

Module: Supporting Decisions with Assessment

Exercise for Major Milepost Assessment

Example Prompt Response and Commentary

In responding to these outcomes from the SBA test, we might first brainstorm potential causes for the Communicating Reasoning area to see lower performance than the other ELA areas. This effort might produce questions such as:

- Is there a gap or misalignment in the math curriculum?
- Are instructional practices ineffective?
- Do teachers report low confidence in their ability to teach the communication of reasoning effectively?
- Are there shortcomings or other problems in the test items?

To address these questions, we could organize a committee of teachers to be tasked with carrying out the investigation. Specific tasks for this committee would include:

- Identifying the specific learning standards associated with the Communicating Reasoning domain.
- Locating a test blueprint and/or other documentation of SBA content.
- Studying the curriculum for alignment to the standards and to the test items, in terms of both relevance (i.e., does the curriculum focus on the same things as the standards and test?) and representativeness (i.e., does the curriculum thoroughly cover the content of the standards and test?).
- Reviewing the professional literature to identify best instructional practices for the communication of reasoning.
- Engaging in a lesson study, surveying teachers for confidence levels, and observing current instructional practices.
- Reviewing existing support and guidance for SBA score use, including any review of item bias.

From this investigation, we would try to identify the extent to which each of the following issues is relevant, and then respond accordingly.

- Curriculum issue – Organize a committee of teachers to align the curriculum to address the learning standards more thoroughly and directly in Communicating Reasoning. Engage as many teachers as possible in this discussion.
- Instructional/confidence issue – Communicate findings and needs to administration personnel who are responsible for providing professional development for teachers. Start with ensuring deep content knowledge among educators. Then attend to specific strategies, such as: math talk, probing questions, authentic and varied instructional and assessment tasks; use of manipulatives, collaboration, differentiation, and scaffolding.
- Suspected test-item issue – Reach out to measurement/testing specialists to assist in an item analysis to determine if any validity or bias issues may exist for this domain in the local context. If such issues are suspected, consider the potential effectiveness of strategies listed in the two bullet points above. Also contextualize the results and advocate for a different, more appropriate form of accountability assessment.