

Using Interim Assessments within a Balanced Assessment System

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Doug Reeves (2005)

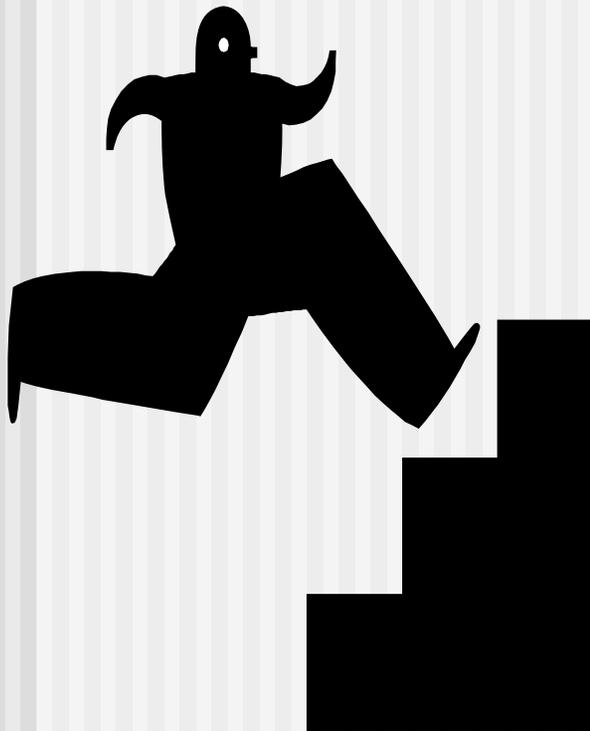
“It’s not about giving the assessments; it’s about doing something about the results.”

Session Topics

- What are interim assessments?
- How do they fit within a balanced assessment system?
- Are they “formative”?
- What purposes do they serve?
- What are different types of interim assessments?

Comprehensive Balanced Assessment System

Aligned to State Content Standards



MEAP/MME/SCAS EOC/Unit/Chapter/
Technical Skill Assessments
(Summative)

Interim/Benchmark Assessments
(Summative)

Classroom Assessment Strategies
(Formative)

What Are Interim Assessments?

- Interim assessments are
 - Summative assessments given periodically throughout the school year - - so-called “short-cycle summative assessments”
 - They provide information to educators about the learning of students before:
 - Students fall too far behind
 - High stakes state assessment tests are administered
- The goal is to determine student achievement after instruction while there is still time to remediate areas in which students have done poorly

What Are Interim Assessments?

- Interim assessments are relatively new in the assessment world
 - They have been put to many uses - some good, some not so good
 - Some of the assessments are related to what teachers are teaching and others are not
 - Some school districts have implemented interim assessments after much thoughtful consideration, while others have adopted such assessments because they are the latest fad to “fix” low achievement
- There is some evidence that interim assessments can be helpful in improving achievement

Role of Interim Assessments in a Balanced Assessment System – *Perie, Gong, Wurtzel*

- Evaluate student knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic goals, typically within a limited time frame
- Designed to inform decisions at both the classroom and beyond the classroom, such as school or district level.
- Meaningfully aggregated and reported at broad level

Are Interim Assessments “Formative?”

- Interim assessments are sometimes called “formative” assessments by testing companies that sell item banks or off-the-shelf assessments - but these are NOT “formative”
 - Formative assessments are the methods teachers use on a daily basis in moment-to-moment classroom instruction, to gauge whether instruction has been effective, and then to adjust instruction
 - Formative assessment is not an item bank
 - Formative assessment is rarely a test

Assumptions Underlying Interim Assessment

- Not all students will achieve proficiency the first time instruction is provided
- Not all students will reach proficiency at the same time (although that's how we teach them)
- We shouldn't wait until the end of the semester or year to find out about low achievement (students lagging far behind)
- If we discover learning problems early, they can be more easily remedied, before they become bigger problems
- Teachers will provide the needed instruction when student learning needs become apparent

Questions to Start With

- How will the assessment results be used? By whom?
- How will student learning improve as a result of the interim assessment?
- Will learning improve more if interim assessments are not used?
- Are there other types of assessment (e.g., formative assessment) that should also be used, so as to increase the likelihood of student success?
- What professional development needs to be provided to successfully implement interim assessments?

When Are Interim Assessments Administered?

- Prior to instruction
- At the completion of each instructional unit
- At the end of a fixed period of time
 - Each marking period
 - Each semester
 - A shorter or longer period of time

Interim Assessment Users

- Students
- Parents
- Teachers
- Building administrators
- District administrators
- Others

Interim Assessment Uses

■ Instructional Purposes

- Provide feedback on individual students to a teacher
- Provide aggregate information on how students in a school or district are doing at a given point in the school year
- Determine the gaps between what was taught and what was learned (student knowledge and skills)

Interim Assessment Uses

- Instructional Purposes (Continued)
 - See where students' current knowledge and skills are relative to what is about to be taught - are the students ready to learn the material in the *next* instructional unit?
 - Help the teacher determine where to put his or her efforts - to review previously taught material, teaching the material in greater depth, or to move on?
 - Grade students at the end of an instructional unit

Interim Assessment Uses

- Instructional Purposes (Continued)
 - Test knowledge and skills beyond those assessed in the time-constrained large-scale assessment
 - Test knowledge and skills that not assessable in the large-scale assessment program
 - Assess students who want to “comp out” of taking the class

Interim Assessment Uses

- Evaluation Purposes
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of various curricular and/or instructional practices
 - Did the instructional program work as promised?
 - Should the practices continue to be used?
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of teachers
 - Which educators' students achieved the most growth?
 - Reinforce instructional pacing - to keep everyone “on the same page” - across the school or district
 - Provide information on how best to target the curriculum to meet student needs

Interim Assessment Uses

- Predictive Purposes
 - Provide an early warning system for students who are not on-track to succeed in the course
 - Is there a proven intervention for these students to help them achieve?
 - Predict student achievement on the summative assessment(s)
 - Will individual students pass the state assessment?
 - Avoid attending to just the “bubble” students, however....
 - Will enough students pass so that the school makes AYP?

Interim Assessment Methods

- Multiple choice tests
- Short constructed-response questions
- Extended constructed-response questions (essays)
- Performance events (on-demand)
 - Visual art or music
 - Social studies group discussion
- Performance tasks over several weeks (projects)
 - English project based on Internet research
- Research projects
 - Social research

Interim Assessment Methods

- Written reports of research or lab tasks
 - Science experiments
- Checklists
 - Teacher observation
 - Interviews
- Oral reports and presentations
 - Project
- Community activities
 - Reports to civic groups
 - Participation in civic organizations
- Portfolio entries or an entire portfolio of evidence
 - Career education and technical skills

Interim Assessments

■ Advantages

- Assure students receive common learning experiences
- May improve horizontal and vertical articulation
- Identify and help struggling students before they fall too far behind
- May be able to use a broader array of assessment methods such as projects and performance assessments.

■ Challenges

- Instructional sequences are not always universal - can one set of assessments meet all needs?
- Are assessments of high quality
- Do the assessments match instruction?

23 Conditions for Successful Interim Assessments – *Marshall 2006*

- Laying the foundation for success
- Creating highly informative assessments
- Scoring and making meaning of the assessments
- Putting interim assessment data to work

Three Tiers

- Essential to student success
- Very important to student achievement
- Important to student achievement

Essential to Student Achievement

- Teacher understanding and trust
- Alignment with state tests and college-ready expectations
- Diagnostic
- Teacher scoring and analysis
- Team data meetings
- Follow-up with students
- Monitoring and follow-up by the principal

Contact Information

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