

Guide for Discussing Assessment

This resource provides a guide to managing emotions around assessment. It outlines key messages that can help clarify the importance of assessment in teaching and learning as well as specific ideas about how to handle possible scenarios that may emerge as stakeholders review assessments embedded in the curriculum.

Key Messages

- We believe our students are capable of performing well on challenging assessments aligned to the rigor of the standards. It is our responsibility to give students meaningful assessment opportunities that prepare them for college and careers.
- For many educators, assessments drive the ways we spend our time in the classroom and our expectations for students.
- We believe that assessment should be tied to daily instruction. Assessments support excellent teaching and learning and give us insight into our students' understanding.
- Teachers need assessments that spotlight grade-level standards and practices. This is critical to illuminating where students are and what they need to do to improve.

Common Challenges or Areas for Discussion

If...	Then...
The group needs to reset or clarify expectations around the role of assessment in curriculum	Return to your core beliefs and instructional vision. Discuss how assessment is reflected in this vision/belief statement.
The group needs to surface conflicting emotions about assessment	Consider these activities: ● Take a Stand: ○ Place the word “positive” on one side of the room and “negative” on the other. ○ Ask participants to think about the word “assessment” and where they stand on the scale of positive to negative. Direct them to stand on the line accordingly. ○ Discuss variance in stances. ● Best Experience: ○ Ask participants to consider their best, most positive experience with assessment—as a teacher or a learner. ○ Generate group criteria for positive assessment experiences.

The group expresses concern about the rigor of new assessments	Discuss: • What fears do we have? Why do we have them? • When we embrace assessment as a starting point for instruction, how will that change our practice? • How do assessments support equity in our schools? • What do common assessments allow us to know and do? Draw upon resources in the Key Messages for Maintaining High Expectations for Students document.
The group expresses concern about assessment overload	Preview the steps to come in Key Action II.3, emphasizing that there will be time in the process to develop a comprehensive assessment strategy. Share pages 14–16 from Achievement Network’s White Paper: Teaching Comes First to spotlight the overarching process. Discuss: • What kinds of professional learning around assessment is needed to best support our teachers? • What systems are already in place to support analysis of assessments and re-teaching? What systems are needed?