

a Family's Guide to Understanding Student Assessment

This guide was made to help families understand how assessment can support student learning. You will find information about different types of assessment your student might engage in and how each can help your student meet learning goals. This guide includes questions that you can ask your student and their teacher to help you support learning at home. When teachers and families work together, students can develop the skills they will need for life after graduation.

If you have questions about this information, please contact your student's teacher.

What Is Assessment?



Assessment is not just a test – we use a lot of different assessment tools and strategies to get different kinds of information about learning for each child, school, and district.



There are different types of assessment that are designed for different purposes and support different decisions about student learning.

Why Do We Assess?



School leaders, teachers, parents, and students need information that gives a full picture of how students are doing so that they can make good decisions about student learning.

-  School leaders need information to understand how a classroom, school, or district is doing so that they can make decisions about things such as professional development and staffing.
-  Teachers need information about the progress their class is making toward end-of-year expectations so that they can make decisions about what they might need to change in upcoming instruction.
-  Students and teachers need ongoing information in the classroom to help them decide where to go next in learning.

Understanding the types of assessment your student engages in and what the information provided tells you about your student's learning can support you to have meaningful conversations with your student and their teacher about supporting learning at home.



Formative Assessment

Every day, teachers and students work together to understand where students are in their learning. This process is called formative assessment and it helps students answer three critical questions about their learning, so they can move toward their learning goals.



- 1. Where am I now?**
- 2. Where am I going?**
- 3. Where to next?**

Formative assessment requires teachers and students to be clear on what students are learning (the learning goals) and how they will know if they are successful in learning it (success criteria). They need to gather information about student learning, make sense of it, and, most importantly, use it to move learning toward the learning goals. Formative assessment should be the kind of assessment that students are engaged in most often because it has the most direct impact on their learning.

Formative assessment can be informal, such as observation of a peer-discussion, or formal, such as a written assignment or presentation.

Questions you can ask your student about formative assessment:

- ? What are you working to improve, and how will you know if you've gotten better at it?
- ? How can this task or activity help you improve?
- ? What are you doing well? How do you know?
- ? What feedback have you gotten from your teacher, or from other students, and how are you using it to improve?

Questions you can ask your student's teacher about formative assessment:

- ? How can I find out what my student is expected to learn and what it will look like for them to be successful as a learner?
- ? What can I ask my student to help them understand their own learning process?
- ? How do you provide feedback on my student's classroom assignments that are not homework?
- ? How do you provide feedback that will help my student improve?
- ? What kinds of feedback would be helpful for me to provide at home?
- ? What role does my student play in evaluating their own work and the work of their peers?
- ? How does my student come to understand what to do next to move their learning forward?
- ? How can I share with you what I am observing at home about my student's learning?

Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessment uses tools to get information about students' strengths and weaknesses in specific areas of learning. Teachers use diagnostic assessment to design individualized instruction and to identify students who can benefit from additional support.

Diagnostic assessment might be a test that measures, for example, different aspects of reading development, or a placement test taken at the beginning of the year.

Questions you can ask your student about diagnostic assessment:

- ? What was challenging about the test?
- ? Do you think the test would be different if you took it now? Why?

Questions you can ask your student's teacher about diagnostic assessment:

- ? How do you identify my student's strengths and areas to improve, and how will you communicate that to me and my student?
- ? What diagnostic assessments will my student experience, and what are they intended to measure?
- ? What do you do with the information provided by diagnostic assessments?
- ? How can I use information from diagnostic assessments to help my student at home?
- ? What information was used to assign my student to a specific group, class, or support?
- ? What support is available for areas where my student is struggling, and how do you determine whether that support is making a difference?

Interim Assessment

An interim assessment is a test that monitors student progress toward meeting benchmark or end-of-year learning goals. Interim assessments may be given several times throughout a school year. Teachers and schools use the information from interim assessments to make adjustments to upcoming instruction.

Interim assessment might be a district-created benchmark test or a formal product such as NWEA MAP.

Questions you can ask your student about interim assessment:

- ? What information did this test give you about your learning?
- ? How did the test connect with what you learned in school?
- ? What was most challenging for you on this test, and what could have made it less challenging?
- ? Did the results of this test surprise you?

Questions you can ask your student's teacher about interim assessment:

- ? How will I find out how my student is doing relative to grade-level expectations?
- ? How often will my student participate in interim assessments?
- ? Is there an assessment calendar that I can view?
- ? How do the interim assessments that my student experiences relate to what they are learning in class?
- ? What do you do with the information from interim assessments?
- ? How can my student and I learn about my student's performance on interim assessments?
- ? What do I need to know to understand the data from interim assessments?
- ? How can I help my student improve based on information provided by interim assessments?
- ? Are the supports my student receives in class consistent with the supports provided in interim assessments?

Summative Assessment

Summative assessments are given at the end of a period of learning to help understand whether students met the learning goals. Your student may engage in a summative assessment that includes a variety of topics, concepts, and skills at the end of a unit of study in the classroom. The state tests that your student may have taken at the end of a school year are also summative assessments. Federal and state law requires that students are given summative assessments in specific grades and subjects each year. These tests provide information about how well schools and districts are preparing all students for college and careers. The Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP) and ACT are examples of summative assessments.

Questions you can ask your student about summative assessment:

- ? How did the test connect with what you learned in school?
- ? What was most challenging for you on this test, and what could have made it less challenging?
- ? Did the results of this test surprise you?
- ? What do you want to work on next year and what do your summative results tell you about that area?

Questions you can ask your student's teacher about summative assessment:

- ? How can my student and I learn about my student's performance on summative assessments?
- ? Do you talk to my student about their performance on summative assessments? What do you say?
- ? What do I need to know to understand my student's score report?
- ? Do the results from my student's summative assessment match up with what you see in the classroom?
- ? Are the supports my student receives in class consistent with the supports provided in summative assessment?
- ? How does the school use state assessment data?
- ? What do summative assessment results tell me about my child's school?
- ? What is the school doing in response to the summative data?