Assessment Purposes

This resource shares purpose, frequency, and examples of the various types of assessments.

Summative/Evaluative Assessments

- **Purpose**: These are usually used as part of an accountability system (national, state, and/or district) or to otherwise inform policy. They are the least flexible of the assessments.
- **Frequency**: Given one time at the end of a set time period (e.g., semester or school year) to evaluate students' performance against a defined set of content standards and to monitor and track student performance as a group.
- **Examples**: State test scores used by a principal to evaluate the success of a new curriculum; SAT scores used by colleges to evaluate college readiness.

Formative/Instructional Assessments

- **Purpose**: As a result of formative assessments, teachers provide corrective feedback and can modify their instruction to improve student understanding.
- **Frequency**: These assessments are conducted by teachers in the classroom for the explicit purposes of diagnosing where students are learning and identifying gaps in their knowledge and understanding. These assessments are small-scale, short-cycle, and embedded within the current unit of instruction. Formative assessments can be differentiated depending on the teacher's judgement about the need for specific information about a student at a given point in time.
- **Examples**: End-of-unit module used by a teacher to check understanding; a daily exit ticket used by a teacher to guide the next day's lesson.

Interim/Benchmark Assessments

- **Purpose**: The results of these assessments can be meaningfully aggregated and reported at a broader level.
- Many interim tests are intended to serve as predictive for an end-of-year assessment, often the state test. To truly be predictive, a test must quantifiably show how results align with end-of-year tests.
- Interim assessments can also serve formative instructional purposes, but only if they are substantially aligned with local curricula and are timed to allow teachers to adapt instruction.[1, 2]
- **Frequency**: These tests are given in cycles throughout the year, usually every six to eight weeks.
- **Examples**- iReady, ACT practice tests, state practice tests

---

[1] Perie, M., Marion, S., & Gong, B. (2009). Moving toward a comprehensive assessment system: A framework for considering interim assessments. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice, 28*(3), 5-13.

[2] Achievement network, (2018). *Teaching comes first: How school district leaders can support teachers, save time, and serve students with a new vision for assessment.*