

Keys to Assessment Quality: Questions to Ask of Classroom Assessments

Key 1: Purposes

Does the assessment author have a clear picture of how the assessment results will be used and by whom?

- Is it clear who will use the results and how they will be used? Is the distinction between assessment *of* and *for* learning clear?
- How do the purposes in this assessment fit into a bigger plan that addresses both assessment *of* and *for* learning over time?

Key 2: Targets

Does the assessment author have a clear picture of what she or he is trying to measure?

- Are the student learning targets stated and easy to find?
- Are the student learning targets focused—there aren't too many?
- Are they clear? Would teachers agree on what they mean?
- Are they appropriate? Do they represent the heart of the discipline and worth the instructional and assessment time devoted to them? Is there a clear connection to standards?
- Do the stated learning targets reflect a bigger plan to cover all important learning targets over time? Do they reflect a bigger plan across grade levels—previous and next learning—in a continuous progress curriculum?

Key 3: Design

Has the assessment developer translated the learning targets into high quality assessments that will yield accurate results?

Choosing the Best Assessment Method

Has the assessment method been consciously chosen to fit the learning targets to be assessed and the purpose for the assessment?

- What types of learning targets are being assessed?
- What are the assessment methods used?
- Are the assessment methods best for the learning targets being assessed? Best is a balance between “most accurate” and “practical.”

Finding and Devising Quality Tasks and Questions

- Are the assessment questions or exercises written well—not confusing, the answer to one question doesn’t give away the answer to another, etc.?
- If a performance assessment, is the scoring guide (rubric) clear and does it cover the most important aspects of what makes a quality question?

Sampling

Does the assessment gather enough information to be able to make a generalization about level of student learning on the target? If not, is this assessment part of a bigger plan to gather sufficient information across time/assessments?

Avoiding Potential Sources of Bias and Distortion

Do you notice anything in the assessment or way the assessment is carried out that might not allow a student to be able to adequately demonstrate what he or she knows and can do? This includes unclear targets, unclear purposes, not the best assessment method, problems with tasks and rubrics, inadequate sampling. But, in addition it includes problems with context factors and students.

Key 4: Communication

Has the assessment developer planned for adequately managing information from the assessment and reporting it in ways that will meet the needs of users?

- Has communication been planned as part of the assessment process?
- Do teachers record assessment information accurately over time and appropriately combine it for reporting?
- Will the users of the results understand and find them useful?

Key 5: Student Involvement

Are students involved in the assessment process?

- Would student-involvement components be useful in this case? If so, are they present?

This might include how learning targets were made clear to students, how descriptive feedback was given to students, how students were involved in self-assessment, tracking progress, and setting goals, and how students were involved in communicating about their own learning.

How does the student involvement in this assessment reflect a bigger plan for involving students in their own assessment?