

Position Statement on K-12 Classroom Assessment

Classroom assessment is a process engaged in by teachers and others to collect, evaluate, and use evidence of student learning for a variety of purposes, including diagnosis of student strengths and weaknesses, monitoring of student progress toward desired levels of proficiency, assigning grades, and providing information to parents (McMillan, 2014). Classroom assessment includes both formative assessment practices that inform teaching and learning decisions and evaluative forms of assessment.

The National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) believes that the science and practice of classroom assessment are essential because they can improve student learning in a way that other forms of assessment cannot. Classroom assessment's core purpose is to facilitate learning for all students. Those most directly involved in that effort are students, teachers, and other school-based professionals. From this perspective, the most salient moments in student learning are orchestrated by teachers and students in the classroom--the place where the most immediate decisions about student learning are made, and where the greatest impact can occur.

To aid in classroom decision-making, students and teachers need to make regular use of formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment, integrated into the instructional process, can suggest real-time and near-term modifications to teaching, guide learning through immediate feedback, and aid students in assessing themselves and one another to inform next learning steps. Summative assessment occurs after a segment of instruction is completed, such as at the end of a unit of instruction, and is therefore generally more evaluative than diagnostic, as it often indicates learning progress and achievement. Together summative and formative classroom assessment can be used by students to identify gaps in their knowledge and skills, and by teachers to identify content that might need to be retaught in a new way, or, in the case of an end-of-year measure, to reflect on whether and how teaching might be changed for the subsequent year.

Because classroom assessment is central to student learning, NCME recommends the following actions aimed at advancing the science and practice of classroom assessment.

- Competency in classroom assessment should be encouraged for all individuals seeking licensure as a teacher, and for those seeking an administrator license.
- Teacher educators should provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop competencies related to classroom-based assessment, along with a greater focus on formative assessment as an essential part of methods courses.
- School district administrators should encourage and support ongoing teacher learning around classroom assessment.
- Teachers and school and district leaders should provide clear information to parents and guardians about the different forms and roles of classroom assessment.
- State and district leaders should include reviews of the classroom assessment components of instructional materials as part of the materials adoption process, and ensure that adopted materials support effective use of classroom assessment practices.
- Teachers should encourage students to develop self- and peer assessment strategies that can help them to become more effective learners.
- US Education Department and grant awarding foundation program officers should encourage and fund the development of a robust program of multidisciplinary research in classroom assessment to contribute to the development of improved methods, products, and services for classroom assessment. Such research should involve practicing teachers and school administrators, and experts in curriculum and instruction, measurement, cognitive and learning science, and technology.

Significant advances in the science and practice of classroom assessment can contribute to greater success throughout the grade range and support efforts to create equitable outcomes for all students. Those advances presume, and indeed require, a concerted effort undertaken by all of the actors identified above.

Reference

McMillan, J. H. (2014). Classroom assessment: Principles and practice for effective standards-based instruction (6th Ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson

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By the NCME Board of Directors, November 21, 2018

About NCME

The National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) is a professional organization for individuals involved in assessment, evaluation, testing, and other aspects of educational measurement. Members are involved in the construction and use of standardized tests; new forms of assessment, including performance-based assessment; program design; and program evaluation. NCME members include university faculty; test developers; state and federal testing and research directors; professional evaluators; testing specialists in business, industry, education, community programs, and other professions; licensure, certification, and credentialing professionals; graduate students from educational, psychological, and other measurement programs; and others involved in testing issues and practices.