



EAST LYME PUBLIC SCHOOLS ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Purpose of Assessment: Why do we assess?

Assessment has an important and varied role in East Lyme Public Schools. Assessments are used to inform educators, parents and students regarding overall progress. Assessments answer the question: "How well do we teach?" Assessment measures the attainment of learning and provides data that is used formatively to make changes in curriculum or instruction for individual students or group of students. Teachers use assessments to make decisions about instruction, grades, eligibility for support services and placement.

When assessing student learning, the *why* should precede *how*. The three general purposes of assessments are:

1. To inform and improve instruction
2. To screen/identify for interventions and enrichment (supports)
3. To measure outcomes

Components of Assessment System: How do we assess?

¹ Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Washington D.C. 2010

East Lyme educators and administrators use a Balanced Assessment System to determine the quality of individual, school, and district education. A Balanced Assessment System includes both the components of content standards and assessment measures. They are organized within a system that has coherence and balance throughout the district and honors the growth of the whole child.

What is a Balanced Assessment System?

- A balanced assessment system includes content standards and assessments.
- Content standards describe clearly what should be learned (knowledge, skills, competencies, behaviors, habits of mind, etc.), and a level of achievement as well (are students to be able to understand the knowledge, apply it, etc.).
- Assessments are constructed to measure students' attainment of the content standards (knowledge, skills, competencies, behaviors, habits of mind, etc.), and report on their level of achievement in clear and useful ways.
- The system is balanced appropriately between accountability and support of learning. This typically means that there are other purposes in addition to accountability, and other assessments in addition to the state's once-a-year summative assessment.

**Adapted from Council of Chief State School Officers and Renaissance Learning*

Every assessment of learning tells us two things: what students know and are able to do in a given moment and what teaching practices were effective in order to get children to grow. Both are valuable in helping us to meet the needs of all learners and encourage best teaching practices.

A balanced system encompasses several layers of assessment:

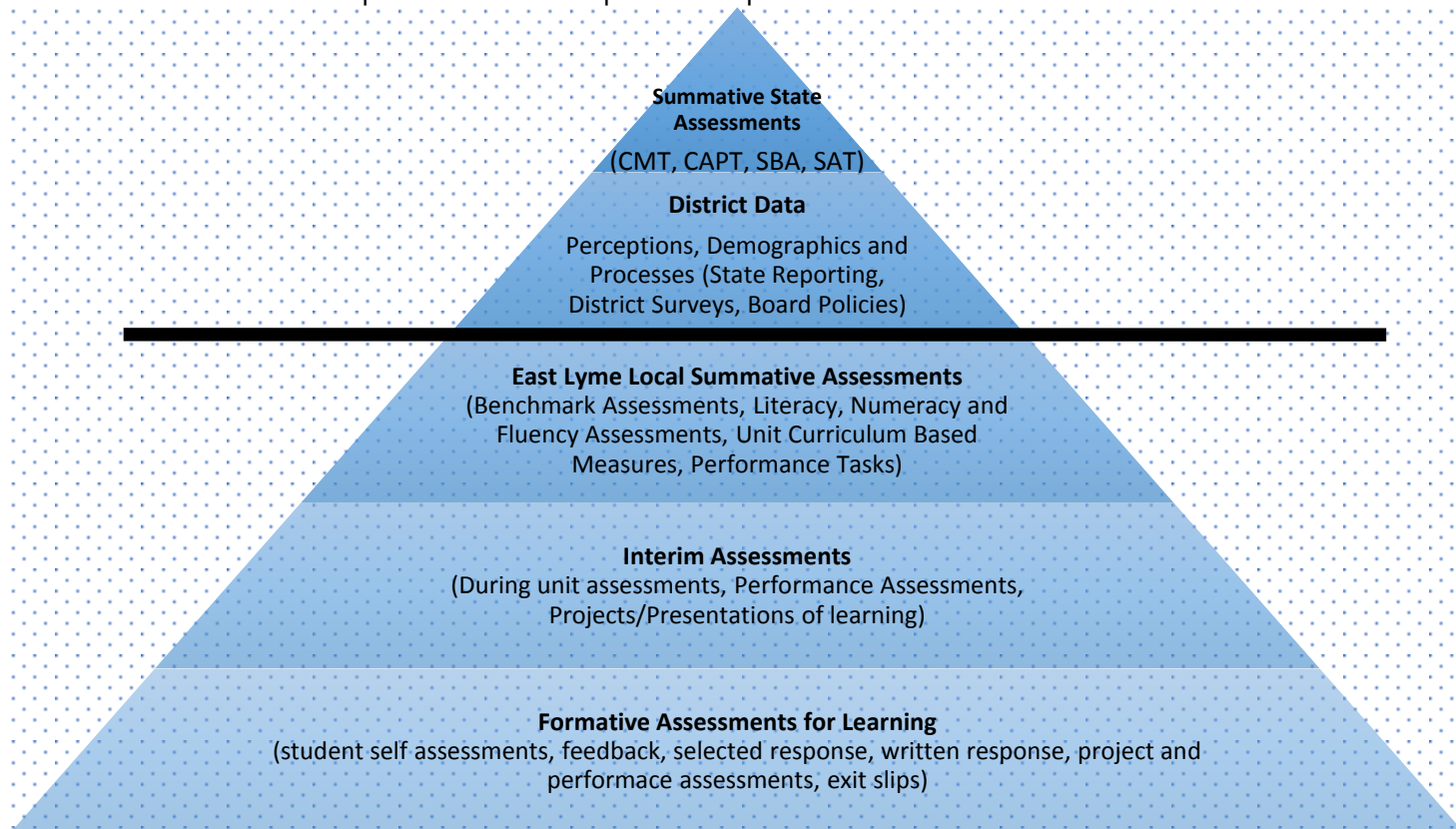
- At the **district level**, balance reflects a continuum of assessment tools whose data correlate and measure all dimensions of student learning rather than focusing on a single domain.
- At the **school or grade level**, balance requires the use of multiple measures/formative tools to gain a big picture view of student performance. It includes standardized tests, typical classroom assessments, as well as informal observation. The data is used to monitor the progress of a class or cohort of students often to inform whole group instruction or curriculum adjustments.
- At the **individual/classroom level**, balanced assessments are used to form instructional groupings, monitor progress, determine a student's specific learning needs, and provide opportunities for students to self-assess and reflect on their learning. Multiple measures (formal and informal) are used to guide decision-making.

Formative assessment is a **process** used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes.¹ Key features of this definition are:

- Formative assessment is a *process*, not any particular test.

¹ Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Washington D.C. 2010

- It is used not just by teachers but also by *both teachers and students*.
- Formative assessment takes place *during instruction*.
- It provides *assessment-based feedback* to teachers and students.
- The function of this feedback is to help teachers and students make *adjustments* that will improve students' achievement of intended curricular aims.
- The formative assessment process should help teachers personalize instruction for students.



¹ Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), Washington D.C. 2010