



Indicator: The school assesses each student at least 3 times each year to determine progress toward standards-based objectives. (5114)

Explanation: Often called benchmark tests, these tests help teachers gauge their students' progress toward year-end standards-based assessments and make adaptations in instruction and to identify students in need of additional assistance. Instructional Teams and individual teachers review the results to make the necessary adjustments. They also enable the school to see areas of strength and weakness in the curriculum and instructional plans. Leadership Teams review the results for the entire school and across grade levels and subject areas.

Questions: Does your school administer at least three benchmark assessments to all students each year? Does the Leadership Team review the results? Do your Instructional Teams and individual teachers systematically review the results to make adjustments in instructional plans and to differentiate assignments and supports for individual students?

Assessment is the process of testing (written, verbal, or by examination of work) to see: (1) what a student knows and can do, and (2) patterns of strengths and weakness in what a group of students knows and can do. Assessment includes: (1) diagnostic-prescriptive assessments, such as unit pre-tests and post-tests, used by teachers and teams; (2) embedded assessments that are part of learning activities by which the teacher determines mastery of objectives by the student's successful completion of the activity; (3) periodic assessments, such as those provided by testing firms or developed by the district or school to gauge student mastery of standards-based objectives at several points through the school year; and (4) annual assessments such as state standards assessments and standardized achievement tests (Redding, 2007).

In the 2013 edition of Charlotte Danielson's *The Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument*, under Domain 1: Planning and Preparation, is the Component 1f: Designing Student Assessments, where Danielson says, "Good teaching requires both assessment of learning and assessment for learning. Assessments of learning ensure that teachers know that students have learned the intended outcomes. These assessments must be designed in such a manner that they provide evidence of the full range of learning outcomes; that is, the methods needed to assess reasoning skills are different from those for factual knowledge. Furthermore, such assessments may need to be adapted to the particular needs of individual students; an ESL student, for example, may need an alternative method of assessment to allow demonstration of understanding. Assessment for learning enables a teacher to incorporate assessments directly into the instructional process and to modify or adapt instruction as needed to ensure student understanding. Such assessments, although used during instruction, must be designed as part of the planning process. These formative assessment strategies are ongoing and may be used by both teachers and students to monitor progress toward understanding the learning outcomes."

Danielson continues that the elements of component 1f are:

- Congruence with instructional outcomes
- *Assessments must match learning expectations.*
- Criteria and standards
- *Expectations must be clearly defined.*
- Design of formative assessments
- *Assessments for learning must be planned as part of the instructional process.*
- Use for planning
- *Results of assessment guide future planning.*

Indicators include:

- Lesson plans indicating correspondence between assessments and instructional outcomes
- Assessment types suitable to the style of outcome
- Variety of performance opportunities for students
- Modified assessments available for individual students as needed
- Expectations clearly written with descriptors for each level of performance
- Formative assessments designed to inform minute-to-minute decision making by the teacher during instruction (p. 29)

For Special Education

Valid and reliable measurement of students with disabilities requires special consideration during test development and administration. The principles of Universal Design support the development of assessments that are accessible to all students. Research in the use of accommodations during test administration is intended to support the validity of inferences based on test results. Federal policy requiring states to assess all students and to report the disaggregated results of students with disabilities motivated an increase in research conducted in this area, which in turn has improved skills measurement for students with disabilities. Benchmark assessments should effectively measure the progress of special needs student populations and ensure they receive the instruction and remediation required to support learning. The interconnection of assessment and instruction for these populations is critical to ensure their ongoing progress and ability to succeed in today's accountability environment. Should a student be eligible for special education, benchmark assessments provides a "best-practice" approach for writing IEP goals and monitoring the effects of the special education intervention (Fuchs & Shinn, 1989; Shinn & Shinn, 2000). It also has been demonstrated to

result in increased achievement of students with disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1986a; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2004). The use of the same benchmark assessments tool before and after special education placement provides a continuous database, increasing the likelihood of understanding the data for all educators and parents, and reducing the training needs for different assessment systems (Deno, 2003).

References and Resources

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