

Restarting and Reinventing School: Learning in the Time of COVID and Beyond

Priority 3: Assess What Students Need

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Across the United States, state education agencies and school districts face daunting challenges and difficult decisions for restarting schools as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. As state and district leaders prepare for what schooling will look like in 2020 and beyond, there is an opportunity to identify evidence-based policies and practices that will enable them to seize this moment to rethink school in ways that can transform learning opportunities for students and teachers alike.

Our current system took shape almost exactly a century ago, when school designs and funding were established to implement mass education on an assembly-line model organized to prepare students for their “places in life”—judgments that were enacted within contexts of deep-seated racial, ethnic, economic, and cultural prejudices. In a historical moment when we have more knowledge about [human development and learning](#), when society and the economy demand a more [challenging set of skills](#), and when—at least in our rhetoric—there is a greater [social commitment to equitable education](#), it is time to use the huge disruptions caused by this pandemic to reinvent our systems of education. The question is: How can we harness these understandings as we necessarily redesign school? How can we transform what has not been working for children and for our society into a future that carries us forward into a more equitable future?

This section is part of a larger report, *Restarting and Reinventing School: Learning in the Time of COVID and Beyond*, that focuses on how policymakers as well as educators can support equitable, effective teaching and learning regardless of the medium through which that takes place. The full report provides an overarching framework to inform the restart of schools while also providing a long-term vision that can guide leaders toward new and enduring ways to address educational quality and inequity. It illustrates how policymakers and educators can:

1. Close the digital divide
2. Strengthen distance and blended learning
3. Assess what students need
4. Ensure supports for social and emotional learning
5. Redesign schools for stronger relationships
6. Emphasize authentic, culturally responsive learning
7. Provide expanded learning time
8. Establish community schools and wraparound supports
9. Prepare educators for reinventing schools
10. Leverage more adequate and equitable school funding

This section provides research, state and local examples, and policy recommendations for how policymakers and educators can assess what students need. For the full report, go to <http://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/restarting-reinventing-school-covid>.

Priority 3: Assess What Students Need

As students return to school in the fall, they will be bringing with them a wide range of learning experiences from the previous 6 months since COVID-19-related school closures began. Even students who were in the same class when schools initially closed will have had different home lives, experiences, and responsibilities during school closures; different access to devices and support for distance learning; and different emotional reactions to the ongoing and unfolding situation.

Some may have been in daily online learning with a well-planned curriculum supported by teachers and counselors since the week after schools closed, while others may have had only hurriedly assembled instructional packets to complete on their own during this time. Some may have sheltered in place safely with all of their needs met, while others may have experienced illness and the loss of loved ones, or their families may have lost employment, housing, and health care. Teachers will need to take stock of all of students' experiences and needs—social, emotional, health-related, potentially trauma-related, and academic—as they build safe and welcoming communities in person or online (or a combination of both) when school begins.

What Students Need

The ongoing pandemic will have lasting impacts on students' social, emotional, and physical wellness, all of which can influence student learning moving forward. Students may have lost loved ones, lost homes and food security due to family members' unemployment, and been negatively impacted by social isolation over the past several months. A panel of assessment experts convened by the Center on Reinventing Public Education identified a set of [principles](#) for effective assessment as schools reopen. They emphasized that educators should prioritize understanding student experiences, forging caring connections, surfacing considerations of what students have had the opportunity to learn, and connecting students to the appropriate supports within school and community systems.

A first step in assessing students' needs will include evaluating their contexts and their social and emotional needs in order to make appropriate supports available and to foster strong, trusting relationships. (See also "[Priority 4: Ensure Supports for Social and Emotional Learning](#)" and "[Priority 5: Redesign Schools for Stronger Relationships](#).") Regardless of what school reopening looks like, students' success depends on their entry into a caring community and on academic supports that focus on *growth over remediation*, taking a forward-looking view of learning status and progress rather than a deficit-oriented view of student abilities that starts off the year under a cloud of discouragement and self-doubt. [Instructionally relevant assessment processes](#) can help teachers and students recognize, celebrate, and leverage current student understanding and skills to propel student thinking forward through opportunities for feedback, reflection, and continuous improvement.

Because learning happens progressively—that is, we learn by building on our current and prior thinking, rather than just adding new knowledge to a blank slate—knowing how to surface and grow from these learning experiences is essential for supporting all learners, including those with unique learning needs such as students with disabilities, English learners, students placed in foster care, and students experiencing homelessness. Diagnostic and formative assessment processes—those that provide feedback both to teachers about what students have learned and are ready to learn

next and to students on *how* they can improve their learning—can play a tremendous role in student learning and performance gains when they are tailored to individual student experiences and the specific learning progressions students are working along.

What Policymakers and Educators Can Do

State and local leaders have an opportunity to support systems of assessment that both take account of students' broader needs and support their learning. With respect to learning supports, it is critical to prioritize curriculum-embedded formative assessment processes—which research shows can lead to some of the largest learning gains when coupled with supportive instructional practices.¹ This shift from a measurement culture to a learning culture is imperative now, so that we can support diverse learners well: It paves the way for assessment systems that are designed to transform learning and close opportunity and achievement gaps, rather than just surface them, as many current assessment systems do.

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State and local leaders should consider these recommendations to support meaningful assessments as students restart school and to incentivize the use of effective formative and diagnostic assessment processes moving forward.

Ensure that schools have the time and tools to assess the needs of the whole child

Following the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning's (CASEL) [Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Roadmap for Reopening School](#), school leaders can help engage students and staff to learn about what they have been experiencing as well as identify the partners, resources, and community assets that they can leverage to support all students across learning settings.

In Oregon, as part of Portland Public Schools' proposed [reopening plan](#), the first 2 weeks of school are dedicated to virtual activities to prepare staff, students, and staff for the new year of learning ahead. One of these activities will be for teachers to connect individually with students and families to learn about their social and emotional needs and experiences during the months that school was closed. States such as Kentucky provide [detailed guidance](#) on how to begin these conversations, offering advice on how school communities can grieve their losses while also maintaining a sense of optimism and resilience.

In order to understand the strengths and needs of all students, schools will need a collaborative process to help them learn from and leverage the insights of diverse members of the school community, going beyond traditional school leadership positions. There are multiple ways to accomplish this, but the goal should be to include representation from students, families, educators, and community partners (e.g., early childhood, after-school, extended learning, and youth development programs, as well as mental health providers) to plan for and tailor social and emotional supports based on the specific experiences of each school community.

This may be done by setting up structures for connecting and communicating, such as phone calls, video conferences, or surveys, and by creating a transition coalition that includes students, as recommended by CASEL. (See Figure 3.1.) Back-to-school surveys, such as those created by [Panorama](#), and measures of social, emotional, and academic well-being, such as those created by California’s [CORE Districts](#), can be helpful both at the start of school and throughout the year.

Figure 3.1 Sample Questions for Stakeholder Engagement

Put it Into Practice

Learn From Families, Students, and Community Partners

The sample questions below can be used as a starting point for phone/video conferences or written surveys that engage stakeholders in sharing their perspectives.

- What has your experience been like since school has been closed?
- What is on your mind as you think about next school year? What are your biggest hopes or worries?
- What has our school done well during the past months, and what could we have done better?
- How might you like to contribute as we prepare to transition to a new school year?
- What will help you learn this upcoming year?
- What can we do to make school feel even more like a community that cares for you?

Source: CASEL. (2020). *An initial guide to leveraging the power of social and emotional learning as you prepare to reopen and renew your school community.*

Some states, such as [Louisiana](#) and [North Dakota](#), are advising schools to implement [universal social, emotional, and behavioral health screening](#). Universal screening is conducted for [all students](#) (including those already receiving special education services or other supports) and repeated in the fall, winter, and spring. Optimally, screening occurs within a tiered system of support to enable educators to connect students with what they need.²

[School reopening surveys](#) can also be used to determine the needs of students and families. In addition, informal assessment processes may involve engaging students in discourse, written and oral reflections on their experiences, reading and writing activities that are culturally and linguistically sustaining, use of math in low-stakes problem-solving, and other instructionally embedded strategies that can help teachers and students understand how students’ out-of-school experiences are influencing their thinking and approach to learning while providing an opportunity for teachers to build caring, feedback-oriented relationships with students.

Regardless of the specific approach, schools should create ongoing opportunities for connection and for identifying students who need additional support, taking care to be inclusive of and [give additional focus](#) to students who are English learners, are experiencing homelessness, are undocumented or from mixed-immigration-status families, have a disability, live in rural areas, or are impacted by the juvenile justice or foster care systems.

Some districts are also pioneering new digital solutions to offer continuous feedback to school leaders and educators about students’ social and emotional and additional learning needs. California’s [CORE Districts](#) partnered with Education Analytics to provide districts across the state with a new interactive platform, [Rally](#), that will help teachers and school leaders track data on students’

well-being and academic progress by putting multiple sources of available data in one place. The goal is to support teachers in their responses to the unique needs of each individual student, to address the trauma that many students experience, and to work toward equity and racial justice.

Prioritize assessments that illuminate student growth and learning

When it comes to assessments used for diagnostic purposes, local needs—and particularly those of teachers and students—must be centered. As state and local leaders compile and release guidance about how assessments should be used in the fall, it will be crucial to emphasize the use of tools and instructional tasks that will provide the most useful kinds of information to move student learning forward within the classroom. State and local leaders should emphasize authentic diagnostic and formative assessment approaches rather than decontextualized summative assessments.

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What Are Formative and Diagnostic Assessments?

Experts identify three primary goals of assessments, including:

1. **Assessment of learning:** Assessments that are used to monitor student progress at the end of instruction (e.g., summative assessments).
2. **Assessment for learning:** Assessments that are used to directly surface current student understanding and provide feedback for next steps in learning (e.g., diagnostic and formative assessment processes).
3. **Assessment as learning:** Assessments used for either summative or formative purposes that take a performance-based approach, asking students to show what they know and can do by actually doing certain tasks (e.g., writing an essay or designing an experiment), thus engaging students in the learning process while surfacing student understanding.

Formative assessment, or assessment *for* learning, is carried out as part of the instructional process for the purpose of adapting instruction to improve learning. Formative assessment is contrasted with summative assessment, which measures the outcomes of learning that has already occurred.

Diagnostic assessment is a particular type of formative assessment intended to help teachers identify students' specific knowledge, skills, and understanding in order to build on each student's strengths and specific needs. Because of their domain specificity and design, diagnostic tools can guide curriculum planning in more specific ways than most summative assessments.

Combined with insights from diagnostic assessments that help teachers identify students' current thinking and chart next steps, **formative assessment processes** allow students and teachers to monitor and adjust learning together, in real time, as they progress along an identified path.

Formative assessment processes provide feedback both to the teacher and the learner; the feedback is then used to adjust ongoing teaching and learning strategies to improve students' attainment of curricular learning targets or goals on a day-to-day and minute-to-minute basis. Formative assessment processes are fundamentally grounded in relationships, providing participatory ways for students and teachers to attend to the full set of student experiences. These processes are linked to instruction and designed to support growth, as suggested in the following table.

Instructionally relevant assessment that supports growth looks <i>less like...</i>	Instructionally relevant assessment that supports growth looks <i>more like...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardized, multiple-choice tests or banks of items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contextualized opportunities for students to make their thinking (not just right or wrong answers) visible to inform next steps in learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment opportunities that happen entirely separately from learning experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embedded checks on student understanding that happen as part of learning sequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments that assume a single right answer and a dominant way of knowing as the goal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment processes that illuminate facets of student thinking and understanding that build complex cognition in multiple ways
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on assigning grades and scores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on descriptive feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments that occur after learning has occurred and focus on locating deficits for remediation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes that treat current student understanding as a resource for extending learning and making connections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments that focus on content as the primary goal for learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments that integrate content and disciplinary practices so that students develop and consider evidence as part of acquiring knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes that focus on mastery of discrete learning goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes that take into account learning progressions and curricular models of learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes that focus on educators and policymakers as the consumers of assessment data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes that include students' participation in their learning through self-assessment, reflection, and goal-setting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the instrument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the process

Provide access to diagnostic assessment tools that pinpoint student thinking relative to learning progressions and provide actionable guidance over time for how to move students along. Diagnostic assessments are only as useful as the student thinking they surface. It is essential that the assessments used give students the opportunity to make their thinking—and not just right or wrong answers—visible and that they include careful interpretation guidance that helps teachers and students understand which next steps in learning will move student thinking forward. State and local leaders should consider assessments that include performance tasks, which teachers can build upon and modify to suit their needs, and reports [on individual student progress relative to multiyear learning progressions](#) rather than a focus on percentile scores and rankings.

For example, [California](#) provides districts with a state-approved set of options they may want to consider as part of their assessment strategies for the upcoming school year. The list includes assessments such as the [Developmental Reading Assessment \(DRA\)](#), which provides opportunities to individually assess students through both performance tasks and guided interviews multiple times a year. The DRA connects student performance to strengths, areas for growth, and personalized learning pathways to move forward. It is individually administered to students several times a year, allowing teachers to determine each student’s independent and instructional reading level by evaluating reading engagement, oral reading fluency, and comprehension. The diagnostic DRA Word Analysis assessment provides additional information on how struggling and emerging readers attend to and work with various components of spoken and written words. The resulting individualized plan documents what each student needs to learn next and enables teachers to differentiate instruction and select books at the appropriate level. Teachers can then intentionally “scaffold up” to provide students with the support they need to engage with grade-level texts.

Support locally relevant assessments, rather than selecting a single statewide assessment for all students. Formative assessment processes are an essential part of effective teaching and learning. While states may feel some pressure to provide a statewide measure of student learning early in the year, a summative test that delivers only a set of scores or proficiency levels will not help educators or students as much as tools that diagnose where students are in more fine-grained ways and inform decisions about teaching. Moreover, they distract teachers from valuable instruction time by introducing both testing and preparation time that could be better spent connecting with students, understanding their learning needs, and moving them forward.

Many districts have already chosen and integrated a diagnostic or interim assessment strategy into their curriculum and teaching plans. Preserving access to these existing approaches will allow districts to evaluate where students are in their learning when they return to school—relative to their progress in the prior year—and to follow their progress in the year ahead.

Furthermore, research shows that assessments to support and inform learning are most effective when they are connected to planned curriculum, instructional approaches, and materials for learning. While there are research-based learning progressions that span multiple grade levels in many disciplines, student learning is deeply connected to local contexts—the scope and sequence a district is pursuing, the curriculum teachers are using, and students’ experiences in and outside the classroom.

For example, many diagnostic assessments are linked to specific next steps for teaching that may be embedded in a particular curriculum, such as a culturally relevant classroom library with leveled texts in multiple languages, or a familiar software program that supports practice in particular math skills. A school for newly immigrated students may most need to assess English language development progress for its students, rather than using an inaccessible test in English that provides little information for the teaching needed. This makes it particularly challenging to find a “one-size-fits-all” approach to diagnostic assessments. To be useful, they have to be tied intentionally to local decisions about how student learning is supported and structured.

States could consider providing guidelines while enabling local ownership of which assessments—integrated into curriculum and instructional strategies—are most productive to use. This could include providing guidance about a range of assessment options that might be useful, with considerations for schools and districts to weigh as they determine which is most useful for their context, and/or providing a set of common performance tasks that teachers and schools can decide to implement in instructionally relevant ways.

Do not overassess: Make use of expertise, tools, and data that are already available.

There is an abundance of information about individual and groups of students' progress already available within schools and districts, if educators and leaders are supported in using it. In addition to summative test scores, report cards, teachers' classroom records, and school-level cumulative records, many schools and districts have diagnostic and formative assessment processes in place already. In many cases, these processes are part of their ongoing teaching and learning efforts, and the schools and districts have built capacity and routines to support teachers and administrators in understanding and using the resulting data. Rather than adding new tests, schools and districts should be supported in making effective use of the tools they already have in place, designed to be useful within their local contexts.

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Additionally, individual teachers collected a wealth of information about their students during the 2019–20 school year and should be supported with time and opportunity to share that information with the students' new teachers in the fall. Leaders can intentionally cultivate horizontal and vertical networks across subjects within a grade and across grade-level instructors to ensure that teachers are going into the fall term with the best possible understanding of student learning. Students with learning disabilities and English learners are at particular risk of being overassessed. TESOL has published guidelines for serving English learners in this time of the COVID-19 crisis, including methods for using [informal and performance-based assessments](#) for these students that can minimize the number of sit-down tests they encounter as well as supporting teachers in meeting their instructional needs.

Support acceleration of learning, not remediation

While many districts and educators feel pressure to address learning loss through remedial instruction, research shows that grade retention and “down tracking” actually have the opposite effect: Students who experience these deficit-oriented approaches are more likely to fall further behind their peers, as they are often prevented from engaging with rich curriculum opportunities and are subjected to stigma, which undermines their confidence, motivation, and learning.⁵ Educators and leaders should commit to strategies that focus on scaffolding up: that is, providing students with opportunities to participate in engaging learning opportunities that are within their zone of proximal development, providing appropriate supports and “just-in-time” scaffolds to support strong progress. Informal (and more formal) formative assessment information can be used to identify students' current thinking, skills, and ideas, allowing teachers to provide students with the specific supports to be able to engage with targeted material.

[Tailored acceleration](#) strategies use formative assessments to help teachers explicitly address learning gaps associated with skills that were meant to be previously learned. Linking formative assessments to grade-level concepts can help students make faster progress than remedial courses that provide little opportunity for them to truly catch up. Such strategies are also more successful than plowing through grade-level standards without attention to skill gaps that create failure for many students. (See “[Priority 7: Provide Expanded Learning Time](#)” for additional strategies to support accelerated progress.)

Emphasize actionable feedback as a means for improvement. Some of the [largest gains](#) in student performance come from teachers and students themselves (both self and peers) providing actionable, descriptive feedback using criteria applied to tasks that are grounded in student performance. Most important is that students have the opportunity to respond to this feedback as they practice and revise their work. Conversely, grades and scores often limit student motivation and learning.⁴ Formative assessment processes can accelerate and advance learning for all students if they focus on providing students with detailed and descriptive feedback—rather than scores and grades—about performance and, importantly, how to improve.⁵

State and local leaders can consider ways to increase the footprint of formative assessment processes within their assessment systems, and they can support teachers' knowledge and skills for using these kinds of assessments. Teachers can learn to use both informal processes (e.g., check-ins with students, listening to student discourse, evaluating student-generated artifacts produced as part of a learning cycle, and exit tickets) and formal processes (e.g., structured assignments that are evaluated according to particular criteria and assessments that are administered multiple times throughout the year). In both cases, educators and leaders should emphasize measures that produce descriptive feedback that can improve learning while learning is ongoing, through strategies and tasks that students can engage in to grow toward learning goals and success criteria.

This approach is important for all children and is often best exemplified in early childhood assessments. For example, many early childhood assessments are based on teacher observation of students performing a work-embedded task and produce descriptive feedback that can be shared with children and families. These assessments, such as the [Desired Results](#) assessment used in California, ask teachers to observe students two to three times throughout the year and observe their progress on multiple domains of development, including physical, social and emotional, language and literacy, English language, math and science, and approaches to learning. The rubric used to measure progress helps identify not just whether students are on track, but what the next stage of development might be, and includes a progression of skills that can be measured from infancy to kindergarten. The information gained from the assessment can be used to guide teaching and inform conversations with families.

Promote the use of high-quality performance tasks that provide rich information, not just scores.

Performance-based approaches to assessments can provide students and teachers with information about both student performance relative to learning goals and students' thinking and understanding, which can be leveraged into next steps. This makes such approaches particularly compelling assessment tools, as they can provide avenues for detailed formative feedback

while both holistically surfacing evidence of student thinking and providing learning opportunities through the assessment. Performance assessments are particularly well suited for feedback based on transparent rubrics, which can help students identify how they are progressing and how they

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can grow and improve their knowledge and skills. States can play a variety of roles in incentivizing performance assessments, from making their use a formal requirement (such as Oregon’s [Local Performance Assessment Requirement](#)) to cultivating libraries of vetted performance tasks (such as the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium’s [Tools for Teachers](#)) that can be modified and used locally.

One example of an instrument that uses performance-based assessments to support formative processes is the [Mathematics Assessment Resource Service suite of assessment resources](#), which includes lessons that embed research-based performance tasks in math (Balanced Assessments of Mathematics) that can be used to formatively support student learning. In addition to end-of-instruction performance tasks, these assessment resources provide teachers with [modifiable lessons](#) that embed performance-based formative assessment opportunities, with clear support for teachers around learning goals, interpreting student performance, and next steps for teachers to pursue. These lessons and tasks are grounded in descriptive rubrics rather than scores and prioritize next steps over labeling student performance. Many of these tasks have also been incorporated into the [Acuity diagnostic assessment system](#) that is used by many states and districts.

Invest in teachers’ knowledge and skills for formative assessment

Formative assessment is fundamentally a *process* between students and teachers. No matter which tools are used, effective formative assessment practices depend on teachers who know how to interpret student responses and take next steps to move forward. Research suggests that while teachers often have access to assessment data, they are poorly supported in understanding how to interpret that information and take next steps in response.⁶ Investing in teachers, and their understanding of theories of learning, learning progressions, and formative feedback cycles, is imperative to support student success.

Support ongoing and embedded teacher professional learning that encourages teachers to adopt [culturally responsive and sustaining formative assessment processes](#) as part of their existing teaching responsibilities. Such assessments are responsive to students’ base of experience, respectful of their cultures, and grounded in their learning in the classroom. In many districts, professional learning to support formative assessment practices is limited or missing altogether; is provided primarily by assessment instrument developers and tied to the instruments themselves; or is something teachers have to pay for out of pocket. Given the centrality of formative assessment processes in learning—and the particular urgency around effective formative assessment processes in light of COVID-19—it is essential that states and districts allocate funding and dedicated, sustained time for collaborative teacher learning. This is particularly effective when connected directly to teachers’ practice, such as being centered on task development and student work analysis of tasks that are actually administered in a given teacher’s classroom.

The National Education Association (NEA) has created a micro-credentials site with certification banks on a wide variety of topics to make it easier for educators to access professional learning opportunities. [NEA micro-credentials](#) provide options for educators to participate in a learning community and are performance-based. The [Assessment Literacy](#) certification bank includes six micro-credentials for educators to develop their knowledge and skills to utilize meaningful assessment practices.

Build capacity for meaningful use of assessment information that is already a part of a teacher’s repertoire, rather than introducing new tools with little support for implementation or process. Without attention to assessment literacy and developing teacher practice with formative assessment, there is a limit to how much new assessments and tools can impact learning—and indeed, they may actually detract from meaningful learning. By working in communities of practice centered on student work, teachers can more effectively use the assessment information available to them in their classrooms.

Washington is one example of a state that is dedicating professional learning resources for assessment. For several years, the state has provided a 2-day professional development session for kindergarten teachers at the beginning of the school year related to [WaKIDS](#), the state’s kindergarten readiness assessment. The assessment is linked to the state’s preschool curriculum but has been modified to be more culturally responsive and includes a parent engagement component. In professional development, teachers learn how to conduct objective student observations and how to use the assessment results as a mechanism for parent engagement through one-on-one meetings. The assessment is also used as a means of creating conversations between preschool and kindergarten teachers, who often have limited lines of communication, about fostering student development.

Anticipate moving toward more coherent systems of assessment of, for, and as learning

As education leaders focus on assessment *for* learning in this time of crisis, it may also become possible to start a new conversation about summative assessments, which have typically driven learning in the United States toward decontextualized, multiple-choice modes of learning and teaching that are disconnected from real-world applications of knowledge and out of sync with the demands of a knowledge-based economy and society in which information is exponentially increasing every day.⁷

Ultimately, formative and summative assessments should be coherently linked through a well-articulated model of learning that incorporates learning progressions representing ambitious learning goals, along with intermediate stages and instructional means for reaching those goals.⁸ Both formative and summative assessments should represent these goals and stages well and should foster the kind of instruction that will lead to critical thinking and problem-solving, transfer of knowledge to new situations, and the ability to continue to learn.

[Assessment reform efforts in states such as New Hampshire](#), which have emphasized formative processes and the use of performance tasks for measuring learning more frequently and authentically, may lead the way toward more coherent and meaningful assessment policies across the country. More states are taking advantage of [assessment waivers](#) from the U.S. Department of Education, and the Every Student Succeeds Act is eligible for reauthorization at the end of 2020, which may provide an opportunity to create new ground rules that will allow assessment to become a more useful tool for learning.

Resources

- [Learning as We Go: Principles for Effective Assessment During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (Center on Reinventing Public Education). Based on a consensus panel of experts, this document provides a set of principles that can help schools, districts, and states make decisions about assessments to inform instruction as schools reopen. While these principles can inform good assessment practices in general, they are particularly salient in our current environment.
- [Using Formative Assessments to Create Coherent and Equitable Assessment Systems](#) (University of Colorado Boulder). This brief describes principles and examples for building coherent assessment systems, informed by research and lessons learned from 3 decades of assessment reform.
- [Formative Assessment and Next-Generation Assessment Systems: Are We Losing an Opportunity?](#) (Council of Chief State School Officers). This paper can serve as a catalyst and resource for ongoing conversations and planning. It describes why it is critical to make the distinction that formative assessment is not a tool, but a process true to the practice of effective teaching and learning.
- [Blueprint for Testing: How Schools Should Assess Students During the COVID Crisis](#) (FutureEd). This resource provides guidance on how and when states, school districts, and schools should use assessments to gauge and help accelerate students' learning and provide systems-level insights.
- [Guidance on Diagnostic and Formative Assessments](#) (California Department of Education). This implementation tool assists district leadership in selecting and using diagnostic assessments to understand students' academic needs throughout the school year. It describes approved diagnostic assessments that are aligned to Common Core standards and provides information about how to use the expanded interim and formative assessment tools provided by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium to inform instruction for all students.
- [School Reopening Surveys](#) (Panorama Education). These reopening surveys can invite students and families into the reopening process as well as enable districts to determine those students and families most in need of additional in-person instruction.
- [The Informal Formative Assessment Cycle as a Model for Teacher Practice](#) (STEM Teaching Tools, University of Washington Institute for Science and Math Education). This research brief summarizes and illustrates, through examples of informal assessment conversations, the nature of informal formative assessment and its connection to student learning.
- [Beyond "Misconceptions": How to Recognize and Build on Facets of Student Thinking](#) (STEM Teaching Tools, University of Washington Institute for Science and Math Education). This resource presents things to consider; discusses how to attend to equity; and provides recommendations for actions educators can take to be able to recognize, build on, and respond to the range of ideas, or facets of students' thinking, during instruction.
- [NEA Micro-Credentials in Assessment Literacy](#) (National Education Association). The NEA micro-credentials site was created to make it easier for educators to access professional learning opportunities. The Assessment Literacy certification bank includes six micro-credentials for educators to develop their knowledge and skills to utilize meaningful assessment practices.
- [Best Practices in Universal Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Screening: An Implementation Guide](#) (School Mental Health Collaborative). This guide summarizes research-based best practices and resources for selecting, implementing, and using data from universal social, emotional, and behavioral screening.

Endnotes

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