complete screening to ensure consistent data interpretation (Note: DPI does not have a state mandated screening window. Districts are free to establish their own screening window. Keep in mind that some vendors may utilize a screening window and have established benchmarks based on students being screened during the vendor-prescribed window).
- Create a screening plan:
  - Ensure that all staff are comfortable administrating screeners.
  - Begin grade-level progress monitoring for students who have previously received support.
 - Prioritize screening of early/elementary learners.

- Use this data formatively with additional data sources such as student work samples and classroom performance data to gauge which students are making progress toward meeting the grade-level priority content and practices.

Although universal screening assessments may be administered remotely, they may not be thoroughly tested or validated for remote administration (contact local assessment vendors regarding remote assessment features that may have been added for virtual learning).

Formative Assessment Considerations:

Formative assessments are designed to quickly inform instruction by providing specific and immediate feedback through daily, ongoing instructional strategies that are student- and classroom-centered, and that answer "what comes next for student learning?" The formative assessment process outlined in this graphic is a cycle of learning that can help educators ensure that all students are getting the support they need to progress in their learning.

Although student learning environments may look different in the 2020-2021 school year, formative assessment practices should be used to collect evidence of student learning whether the learning is occurring face-to-face, blended, or online.
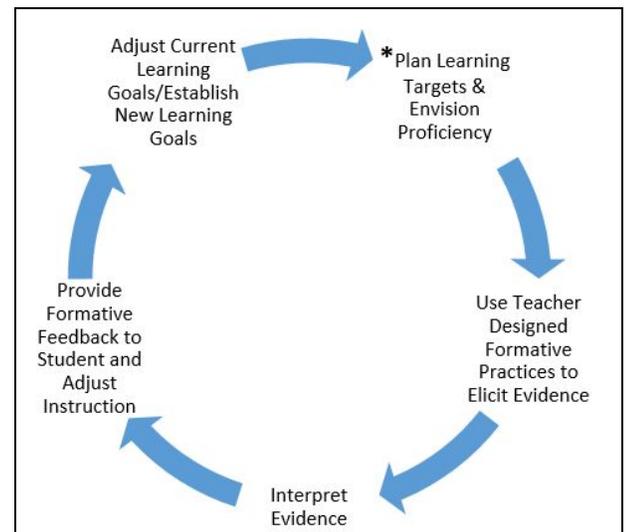
The formative assessment process allows students and teachers to gain a deep understanding of learning goals and envision proficiency in each standard. Feedback from the evidence of learning is used to adjust instruction and guide every student toward success. This process gives teachers insight into the variety of student access points and is an essential source of data to inform and adjust instruction to meet student needs and accelerate learning.

The most critical aspect of formative assessment is providing feedback to students and teachers about learning, and thinking about what comes next for student learning. An assessment practice is only truly "formative" if the data is used to inform instructional practice and provide support to ensure student success.

To learn more about formative assessment practices, visit the [DPI Formative Assessment](#) website, or utilize the [Formative Assessment Professional Learning Modules](#).

Remote Formative Assessment Considerations:

Formative assessment practices engage students in learning inside the classroom or in a virtual setting. They can be used to gauge whole class, small group, or individual student learning.

There are several digital formative assessment tools that can be used to gather evidence of learning through a variety of formats including:
- short multiple choice/interactive/short answer assessment resources
- audio and video assessment resources
- discussion resources

- game-based assessment resources
- presentation assessments
- data collection applications

*For a sampling of remote formative assessment tools, see the Appendix.

Remote Classroom Summative Assessment Considerations:
Summative assessments provide a summary of student learning. There are a variety of ways that students can demonstrate understanding of grade-level priority content and practices in a virtual setting. Educators can engage students in project based learning using product and creation tools, portfolios of work, and summative assessments using digital tools. It is also important that educators provide quality, standards-based feedback on these summative assessments to engage students in learning.

*For a sampling of remote summative assessment tools, see the Appendix.

Progress Monitoring Considerations:
- Target single, grade-level measures.
- Reduce the frequency of progress monitoring for students with consistent data trends.
- Defer to IEP teams to determine progress monitoring plans for students with IEPs. Additional guidance specific to monitoring progress of IEP goals and services is available in Education Forward.
- Be cautious when interpreting data and results:
  - Use this data formatively with additional data sources such as student work samples and classroom performance data to gauge which students are making progress toward meeting the grade-level priority content and practices.
  - Progress monitoring data collected remotely may not be equivalent to data collected in a controlled in-person environment; therefore, avoid using this data to make high stakes decisions.

Gathering Data to Support Instruction

When educators are planning the next or upcoming unit, a variety of data should be used as needed to support content decisions. Determine accessible and/or collectible best data sources to obtain the needed information. How will this data be gathered?

These key questions will support educators to:
- Identify the priority instructional content and practices for upcoming units of study;
- Identify students' learning needs (including unfinished learning) based on those priorities; and
- Determine initial focus for universal instruction, including accelerating learning and potential need for flexible small group support.

Key Questions	Possible Data Sources
What grade-level priority instructional content and practices does the unit focus on?	● upcoming/current unit of instruction ● textbook/curricular materials ● grade-level and previous grade-level content standards aligned progressions ● teaching and learning goals
What were the "unfinished teaching" standards? (These are the standards that were not taught as a result of school closing for COVID-19.)	● interview previous year teachers (a 2nd grade teacher will interview a 1st grade teacher) ● vertical conversations based on content area, local progressions of learning
What information is available from the prior year's teacher about student learning?	● relevant assessment results and data (a variety of formative, interim and summative) ● interview previous year teachers about student performance on grade level standards ● ensure teachers have time for collaboration with vertical team teachers ● review local student assessment data in Student Information Systems (SIS) or WISEdash for Districts
What initial instruction is necessary based on the student observations this fall to ensure grade-level learning?	● formative assessment data ● student learning may require virtual 1:1 sessions, small group sessions, and/or video recording of student work products
What quick assessments provide data on student knowledge of grade-level priority content and practices?	● formative assessment practices ● unit pre-assessment (i.e. on-demand writing samples, short oral reading fluency and comprehension checks) ● assessments from curricular materials

*Adapted from Iowa Department of Education. "Assessment Protocol for Assessing Initial Student Learning."

Additional Resources:

- Achieve Inc. "Student Assessment Inventory"
- Iowa Department of Education. "Iowa Return-to-Learn Support- Survey Tools"
- UnboundEd Learning. "*The Intersection of Standards and Equity with Kate Gerson*" (video)
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. "Assessment and Data Literacy E- Learning Series"
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. "Formative Assessment"
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. "SmartTeach" (demo)
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. "Wisconsin's Strategic Assessment Systems (SAS)"

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Appendix: Sample Assessment Tools

The DPI does not endorse the use of any specific instruction platform, tool, or product, including the virtual resources listed below. The DPI facilitates discussions between school districts on successes and challenges in providing virtual instruction to help each district identify and utilize tools that fit the district's specific needs. Each district should work with its own legal counsel to ensure the use of a particular product complies with state and federal law, including student privacy requirements, as well as local school board policies.

Assessment Based Tools			
Audio and Video Resources Flipgrid Screencastify	**Game-Based Resources** Gimkit Quizizz	**Presentation Assessment Resources** Nearpod	**Formative Assessment Resources** Classkick Fipity.net SmartTeach

Product Creation Tools				
Podcast WeVideo	**Code** Code.org	**Movie/PSA/ Commercial** Screencastify	**Game** Flippity	**Diary/Reflection** Flipgrid