



Simsbury Public Schools

2015

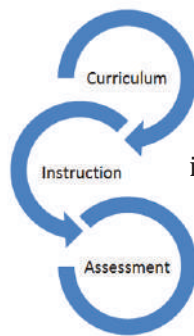
District Assessment Practices & Guidelines

Assessments are tools we use to see what a student knows, so that we can plan the next level of learning, as well as report what progress has been made over the course of each school year. Assessments come in a variety of forms, from formative to summative, beginning to end-of-year performance, to standardized state assessments. Educators want to maximize instructional time in their classrooms; therefore, this assessment framework will guide our decisions and practices across our K-12 program in Simsbury.

Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Erin Murray and Director of Elementary Curriculum, Betsy Gunsalus wrote this document with input from Simsbury Assessment Think Tank (SATT) members.

This document provides the Simsbury Public Schools with guidance for the district's assessment program and can be used as a resource and learning tool by all K-12 educators in Simsbury.

Introduction

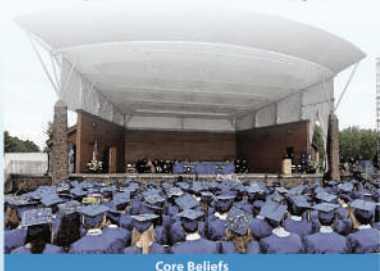


The Simsbury Public Schools provide the rich and rigorous academic foundation required of students in an ever-changing global society. We have a proven track record of outstanding academic achievement across the disciplines in our K-12 program. Our curriculum focuses on 21st century college and career readiness by emphasizing problem solving, critical and creative thinking, artistic expression, physical/emotional wellness, and an appreciation of diversity. We believe that all students deserve a guaranteed, viable, and relevant learning experience that encompasses the learning standards at each grade level.

As a result of legitimate concerns raised from teachers, students, parents, community members, and state officials regarding the stressors associated with "too much testing," the Simsbury Public Schools applied for and received an assessment reduction grant from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). Under the direction of Erin Murray, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching & Learning, and Betsy Gunsalus, Director of Elementary Curriculum, thirty-four educators, inclusive of teachers, instructional leaders, and administrators, were recruited from across the district to participate in the Simsbury Assessment Think Tank (SATT).

As a district that values continuous improvement, the SATT presented an opportunity for our district to create a series of recommendations that will guide improvement efforts across the district. The charge for the committee was to evaluate student assessments, determining the minimal number of assessments that educators and students need to serve essential diagnostic, instructional, and accountability purposes, emphasizing quality over quantity and a balance of assessment that informs instruction, measures outcomes, and communicates student performance. We believe that as our practice becomes more effective, assessment reduction and refinement will result.

District Vision for the Simsbury Public Schools
The Simsbury Public Schools cultivate the mind, body, and character of each student. We engage students with a meaningful and rigorous academic foundation so that they can contribute to a global society with integrity, compassion, and resilience.



Core Beliefs

We believe in...

- Challenging expectations
- High standards
- Passion for lifelong learning
- Academic and extracurricular experiences that emphasize intellectual, physical, artistic, and social/emotional well-being
- Collaboration and communication among families and school personnel
- Building relationships between staff, students, and community
- Family and community partnerships
- Continuous improvement and excellence

Guiding Beliefs About Assessment

- Assessments are streamlined and have a clear purpose and alignment to the grade-level or course standards.
- Assessments should not outweigh the amount of time spent on teaching and learning.
- A balanced approach to assessment is a central element in the overall quality of teaching and learning.
- Formative assessments guide instruction, interim assessments monitor student learning, and summative assessments measure student growth and achievement.
- Assessments are purposefully distributed within and across content areas.
- Assessments include traditional skill-based assessments, as well as performance-based assessments.
- Teachers provide timely feedback to help students set, monitor, and achieve learning goals.

The Importance and Purpose of Assessment

Assessments are tools educators use to see what students know and are able to do so that educators can plan the next level of learning, as well as report what progress has been made over the course of each school year. Assessments come in a variety of forms, and the results of assessment determine whether or not the goals of education are being met. Educators need to maximize instructional time in the classroom; therefore, this assessment framework guides educators' decisions and practices across Simsbury's K-12 academic program.

Assessment provides:

Students with:

- Opportunities to demonstrate their understanding
- Feedback on their knowledge and performance
- Information to set learning goals

Teachers with:

- Information to improve the effectiveness of instruction
- Results to measure student learning and to communicate individual performance to students, parents/guardians, and the public

Instructional Leaders with:

- Information to make decisions about programs, curriculum, and resources
- Descriptions of student performance to evaluate growth and achievement and to ensure accountability

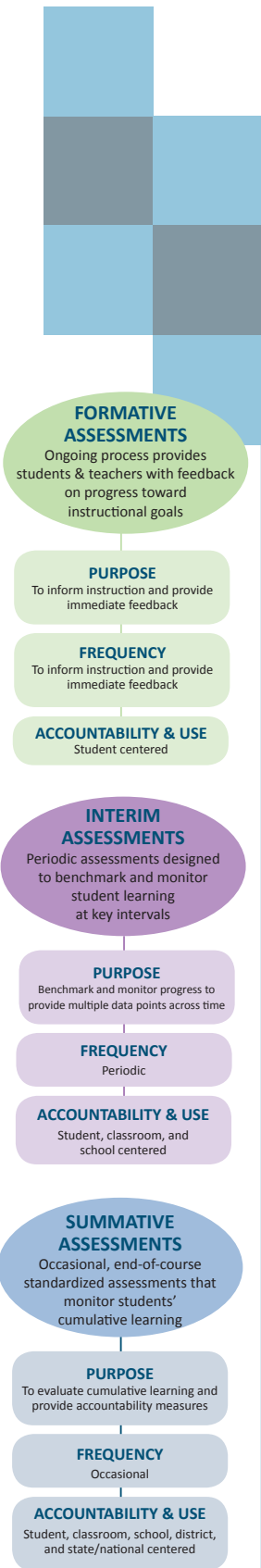
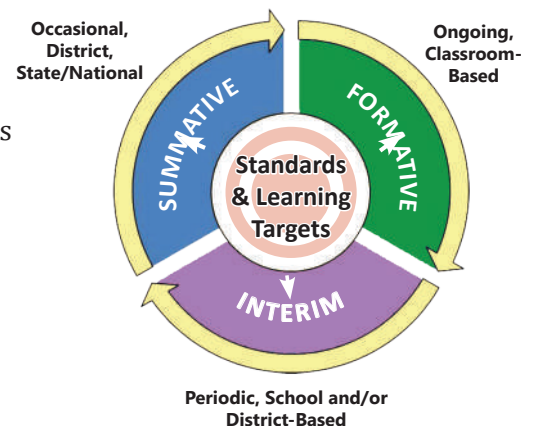
Parents/Guardians and Community Members with:

- Knowledge of what schools are teaching and students are learning
- Student performance data relative to learning standards

A Balanced Approach to Assessment

A balanced approach to assessment is a central element in a coherent educational experience. Within a balanced approach to assessment, educators strategically use a series of assessments designed to inform and evaluate the teaching and learning cycle. The series includes formative, interim, and summative assessments.

A balanced assessment system consists of well-aligned formative, interim, and summative assessment measures.



Criteria and Design of High-Quality Assessment

To ensure quality within a balanced approach to assessment, the following criteria should guide the development and review of assessment practices. When used effectively, these criteria guarantee a comprehensive overview of students' growth and achievement. High-quality formative, interim, and summative assessments are measured against these specific criteria:

Criteria	Definition	Guiding Questions
Clear Purpose	Understand the purpose and how the results will be used	What's the purpose?
Clear Learning Target(s)	Align the assessment to the standards	What standards are we assessing? Does the teaching align with the assessed standards?
Quality Assessment	Design the assessment to allow students to demonstrate the targeted skills and knowledge	How can we assess the standards in the most effective and efficient method? Is the correct scoring measure being used to evaluate the standards?
Proper Assessment Administration	Ensure the assessment design, accommodations, modifications, and environment are conducive to student success	How will we provide testing conditions that even the playing field for all students? How do we maximize a student's ability to perform well?
Effective Communication of Results	Share results with stakeholders in a timely manner	How will we share results for maximum impact? Is the score report/feedback easily understood?

Your Responsibility Around Assessment Practices

As a Student

- Actively prepare to demonstrate mastery of the learning outcomes
- Use feedback from assessments to set goals to improve performance
- Take opportunities to provide meaningful feedback to teachers about assessments

As a Parent/Guardian

- Support the academic growth of students through communication and partnership with the school

Simsbury Public Schools Assessments at a Glance

Assessment	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Curriculum-Embedded Assessments TYPE: formative/interim/summative PURPOSE: to measure application of content and skills	Ongoing throughout the school year												
Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2) TYPE: interim PURPOSE: to inform reading instruction	x	x	x	x									
Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) TYPE: summative PURPOSE: to measure reading comprehension skills				x	x	x	x	x	x				
Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) Science TYPE: summative PURPOSE: to measure achievement against CT Science Standards						x			x				
STAR Math TYPE: interim/summative PURPOSE: to measure academic progress in mathematics			x	x	x	x	x						
Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT) TYPE: summative PURPOSE: to measure college readiness									x		x	x	
Connecticut Aptitude and Performance Test (CAPT) Science TYPE: summative PURPOSE: to measure achievement against CT Science Standards											x		
Advanced Placement Test (AP) TYPE: summative PURPOSE: to measure application of content and skills											x	x	x
Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) TYPE: summative PURPOSE: to measure college readiness												x	x
Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBAC) TYPE: summative PURPOSE: to measure achievement against CT Core Standards				x	x	x	x	x	x			x	

Glossary of Assessment Terms

Anchors

Student work samples that demonstrate levels of student performance

Authentic Assessment Task

A measurement task designed to simulate or replicate real world challenges

Benchmark Assessment

A developmentally appropriate assessment/performance task most often developed within a school district and administered to students at particular intervals of the school year; allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills; its data is used by teachers to inform future instruction and measure progress in relation to content essential learning outcomes (ELOs)

Common Assessment

An assessment typically created collaboratively by a team of teachers responsible for the same grade or subject area and administered across student groups or classes. A common assessment is a guaranteed experience; its data may be used by teachers to measure progress in relation to content ELOs

Curriculum

Comprehensive written plan (program of studies) composed of multiple units developed to honor CT standards and content standards

Data

A collection of information about students used to drive educational decisions

Diagnostic Assessment

Assessments administered prior to instruction to check students' prior knowledge and identify misconceptions, interests, or learning-style preferences

Essay

The development of a written set of coherent ideas into an argument or explanation

Essential Learning Outcome

The targeted knowledge and skills teachers commit themselves to in order to help students attain academic success

Formative Assessment

Assessment method used to guide instructional decisions and to provide timely feedback to students

Performance Task

An exercise that measures a student's ability to transfer knowledge to a new, complex situation

Prerequisite Knowledge and Skill

The knowledge and skill required to accomplish the goals of a unit in a culminating and complex performance task

Prompt

A non-authentic (constrained to school setting), open-ended, written performance task

Quiz

A brief assessment of discrete knowledge or skill

Rubric

Scoring tool that clearly communicates key traits to be assessed and the key features of the levels of performance; used to provide feedback to students

Standardized Assessment

Any assessment that has uniform conditions and protocols for all students

Standards

The essential knowledge and skills students need to master in a grade level and content area

Summative Assessment

A tool used to determine whether or not a student has mastered knowledge and skills taught within a given time frame

Transfer

The ability to apply one's knowledge to a new situation

References and Resources

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Oregon Department of Education. (2014). *Assessment Guidance*.

Stiggins, Rick. (2008). *Assessment Manifesto: A Call for the Development of Balanced Assessment Systems*. Portland, OR: Educational Testing Service.

Wiggins, Grant and McTighe, Jay. (2004). *The Understanding By Design Professional Development Workbook*. ASCD, Alexandria, VA.

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Moving Forward

When the SATT initially met, the committee members engaged in professional learning: reading, analyzing, and discussing relevant research about assessment literacy practices. They went on to design and conduct a survey, and ultimately, they analyzed the feedback from teachers, students, and parents/guardians. Through the survey results, the group identified trends, patterns, and recommendations. As a result of engaging in this process, they audited SPS assessments by grade, content, and course within the core academic areas of Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

The members of the SATT recognize and appreciate the efforts, commitment, and crucial role of teachers in this work around assessment. As principals, department supervisors, teacher leaders, and teachers review the SATT recommendations, the team remains committed to reconvening as a committee and examining how these outcomes play out over the course of the next two years.