



ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Assessment can be defined as a process of collecting, analyzing, and organizing information or data for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating student learning. Credible assessment information, procedures, and techniques must be used to improve student achievement. The past twenty years of research on teacher decision making, cognitive learning, and student motivation have revealed two important findings in relation to assessment:

1. *Effective teachers continually assess students relative to learning objectives and adjust subsequent instruction on the basis of the assessment information.*
2. *The process of assessment not only documents what students know and can do, but also influences student learning.*

The Clark County School District K-5 assessment program is designed to inform instruction and promote student learning of established standards, concepts, and skills specified in the *Curriculum Essentials Framework*.

INSTRUCTIONAL ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Formative Assessments	Description	Administration Timelines	Instructional Implications	Teacher Behavior Examples	Student Behavior Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected Response Extended Written Response Personal Communication Classroom Student Performance Assessment Screening Measure Diagnostic Measure Progress Monitoring Measure Outcome Measure 	<p>Employ ongoing teacher assessment practices to determine student knowledge and understanding of CEF and Power Standard concepts and skills. Embed assessment throughout all instructional activities.</p>	<p>Administer to students daily, weekly, at the end of a unit, and the beginning and end of the school year.</p>	<p>Classroom assessments inform subsequent instructional programs and practices and provide an evaluation for grading purposes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation Anecdotal Records Graphic Organizers Questions Rubric Assessments Checklists Portfolio Entries Writing Logs Grouping Teacher Quizzes and Tests End of Unit Tests Test-taking Skills Assessment Differentiated Instruction 	<p>Requires demonstration of knowledge, understanding, and application of concepts and skills in verbal, written, or visual formats.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explanations Descriptions Conclusions Problem Solutions Recitations Examples Test Taking Projects Oral Reading Fluency Presentations
<p>Interim Assessment Program Grades K-5 Reading, Writing, and Math</p>	<p>Reflects students' level of achievement of <i>The Power Standards</i> based upon paced benchmarks.</p>	<p>Administer to all students K-5 at the end of each trimester</p>	<p>Results displayed in the Instructional Data Management System (IDMS). Provides levels of mastery of the assessed <i>Power Standards</i> in various formats to inform and differentiate instruction to improve achievement.</p>	<p>Teachers meet in grade level Structured Teacher Planning Time (STPT) teams to analyze test results to determine students' strengths and weaknesses; develop interventions targeting instruction to improve each student's achievement</p>	<p>Students respond to selected response questions (through Kindergarten and First Grade assessments can include performance assessments that are scored with a rubric). Test-taking Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer sheet completion </p>
<p>Summative Assessments State-Criterion Referenced Test (State CRTs) Grades 3, 4, and 5 Reading, Mathematics, and Science (5th Grade)</p>	<p>Reflects achievement of individual student and student groups in relationship to specific skills or concepts aligned with state standards in reading, mathematics, and science (5th grade).</p>	<p>Administer to all students grades 3, 4, and 5 in the spring of each academic year. (Reading, Mathematics and Science (5th Grade).</p>	<p>Provides an indication of student achievement in relation to state standards.</p>	<p>Established administration guidelines are followed.</p>	<p>Test-taking Strategies</p>
<p>Norm-Referenced Assessment (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) Grade 4 Reading, Language, Mathematics, and Science.</p>	<p>Provides achievement information for both individuals and student groups. Gives a broad overview of individual student and/or group performance in comparison with a norm group. (language, reading, mathematics, and science)</p>	<p>Administer to all fourth grade students in the fall of each academic year. Tests are administered in reading, language, mathematics, and science.</p>	<p>Provides individual student and group achievement levels in comparison with a norm group. Results inform subsequent instructional programs and practices.</p>	<p>Established administration guidelines are followed. Teachers and administrators use disaggregated results to determine areas of instructional strength and weakness and to target areas in need of improvement.</p>	<p>Test-taking Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pacing Answer sheet completion SQ3R Process of elimination Rechecking work </p>
<p>Nevada Proficiency Examination in Writing</p>	<p>State-mandated test measures proficiency in (1) Ideas and Content (2) Organization (3) Voice (4) Conventions. Each student provides a writing sample based on a designated prompt.</p>	<p>Administer to all fifth grade students in the spring of each academic year.</p>	<p>Results indicate level of proficiency in each of the four writing traits. Score of 3 or above in each trait indicates proficiency of that trait.</p>	<p>Established administration guidelines are followed. Teachers and administrators use results to determine areas of instructional strength and weakness in writing and to target instruction for those areas shown to be weak.</p>	<p>Requires demonstration of knowledge, understanding, and application of writing skills as presented in the student writing sample.</p>

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment practices include formal measures, informal processes, real-world performance, and application of knowledge and understandings. Classroom teachers use ongoing, cumulative, and performance assessment of students to monitor student progress and achievement of the concepts and skills outlined in the *CEF*. Additionally, the district-wide testing program includes state and district-developed curriculum-referenced assessments and nationally developed norm-referenced tests. Used in combination, these assessment components provide a summary of student progress in order to inform instruction and promote further student learning.

Multiple assessment strategies are essential for determining and reporting the learning needs, progress, and achievement of students. A range of assessment formats, including student constructed responses (as in testing) and student made products or exhibits, are included in the assessment process. The purpose of assessment is fourfold:

- to monitor student progress and achievement
- to make informed instructional decisions
- to evaluate student understandings and achievement
- to communicate accurate and meaningful achievement information to parents and students

Classroom Performance Assessment: Student work products or physical activity demonstrate student knowledge and understanding of specific concepts and skills. Multiple classroom performance assessment methods are used by teachers as sources of evidence documenting student learning. These may include, but are not limited to:

OBSERVATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

- Interviews
- Checklists
- Rating Forms
- Logs

STUDENT PERFORMANCE SAMPLES

- Work Products or Artifacts
- Computation
- Oral Reading Performance (Fluency Measures)
- Student Portfolios
- Physical Activities or Performances

TESTS

- Initial Screening
- Classroom Quizzes
- Diagnostic Tests
- Instructional Unit Tests
- IDMS Interim Assessments
- Practice of Test-Taking Strategies
- End of unit tests

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Interim Assessments: Standards-based formative assessments administered to K-5 students three times each year give teachers the timely data they need to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of every student. Aligned with the benchmarked *Power Standards*, these assessments allow teachers to monitor student progress toward achievement of grade-level standards and to develop instructional interventions as needed.

State Criterion-Referenced Test (State CRTs): A test that is designed to measure acquisition of state standards in reading, language, mathematics, and science (5th grade) at grades 3, 4, and 5. (AYP)

5th Grade Writing Assessment: A state-mandated test designed to measure student writing proficiency in four areas: Ideas and Content, Organization, Voice, Conventions. Students provide a writing sample that is based on a designated prompt.

Norm-Referenced Tests (NRT): Tests that measure basic concepts and skills common to most curricula throughout the country. Results provide information that compares student achievement with that of a representative national sample, thus enabling teachers to see the relative ranking of their students in relationship to a norm group.

Instructional Data Management System (IDMS): The Clark County Instructional Data Management System (IDMS) is a comprehensive, centralized Web-based data management system that assists K-12 educators in managing and using data to drive instructional practices, optimize learning results, and improve student achievement. The IDMS application supports a standards-based instructional approach bringing data directly to the desktop computers of classroom teachers and school leaders. Focusing on the critical Nevada State Content Standards, IDMS allows educators to pace instruction, align materials to the standards, create formative assessments, and generate district, school class, and student reports that are meaningful, actionable, and easy to use.

To support data-driven decision making, the Clark County School District utilizes the IDMS to target improvement efforts and address the individual needs of students for immediate intervention. Using the IDMS, educators can examine student performance by the Power Standard, individual student, classroom, grade level, school, and district. To promote curriculum alignment, *Power Standards* were established by the Clark County School District. These standards are highly focused, specific areas of instructional emphasis representing the most critical state standards that students are held accountable for mastering. This combination of standards-based instruction and student-specific information helps educators identify curricular needs and meet individual student learning needs.

Assessing Learning Guides

The Research, Accountability, and Innovation Division of CCSD, in collaboration with Educational Testing Services (ETS), created a series of learning guides based upon the Focus on Standards Model designed to help educators target concepts regarding allocation of instructional time, differentiated instruction, use of assessment data to guide standards-based instruction, and the effective use supporting resources. A complete, downloadable version of each of the following guides can be found in Interact>District Link>A+ in Action Plan. The following is a listing of the Assessing Learning Guides.

- Assessing Learning for Kindergarten through Grade 8 – Introduction to Structured Teacher Planning Time and the use of data.
- Assessing Learning II for Kindergarten through Grade 8 – Unwrapping standards: a clear focus on what students must learn.

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- Assessing Learning III for Kindergarten through Grade 8 – Analyzing multiple measures, learning from your students’ results on state and district tests.
- Assessing Learning IV for Primary, Intermediate, and Middle School grades – Using classroom formative assessment data to inform instruction.

CLASSROOM STUDENT PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Student assessment, the curriculum (*CEF*), and instruction (programs/practices) must be aligned to ensure high levels of student achievement. The *Curriculum Essentials Framework*, *Power Standards*, and the *K-5 Guide for Benchmarks*, outline learning expectations for students. The primary goals of assessment are to advance student learning and to inform teachers as instructional decisions are made regarding subsequent instruction. Student progress and achievement must be assessed in relation to needed pre-requisite skills as well as expectations that go beyond attainment of minimum expectancies. Assessment must be an essential, integral component throughout the planning and instructional process: prior to instruction, during instruction, and following instruction.

The following interrelated steps are cyclical and ongoing throughout the instructional planning and implementation process:

- Review the *CEF*, *The Power Standards*, and the *K-5 Guide for Benchmarks*.
- Pre-assess student achievement levels to determine mastery of pre-requisite skills.
- Identify student learning targets and related instructional objectives.
- Design instructional procedures, strategies, and resources aligned with instructional objectives.
- Implement instructional plans embedding ongoing assessment of student progress with instruction.
- Modify instructional plans and practices to support student learning needs.
- Post-assess student achievement levels.
- Use assessment results to plan subsequent instruction.

Classroom student performance assessment processes are intended to support the continued learning of each student. All students, including those with special needs or talents, are expected to reach high levels of achievement. Teachers must use multiple assessment approaches so that all students can demonstrate their levels of knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways.

TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

Current educational research indicates that the training of students in acquiring basic test-taking skills is a legitimate practice and is highly advisable. The Clark County School District Research, Accountability, and Innovation Department has published *Test-Taking Strategies*, a booklet which should be used by teachers as the basis for student test preparation and training in “test wiseness,” or test-taking skills.

A copy of the complete *Test-Taking Strategies* booklet is available through the Clark County School District InterAct™>District Link>Student Assessment conference. This document provides many suggestions for activities that can be incorporated into regular lessons throughout the year and is

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intended for use in test-taking situations that require use of answer sheets or marking in test booklets. Additionally, much of the content may be helpful for students in completing daily assessments. Teachers can apply this information, with appropriate modification, at any grade level. Suggested test-taking skills outlined in the Test-Taking Strategies booklet are included in this assessment section of the *Curriculum Essentials Framework* for use in instructional planning.

GETTING READY

What Do I Know?

Begin with a class brainstorming session. Encourage students to share ideas and strategies that work for them when they are taking tests (read directions carefully, check work, etc.). Record and discuss these ideas and strategies.

Review the list, isolating those strategies that help when taking a test. Display the list and add to it as new strategies are learned. By becoming more familiar with these strategies, students become better able to use them during regular class assignments.

Test-Taking Skills

Teachers can do the following:

- Explain the purpose of testing to students.
 1. Tell students that test results are one way of determining how much learning is occurring.
 2. Explain to students that on some tests (e.g., NRTs) they are not expected to know everything on the test and that some questions are designed to stretch student thinking and may be beyond material previously taught.
- Provide grade level experiences in the use of testing materials.
 1. Remind students that when they are answering questions that relate to a reading passage, they should always go back to the passage itself when they are in the process of selecting an answer choice.
 2. Provide practice using answer sheets in daily or weekly work.
 3. Help students learn to cover answer columns not being used on multi-column answer sheets or booklets. This may help to avoid errors and confusion.
 4. Instruct students to compare question numbers with corresponding answer spaces as they work through the test.
 5. Demonstrate and practice using place markers, i.e., rulers or paper markers.
 6. Explain and demonstrate the mechanics of appropriately marking answer sheets/booklets. Tell students why they must be well marked (see guidelines for marking answers).

TIME MANAGEMENT

Some tests (e.g., most classroom tests or district-developed tests) are not timed and allow students to work at their own pace. However, other tests (e.g., NRTs, math facts) are timed, and these time limits may be troubling to students who lack experience with timed activities. When tests are timed,

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students may become anxious. Teachers can minimize this anxiety by giving timed exercises during routine activities.

Time Awareness

1. Have students sit quietly with their eyes closed or heads down on their desks for two minutes. Ask the students to raise their hands when they think two minutes have passed. Discuss how long the time interval seemed. Next, have the students play a game or fun activity for two minutes. Compare the two timed intervals. Lead students to an awareness that time may seem to go more quickly when they are involved in a task.
2. Set a timer for one minute and have students sit quietly until the time is up. Discuss various tasks that might be accomplished within a minute period, such as writing one's name, solving a subtraction problem, etc. Increase the time period as the students' concept of time improves.
3. Give students practice in taking timed tests of various lengths. Applying time limits on everyday lessons/activities can assist students in gaining confidence with timed tests.
4. Pose a problem for students to process within a set time. Pose another problem for students to process without any time limit. Have students discuss how they worked on each problem. Were there any similarities or differences in how they approached the problems?

Skimming

Skimming a passage will help students get an idea of the content and the number of questions that must be answered. Students should answer the questions that appear easiest first. Skimming is most practical when used with short tests.

Pacing

Give students one minute to work on problems/questions. After a minute, ask students how many items they answered. Record on the board the number of items completed. Continue working for another minute. Discuss the number of additional items students were able to finish and why. Then allow students to finish, writing down the finishing times of individual students. Discuss the differences in finishing times (different students work at different paces).

Discuss why some items took longer to complete (longer to read, more difficult questions). Tell the students that when they are taking a test, one way to pace themselves is to go through the test one time and answer the easy items. Then they can go back to the beginning and go through the test again, this time working on the harder items.

Pacing Includes:

1. Doing the easiest problems/questions first;
2. Going back to the harder ones and doing them in order;
3. Leaving a difficult question if it is taking too long.

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DEVELOPING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Explain to students the importance of having a positive attitude. People can make themselves succeed or fail. When students make up their minds to succeed, they usually do. Teachers can:

- Motivate students to do well and not to give up.
- Explain the importance of the test without raising anxieties. The teacher can explain that the test will help teachers by supplying information on what the student knows about a subject area.
- Explain to students how capable they are of doing well on tests.
- Remind students to get a good night's sleep, have a good breakfast before the test, and do their best.

SUGGESTED IDEAS FOR SUCCESS

- Develop long range plans to organize instruction.
- Build student test confidence throughout the school year by informal testing. Experiences should be purposeful and directly related to the *Curriculum Essentials Framework*.
- Teach skills emphasizing practical utilization. Teach skills in context for better retention.
- **Teach test-taking strategies, not the test.**
- Review and define words commonly used in test directions. Terminology common to standardized tests may confuse students, but the more experience they have with it, the better they are able to handle it. Familiarity with direction words can help students understand exactly what they are required to do.

Examples:

bubble in/fill in	probably	combines
mark	according to	supports
correct	passage	completes
column	similar/different	web
opposite	total	form
blank	most	selection
missing word	like	containing
capitalization	punctuation	

- Instruct students to read directions and items/questions carefully.
- Instruct students to read all the answer choices before choosing the correct answer.
- Instruct students to go back to a reading passage when they are answering questions based on that passage.

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- Discuss multiple-choice questions. Discuss the obvious wrong answer choices first and why they are incorrect; then lead to the correct answer through the process of elimination.
- Provide a quiet, comfortable environment for students while they are being tested.
- Instruct students to try to tune out background noises which can not be controlled.
- Provide students with test-taking practices. Such practice can be incorporated into the regular instructional program and should give students experience in the following:
 - pacing themselves on timed tests;
 - answering questions in a variety of item formats (e.g., choosing the incorrectly spelled word from a group of words, working math problems in both horizontal and vertical formats, recognizing correct punctuation or capitalization, etc.); and
 - developing a general strategy for answering test items, such as:
 1. Read the item, including all answer choices.
 2. If the answer is known immediately or can be readily determined:
 - a. Mark the answer to the item on the answer sheet.
 - b. Check the answer to make sure the answer choice bubbled corresponds to the desired choice.
 3. If the answer is not immediately known or cannot be readily determined, omit the item for the time being, but make a note of it either by writing the item number on scrap paper (if allowed) or by making a light mark by the number of the item (making sure to erase it later).
 4. Finish the test in this manner.
 5. If time permits, go back to unanswered questions and select an answer to each based on the following procedure:
 - a. Read the question again.
 - b. If applicable, reread the accompanying passage to identify necessary information.
 - c. Eliminate answer choices that are obviously wrong.
 - d. Select the best answer from among the remaining choices.
 6. In general, students should be advised to answer all remaining questions for which one or more options can reasonably be eliminated.

Ideally, once students have acquired the test-taking basics appropriate to their grade level, additional practice experiences can be woven into the regular instructional program, thus allowing real student learning to continue at the same time that test-taking skills are being reinforced. A cooperative effort among teachers at each grade level would seem to be an efficient means of developing instructional materials which incorporate test-taking skills. Spelling tests, for example, could be administered in various formats; math assignments could involve the use of scratch paper and/or separate answer sheets; and multiple-choice questions could be formulated for reading assignments both in the regular reading book and the various content areas.

TESTING PRACTICES

APPROPRIATE TESTING PRACTICES

Accurate Test Results

Accurate test results are essential both for use in decision making and for reporting to the various publics upon whom the school district depends for support. Adherence to appropriate procedures in the administration of standardized, norm-referenced tests can ensure that accurate data are obtained.

Test

Research indicates that programs designed to help students acquire basic test-taking skills are highly advisable. Such programs not only improve students' use of time and reduce their errors, but also tend to eliminate the variable of testwiseness by making all students testwise. To familiarize students with the various concepts and strategies essential to successful test-taking, teachers should do the following:

- **Explain the purpose of testing to students.** Even very young children are entitled to know why they are being tested. Students should be told that test results let teachers know whether their students are learning and maintaining grade level skills and allow district officials to compare the achievement of students in Clark County with that of students nationwide. Explaining that students are not expected to know everything on some tests (e.g., some questions on a norm-referenced test are purposely above grade level since the tests apply to more than one grade) can lessen student anxiety, as well.
- **Provide experience appropriate to the grade level in the use of testing materials.** Students should practice:
 - using separate answer sheets;
 - working in columns and rows;
 - bubbling in responses; and
 - recognizing the variations that can occur in the letters associated with the answer options.
- **Review and define words commonly used in the directions of standardized tests.** Familiarity with words such as “same/opposite,” “similar/different,” “right/left,” “up/down,” “preceding/following,” “most,” “like,” “usual,” and “passage” can help students understand exactly what they are being asked to do.

INAPPROPRIATE TESTING PRACTICES

Knowledge of Inappropriate Practices

A standardized test is, by definition, one that is “administered and scored with uniformity of procedure.” Any deviation from the uniform procedures and conditions under which such a test is to be administered renders the results of testing invalid. Outlined below are specifications for

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test administration which must be followed if test results are to be an accurate measure of student achievement.

Pre-administrative Practices

Prior to the administration of a standardized, norm-referenced test (NRT), staff should:

- **Never familiarize students with actual questions or reading passages from the test.** Test-taking skills can and should be taught with materials unrelated to the actual test. Ideally, such materials should be developed from various components of the regular instructional program.
- **Never use actual or modified test items or words for work/homework assignments.** Such practices invalidate the test results.
- **Never provide instruction in skills outside the scope and sequence of the district-delineated curriculum merely because those skills are included on a standardized test.**

Never test students selectively. Every effort should be made to include all students in testing. Special students, such as those in special education or language acquisition programs, should be included in testing as identified on the Testing and Evaluation directions accompanying a specific test. The three- to four-week testing period allows ample opportunity for make-up testing.

Administrative Practices

During the actual administration of a test, staff should adhere strictly to the procedures specified in the Examiner's Manual and:

- **Never provide verbal clues during the orally administered sections of the test.** Students are quick to pick up on hints to the right answer, intentional or otherwise, so it is essential that the test administrator not change the pitch of his/her voice or to pause longer at the right answer. It is also important, however, that the test administrator not underemphasize key words in the stem of such questions, because students are completely dependent on him/her for that information.
- **Never provide assistance or prompting to a student during the time s/he is taking the exam.** While the test administrator may be in the habit of suggesting that students rethink certain answers on teacher-made tests given in the classroom, this procedure violates the most basic meaning of standardized testing.
- **Never deviate from the testing time specified in the Examiner's Manual.** Time limits must be strictly followed for the testing conditions to remain standardized. Do not begin a subtest unless there is enough time to finish it. Do not extend the time limit to allow all students to finish.
- **Never allow a student to return to a previously administered section of a test.** An extension of time limits such as this invalidates any comparison that might be made with the norms provided by the test publisher.
- **Never leave students unsupervised during the administration of a test.** The distraction that occurs when students realize that no proctor is present affects both their performance and the standardization of conditions.

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- **Never provide the opportunity for students to assist one another or copy answers.** Close supervision and a suitable seating arrangement should take care of this.

Post-administrative Practices

After a test has been administered, staff should:

- Never alter a student's responses on the answer sheet. Stray marks on the answer sheet should be erased, with special attention to the area of the timing tracks. However, other alterations, such as erasure of the lighter of two responses to the same item, are not permissible.
- Never discard potentially low-scoring students' answer sheets. The very student whose answer sheet is discarded may be the one who needs special help. If a student is observed to be marking answers randomly, the student should be temporarily removed from the testing situation and subsequently counseled as to the purpose of testing and the importance of putting forth his/her best effort. At the next scheduled sitting, the student should be returned to the testing situation and encouraged to complete that and all subsequent test sections. *Student responses on the subtest during which the student was removed from the testing situation should be erased, so that the student will not receive a score for that subtest.*