



# Assessment Strategies to Inform Instruction

## Purpose:

This resource provides information for district and school leaders to consider when identifying student needs, planning instruction and monitoring student learning.

## Introduction:

It is critical that educators identify high-quality assessment strategies to produce timely, asset-based information to determine where students are in their learning and develop a plan for moving forward. Student learning progress should be monitored using multiple data sources such as:

- observations from teachers, families, and students,
- embedded formative assessments,
- classroom assessments, and
- district-wide interim/benchmark assessments.

All of these data, with **emphasis on formative assessment data**, should be used together to design instruction, adjust curriculum, identify targeted supports, and create flexible student learning groups. This ensures that both the in-depth grade level instruction and just-in-time learning of essential content from the prior grade occur simultaneously.

## Assessment

Assessments are an embedded part of classroom teaching and learning and provide data on grade-level priority content and practices. Schools have access to multiple data sources including data and work samples from previous teachers, formative assessment practices, and universal screeners/progress monitoring tools to name a few. These data sources, used together, can provide evidence of student learning progress.

### Assessment should:

- look ahead to provide just-in-time information to help teachers identify how to help each student access grade-level learning,
- identify and build on student assets,
- take an approach specific to each content area and grade level or band,
- provide information that is instructionally relevant,
- provide teachers, students, and families with specific, actionable, and immediate feedback about learning,
- allow opportunities for student self-reflection on progress towards learning goals,
- have structures and curriculum connections that are familiar to students, and
- occur after relationships have been established between the teacher and students.

### Universal Screeners:

Universal screeners are standardized measures that are administered and scored in a consistent manner, which make it possible to compare the performance of individual students, subgroups of students, and/or all students in a class or grade level. This data source can be one of many helpful data points of student learning. There are a variety of screener options including vendor tools and locally developed common assessments. Use universal screeners in conjunction with student work samples and classroom performance data to gauge which students are making progress toward meeting the grade-level priority content and practices.

Prior to screening, consider the following:

- Prioritize universal instruction to meet the needs of every student in the classroom.
  - Establish relationships between teachers and students prior to administering universal screeners.
  - Use classroom formative assessment practices to adjust initial instruction.
  - Use flexible small group or class-wide interventions. Teachers should use universal screener data to determine what scaffolds are needed so that each student can access grade-level priority content and practices.
  - Select a short window to complete screening to ensure consistent data interpretation.
- Note: DPI does not have a state mandated screening window. Districts are free to establish their own screening window. Keep in mind that some vendors may utilize a

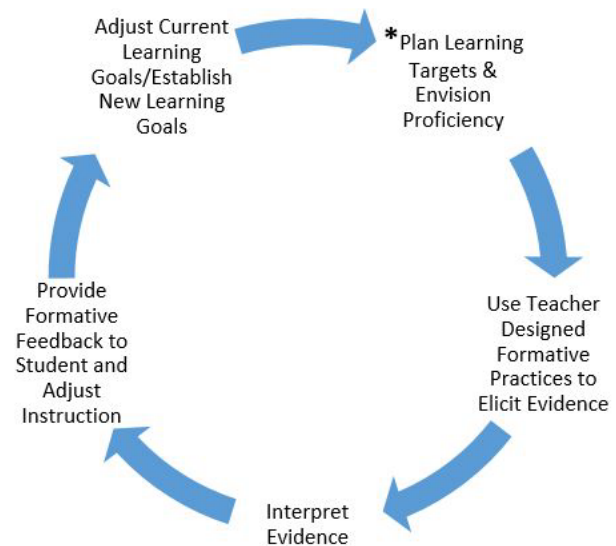
screening window and have established benchmarks based on students being screened during the vendor-prescribed window.

- Create a screening plan:
  - Ensure that all staff are comfortable administering screeners.
  - Begin grade-level progress monitoring for students who have previously received support.
  - Prioritize screening of early/elementary learners.

### Formative Assessment:

Formative assessments are designed to quickly inform instruction by providing specific and immediate feedback through daily, ongoing instructional strategies that are student and classroom centered, and answer the question, "what comes next for student learning?". The formative assessment process outlined in the graphic below demonstrates how an educator can utilize a learning cycle to ensure all students are getting the support they need to progress in their learning.

The formative assessment process allows students and teachers to gain a deep understanding of learning goals and envision proficiency in each standard. Feedback from the evidence of learning is used to adjust instruction and guide every student toward success. This process gives teachers insight into the variety of student access points and is an essential source of data to inform and adjust instruction to meet student needs and accelerate learning.



The most critical aspect of formative assessment is providing feedback to students and teachers and thinking about what comes next for student learning.

An assessment practice is only “formative” if the data is used to inform instructional practice and provide support to ensure student success. To learn more about formative assessment practices, visit the [DPI Formative Assessment website](#), or utilize the [Formative Assessment Professional Learning Modules](#).

### **Summative Assessment:**

Summative assessments provide a summary of student learning. There are a variety of ways that students can demonstrate understanding of grade-level priority content and practices. Educators assess student learning through project-based learning, portfolios of work, and summative assessments. It is important that educators provide quality, standards-based feedback on these summative assessments to engage students in learning.

### **Progress Monitoring:**

Progress monitoring is the standardized process of evaluating progress toward a performance target, based on rates of improvement from frequent (usually weekly or biweekly) assessment of a specific skill. It is used to assess students' academic progress, examine rate of improvement, and evaluate effectiveness of instruction or intervention; it is typically used with both individual students and small groups.

#### **Progress monitoring should:**

- Target single, grade-level measures.
- Reduce in frequency for students with consistent data trends.
- Be deferred to Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) teams to determine progress monitoring plans for students with IEPs.

Be cautious when interpreting progress monitoring data and results. Use this data formatively with additional data sources such as student work samples and classroom performance data to gauge which students are making progress toward meeting the grade-level priority content and practices.

### **Data to Support Instruction**

When educators are planning an upcoming unit, a variety of data should be used to support content decisions. Data sources could include student data, information about grade-level instructional content and practices, information about the prior year's teacher, student observations after initial instruction, and student knowledge of grade-level content and practices.

## **How can student data can help educators?**

Student data can:

- Identify the priority instructional content and practices for upcoming units of study.
- Identify students' learning needs based on those priorities.
- Determine initial focus for universal instruction, including accelerating learning and potential need for flexible small group support.

## **What grade-level instructional content and practices can help to provide unit focus?**

The following instructional content and practices resources can help to align a unit with student need:

- upcoming/current unit of instruction
- textbook/curricular materials
- grade-level and previous grade-level content standards aligned progressions
- teaching and learning goals

## **What information can be gathered from the prior year's teacher about student learning?**

An interview with a prior year's teacher can provide:

- relevant assessment results and data (a variety of formative, interim, and summative)
- information about student performance on grade-level standards
- opportunity for collaboration with vertical team teachers
- opportunity to review local student assessment data in Student Information Systems (SIS) or WISEdash for Districts

## **What data from initial instruction can be used to ensure grade-level learning?**

Student observation data gained from formative assessment practices can help to inform the need for reteaching, one-on-one, and/or small group sessions.

## What quick assessments provide data on student knowledge of grade-level content and practices?

Examples include:

- formative assessment practices
- unit pre-assessment (i.e., on-demand writing samples, short oral reading fluency, and comprehension checks)
- assessments from curricular materials

*This section was adapted from the Iowa Department of Education's "Assessment Protocol for Assessing Initial Student Learning."*

### Additional Resources:

- Achieve Inc. ["Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts"](#)
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. "Assessment and Data Literacy E- Learning Series"
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. "Wisconsin's Strategic Assessment Systems (SAS)"



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