

ASSESSMENT

Visit <http://intranet.cps.k12.il.us/Assessments/> for more information.

In accordance with the Illinois School Accreditation Process, the CPS has developed a coherent system of learning outcomes, instruction based on the outcomes, and an assessment system that is aligned with the outcomes and instruction. The assessments are intended to form the basis for making sound decisions about students and instructional programs.

The website listed at the top of this page includes information on the following assessment-related topics:

- Listings and basic explanations of the tests given within the CPS
- Specific test dates as well as testing requirements for each grade level and those tests that are optional
- Information on how to help students perform well on standardized tests
- Resources for developing effective performance assessments: creating rubrics, selecting performance assessment tasks, and tailoring assessments from a rubric bank
- The Handbook of Kindergarten-Primary Assessment Tools to monitor and chart the progress of younger students

Included in this handbook are the following documents:

“Framing the Learning:” Use this resource to guide you in communicating goals and steps toward the final outcome.

“An Assessment Continuum:” Use this resource to gauge student learning in a variety of ways from the beginning to the end of an instructional unit.

“Award-Winning Performance Assessment:” Use this to evaluate the quality of performance assessments assigned to your students.

Framing the Learning

- We seldom start out for an automobile trip without having in mind a destination and a plan for getting there. If only the driver knows the destination and the plan, the passengers are limited in their ability to make the trip alone or to explain it to someone else. The same is true for learners in the classroom. Information is power, so put students in the driver's seat by letting them know where the learning is headed.
- **Communicate Standards, the Learning Process, & Assessment by**
 - **Explaining what students need to know & be able to do.**
 - **Clarifying why students need to know & be able to do what the standard targets.**
 - **Delineating the activities & assessments students will experience in order to process their learning.**
 - **Articulating how students will demonstrate learning & the criteria to be used for assessment.**
 - **Providing models for processes & products.**

We need to clearly articulate these variables at the beginning of the learning experience and provide opportunities for students to translate them into their own words.

Letting students know the desired outcomes in **age appropriate language** is an important part of **Framing the Learning**. Telling students that they will be working on "telling time" or on "solving problems with irrational numbers" is NOT communicating what they are supposed to know and be able to do. It is simply

telling them the topic. Instead, we want to say something to the effect of, **"By the time we finish this lesson (or unit) you will know and/or be able to..."**. "We will know that you know that and/or able to do that because you will be assessed by" Many learners also need a rationale for "learning this stuff" and unfortunately, "Because I said so!" is not sufficient reason. In fact, for some students the fact that it is "going to be on the test" is not the least bit motivational. We have to be clear in our own minds about the essential understandings we are asking students to learn. In order to "market and sell" the knowledge and skills we want them to acquire, we also need to be clear how what we are asking them to learn is used in the world beyond academics.

LET STUDENTS KNOW:

**WHAT THEY ARE
LEARNING**

**WHY THEY ARE
LEARNING IT**

**HOW THEY WILL
LEARN IT**

**HOW THEY WILL
KNOW THEY KNOW IT**

Framing the Learning



- **Provide the Agenda/Outline for the Day, Unit & Year**

Depending on the age of the students the agenda may be written daily on the board or be included in a unit overview packet. An important consideration is explicitly linking whatever appears on the agenda to the learning outcomes as the students engage in the agenda items.

- **Identify Student Naive Understandings & Misconceptions & Help Students Reframe Their Thinking as Appropriate**

Our students are not the only ones with naive understandings and misconceptions about the world around us and how it works. We all have them. Ours may be about how the stock market and the Dow Jones Average are related, how a fax machine works, what a well-to-do neighborhood in New Delhi looks like, or whether it is better to lease or buy a car. When those discussions are going on around us, we often pretend that we know what people are talking about, or we may tune out. If we are reading about something for which we do not have the prior knowledge to fully understand (we may not even know we do not know enough) we may force connections or just skip that part. That is exactly what students do in classrooms. It is essential that we surface those naive understandings and misconceptions or they will hook new learning to inadequate or incorrect knowledge, perhaps without even knowing that they are doing it.

- **Help Students Access Prior Knowledge & Make Connections**

- To past experiences both inside & outside of school
- Between concepts/activities at transitions
- To future areas of study & to life beyond the classroom

- **Have Students Process, Summarize & Use Learning in Meaningful Ways Which Promote Retention & Transfer**

The remaining pages of this chapter and the following chapter entitled "Learning is NOT a Spectator Sport" offer many ways for you to help students surface misconceptions, build on or fine-tune naive understandings, access prior knowledge, and make connections. There are also strategies for having them process, summarize, and use learning in ways that promote retention and transfer.

**See Chapter IV
"LEARNING IS
NOT A
SPECTATOR
SPORT" for ways
to help students
make
connections!**

An Assessment Continuum from Formative to Summative

It is difficult to distinguish between assignments and assessments in today's classroom because assessment is not an end of the unit event, rather it is integrated into the instruction program. Formative assessment begins even before we begin teaching with preassessment. We gather formative data throughout the unit of study, often in informal ways, to inform our teaching decisions and improve student learning. Each assessment option listed below is either discussed in this chapter or in other sections of this book. Please note page references below for information found in other chapters.



Preassessments

Checks for Understanding

Observations/Anecdotal Records

Student Questions/Comments (In-class and in Journals) See pages 81-83.

Teacher Questions & Prompts (In-class) See pages 54-62.

Assignments (including Homework)

Peer Assessment

Self Assessment

Quizzes

Tests

Performance Tasks

Award Winning Performance Assessment

The Performance Task

Questions to consider in the design of the task:

- **Coherency:** Do the component parts of the task flow logically from one to the other while moving toward completion of the task?
- **Rigor:** Is the task designed at the appropriate level of thinking and matched to the age and grade of the student?
- **Authenticity:** Does the task call for the creation of a product that could be used by a real audience?
- **Validity:** Does the task measure the essential understandings it seeks to measure?
- **Engagement:** Is the task both interesting and worthy of the time and energy it will take to complete? (Wiggins, 1998)

The Task Analysis

- Identify the background knowledge, the levels of understanding, and the skills necessary for successful completion of the task.
- Identify the knowledge, levels of understanding, and skills the entire group or subsets of the group are lacking.
- Based on the task analysis, design the learning experiences in a purposeful and proactive way to prevent frustrations and problems with learning.

The Assessment Criteria

- Criteria can be presented in either a holistic or analytic rubric, a performance assessment task list, or a checklist.
- The essential variables are that the criteria be presented to the students prior to the beginning of the task in a precise and public way.

The Role of Exemplars

- Exemplars are powerful motivators. Teachers find it helpful to provide not only exemplars of work that meets standards, but also to provide examples of work that does not meet standards.
- Providing students with multiple samples of work and having them sort the work into the categories of exceeds, meets, and does not meet standards helps them more explicitly identify the essential components of acceptable work.

