



# LEARNING POINT

## What constitutes a high-quality, comprehensive, balanced assessment system?

### Students are assessed in public education for numerous reasons, including:

- instructional monitoring
- grading
- program selection
- program evaluation
- accountability
- instructional placement
- learning diagnostics
- and many others

### Various types of assessment items can be used in public education:

- selected response
- written response
- performance tasks
- interviews

### Assessments can be delivered different ways:

- paper and pencil
- online (computer, tablet)
- face to face

### Know your purpose

In order for assessment to be done well, the purpose, types of items chosen, and delivery method chosen,

must fit well with the particular learning targets. Not all learning targets are assessed equally well by all item types and delivery methods.

High-quality assessments are designed for a specific purpose or purposes. If those assessments are used for things that they weren't designed for, the results may not be valid or reliable.

An assessment system is in balance when appropriate assessment information, in terms of both the type of information and quantity of

information, is provided to all relevant stakeholders.

### This balance requires:

1. Good learning target-assessment method match between the learning objectives and
2. use of a variety of assessment methods
3. Scheduling an appropriate amount of assessment throughout the school year.

## To learn more

**Three C's of a Balanced Assessment System**  
[michiganassessmentconsortium.org/resource/other-resources](http://michiganassessmentconsortium.org/resource/other-resources)

**Stiggins, Rick. Assessment Manifesto – A Call for the Development of Balanced Assessment Systems**  
[tinyurl.com/assessment-manifesto](http://tinyurl.com/assessment-manifesto)

**Stiggins, Rick. Balanced Assessment Systems: Redefining Excellence in Education**  
[tinyurl.com/defining-excellence](http://tinyurl.com/defining-excellence)

## Assessment for learning; assessment of learning

Educators often talk about two types of assessment:

1. Assessment for learning — assessment that takes place as part of the instructional process to monitor student progress and adjust instructional activities. Assessment practices for learning are formative in nature.
2. Assessment of learning — assessment that takes place at the conclusion of after the learning activities have been completed to verify that students have met the learning targets. Assessments of learning are summative in nature.

Both types of assessment are important in a balanced assessment system. However, assessment tools for learning and assessment tools of learning often are often built differently and are not simply interchangeable with one another.

## Three Cs of a balanced assessment system

When it comes to implementation, a comprehensive evaluation system is:

**Comprehensive** — meaning a variety of high-quality assessment tools and practices are being used — including both formative and summative approaches; assessments collectively meet all purposes for assessment; and both teachers and students are engaged and proficient in assessment.

**Coherent** — meaning all elements of the assessment system are coordinated and measure the same skills; curricula, assessment, instruction and professional learning are aligned.

**Continuous**—meaning assessment occurs continuously, using a variety of formal and less formal assessment methods that measure student progress on an on-going basis.

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### Key Terms

(See extended definitions at [tinyurl.com/MAC-Literacy](http://tinyurl.com/MAC-Literacy).)

- Selected response
  - Written response
  - Performance tasks
  - Formative
  - Summative
  - Assessment for learning
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**“The challenge for schools is designing a balanced assessment system using the strengths of summative, interim, and formative assessment to address instructional, accountability, and learning needs.”**

**-Tracy A. Huebner, Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, West Ed**

*The Michigan Assessment Consortium’s Assessment Learning Network ALN, is a professional learning community consisting of members from MI’s professional education organizations; the goal of the ALN is to increase the assessment literacy of all of Michigan’s professional educators.*