

Achieve Institute Agenda

Virtual • August 16–18, 2021

All times listed are in Mountain Time.

Monday, August 16

9:00–10:30 a.m.	Keynote —Nicole M. Dimich <i>Assessment That Cultivates Hope, Efficacy, and Achievement</i>
10:30–10:45 a.m.	Break
10:45 a.m.–12:15 p.m.	Block 1 Sessions —Assessment Architecture
12:15–1:00 p.m.	Break/Lunch
1:00–2:30 p.m.	Block 2 Sessions —Assessment Architecture
2:30–2:45 p.m.	Break
2:45–3:45 p.m.	Panel Discussion — <i>Presenters provide practical answers to your most pressing questions.</i>

Tuesday, August 17

9:00–10:30 a.m.	Keynote —Cassandra Erkens <i>Getting to the Good Stuff: Student Investment</i>
10:30–10:45 a.m.	Break
10:45 a.m.–12:15 p.m.	Block 3 Sessions —Instructional Agility
12:15–1:00 p.m.	Break/Lunch
1:00–2:30 p.m.	Block 4 Sessions —Instructional Agility
2:30–2:45 p.m.	Break
2:45–4:15 p.m.	Block 5 Sessions —Student Investment

Wednesday, August 18

9:00–10:00 a.m.	Role-Alike Networking — <i>An expert-facilitated discussion with others who share similar responsibilities</i>
	Central Office —Tom Schimmer
	Building Administration —Cassandra Erkens
	Elementary Teachers —Nicole M. Dimich
	Secondary Teachers —Katie White
10:00–10:15 a.m.	Break
10:15–11:45 a.m.	Keynote —Tom Schimmer <i>Grading From the Inside Out</i>

Day 1 Sessions

Assessment Architecture

Block 1—10:45 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

Nicole M. Dimich	Designing Effective Assessments in Three Steps
Cassandra Erkens	Designing Assessments for 21st Century Skills
Tom Schimmer	Reassessment the Right Way
Katie White	Ensuring Powerful Learning Through Soft-Edged Assessment

Block 2—1:00–2:30 p.m.

Nicole M. Dimich	Developing Rich, Culturally Relevant Items and Tasks
Cassandra Erkens	Rubrics that Work: Agency, Accuracy, and Achievement
Tom Schimmer	Assessing Student Work: Most Recent, Most Frequent, or Most Accurate?
Katie White	How Changing One Thing Can Change Everything: The Power of Learning Continuums

Day 2 Sessions Instructional Agility

Block 3—10:45 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

Nicole M. Dimich	Assessing Social Competence: Social and Emotional Elements of Assessments
Cassandra Erkens	Instructional Agility
Tom Schimmer	Effective Leadership in Assessment and Grading
Katie White	Feedback That Works

Block 4—1:00–2:30 p.m.

Nicole M. Dimich	The Role of Assessment in Developing Multitiered Systems of Support
Cassandra Erkens	Making Homework Count
Tom Schimmer	Redefining Student Accountability
Katie White	Flexible Assessment in Shifting Contexts

Block 5—2:45–4:15 p.m.

Nicole M. Dimich	Analyzing Student Work to Plan Instruction and Intervention
Cassandra Erkens	Engineering Engaging Conversations
Tom Schimmer	Assessing Critical Thinking
Katie White	Students as Partners in Assessment

**Agenda is subject to change. Sessions are live.
Recordings of sessions will be available for 60 days after the event concludes.**

Session Descriptions

Nicole M. Dimich

[KEYNOTE] Assessment That Cultivates Hope, Efficacy, and Achievement

To maximize its effectiveness, assessment must build hope, efficacy, and achievement. Nicole M. Dimich emphasizes why, more than ever, assessment literacy is the most effective and efficient professional investment teachers can make. Nicole outlines six assessment tenets that lead to a culture of learning where scholars are optimistic about their success. This interactive keynote highlights the critical understandings and strategies that individual and collaborative teacher teams need in order to use assessment to *inspire* student achievement, not merely to measure and record it. Creating and analyzing assessments guides the work of teams as they strive to design innovative instruction, invest students in their learning, foster social and emotional health, and inform targeted and specific interventions and extensions.

Designing Effective Assessments in Three Steps

When designed well, assessments provide meaningful evidence of student learning. This session introduces an assessment design process based on Nicole Dimich's book, *Design in Five: Essential Phases to Create Engaging Assessment Practice* (2015). Participants learn how 1) choosing standards, 2) crafting learning goals, and 3) planning assessment methods help teachers collect accurate proficiency information while offering insight into next steps for instruction. Participants receive tools and templates to focus on their work. Administrators and those who support teachers can use these resources to facilitate quality assessment design.

Participants learn:

- Key aspects of assessment validity
- A three-step protocol to design or revise quality assessments
- The most effective methods in ensuring accurate assessment evidence

Developing Rich, Culturally Relevant Items and Tasks

Nicole M. Dimich shares key characteristics of culturally relevant questions, tasks, and items that capitalize on the strengths of our diversity—race, culture, interests, experiences, communities, and more. When written and used well, rich items provide valid and reliable information to describe and grow student learning. Teachers and teams can apply these ideas to designing assessments and creating engaging instruction that leads to students achieving the intended learning.

Participants will:

- Learn elements and characteristics of culturally relevant tasks, questions, and items.
- Discover a process for designing culturally relevant and rigorous items and tasks.

Assessing Social Competence: Social and Emotional Elements of Assessments

In these uncertain times where things are changing quickly, how do we effectively and efficiently engage in assessment practices that acknowledge the varying levels of social and emotional health students and their families have experienced? Nicole Dimich will explore the concept of social competence and how to use assessment to develop confidence and self-awareness. In addition, this session will explore how to view assessment with the whole child in mind and provide guidance in assessing social and emotional health to develop self-regulation and investment. This type of nuanced look at the power of assessment to build a growth mindset and a culture of possibility allows educators and students to learn and thrive.

Participants will:

- Learn key aspects of social competence and social and emotional learning.
- Consider strategies to develop social competence through assessment practices.
- Explore aspects of assessing and promoting social and emotional well-being.

The Role of Assessment in Developing Multitiered Systems of Support

Developing a multitiered system of support or response to intervention (RTI) model is critical to guaranteeing essential learning. Nicole M. Dimich articulates Tier 1 prevention, Tier 2 intervention, and Tier 3 remediation practices and structures. Assessment is central to ensuring that the instruction and intervention practices implemented in a multitiered system of support is focused on students' learning needs and monitored to understand the impact of this system on student learning and confidence. Systems must be agile in responding to students' learning needs.

Participants will:

- Learn the purpose of Tiers 1, 2, and 3 in developing a multitiered system of support.
- Discover various structures to support deep implementation and impact of these systems of support.
- Explore assessment data best situated to determine the type of instruction and intervention needed to powerfully ensure systems of support lead to high levels of achievement.

Analyzing Student Work to Plan Instruction and Intervention

We have an overwhelming amount of data at our fingertips. This can lead to collaborative teams feeling overwhelmed or in a constant cycle of assessing without pausing to maximize the power of this information. Assessments provide insight into the extent to which students are learning essential skills and how to plan instruction and intervention to ensure they grow and achieve. When student work is analyzed, these insights guide teachers to design instruction that meets the needs of students and helps them achieve at high levels. Nicole M. Dimich offers a process for individual teachers and collaborative teams to examine student work to plan effective instruction and intervention to guide next steps in learning.

Participants will:

- Explore a process for examining student work to understand students' strengths and next steps to plan instruction and intervention.
- Learn how to choose effective instructional and intervention strategies from student work.

Cassandra Erkens

[KEYNOTE] Getting to the Good Stuff: Student Investment

In the ideal classroom, all learners invest deeply in their learning, demonstrating motivation, persistence, passion, and high levels of intellectual risk taking and engagement. Is this idea realistic? Yes! However, changes to current assessment practices and systems are essential if learners are to self-regulate as they engage in deep learning. Cassandra Erkens explores mindsets and strategies educators must employ to support learners in *getting to the good stuff*.

Learning outcomes include:

- Identifying barriers that block learners from investing in their learning
- Exploring the educator's mindset to support deep learning at the classroom level
- Identifying strategies and tools to support learners in self-regulation

Designing Assessments for 21st Century Skills

As teachers, we prepare learners for a future we may be unable to understand or envision. How can we create and use assessments that tap into a global and technological realm? How can we ensure assessments move students beyond regurgitating information to co-creating new insights and solutions for a complex and rapidly changing world? Cassandra Erkens explores the integration of rigor, relevance, and 21st century skills in assessment design.

Learning outcomes include:

- Exploring widely accepted 21st century skills
- Identifying the criteria for and non-negotiables of quality assessment design
- Identifying quality and nonquality assessment options
- Exploring how to design a 21st century skill-based assessment

Rubrics that Work: Agency, Accuracy, and Achievement

As educators move toward integrating next-generation standards and standards-based grading, many questions arise about rubrics as tools to measure proficiency. Well-developed rubrics are windows through which students see what teachers require of them. Such tools also are mirrors that reveal what students know and still need to learn. This session explores how to design and employ powerful rubrics that ultimately increase agency, accuracy, and achievement for all students.

By the end of this session, participants learn to:

- Identify the characteristics of quality rubrics and the processes to develop quality rubrics.
- Determine how best to employ rubrics to improve student agency and achievement over time.
- Explore ways to engage learners in the accurate interpretation of their personal (or peer) results for shared feedback opportunities.

Instructional Agility

The goal of all instruction is to ensure all students learn at high levels. To do this, teachers must be precise yet flexible in their instructional designs so they can gather emerging formative evidence and then make seamless but focused maneuvers at a moment's notice. Participants explore options for gathering in-the-moment evidence rather than always stopping instruction for intrusive assessment events.

Participants learn to:

- Engage real time, focused formative assessments that generate meaningful decision-making evidence.
- Employ classroom protocols and strategies necessary to be instructionally agile.

Making Homework Count

Teachers use homework for three primary purposes: practice, preparation, and extension of classroom learning. According to research, homework is one of the most powerful instructional strategies teachers employ to impact student achievement. Yet other research indicates there is

little to no correlation between homework and achievement results. How might teachers leverage homework to increase student productivity and achievement? Participants explore considerations for designing and using homework as a formative assessment tool to improve student learning.

Participants learn to:

- Align homework's intent with promising practices in its design and use.
- Identify formative assessment tools and processes to support homework as an opportunity for safe practice.
- Explore the role of error in developing instructionally agile responses to data based on practice opportunities.

Engineering Engaging Conversations

The quality of formative data generated during instruction relates to the quality of questions asked—and the classroom conversations that result. Cassandra Erkens provides a rationale for using dialogue as an instructional foundation. She explores options for creating engaging conversations and criteria to monitor student engagement and learning.

Participants can expect to:

- Understand the role of engineering conversations as an instructional foundation.
- Explore frameworks for engaging conversations.
- Apply criteria for monitoring student engagement and learning.

Tom Schimmer

[KEYNOTE] Grading From the Inside Out

Developing a standards-based mindset is the oft-overlooked but essential first step of long-term grading reform. Based on his book *Grading From the Inside Out: Bringing Accuracy to Student Assessment Through a Standards-Based Mindset* (2016), Tom Schimmer outlines how to take a standards-based approach to grading, even when a traditional grading and reporting paradigm exists. He discusses the non-negotiable true north of grading for accuracy and with confidence and the three essential practices that are cornerstones for developing a standards-based mindset.

Learning outcomes include:

- Understanding how to audit grading practices through the lens of accuracy and confidence
- Exploring faulty logic behind traditional grading practices
- Identifying replacement practices that establish a standards-based mindset and approach to grading, independent school or district policy changes

Reassessment the Right Way

Reassessment is one of the most misunderstood aspects of sound grading practices. More than merely a do-over, reassessment involves clear assessment information, targeted instruction that matches intensity levels relating to student needs, and reverification of new proficiency levels.

Tom Schimmer helps participants see reassessment more than just jumping through hoops, but as a natural part of the learning process. He also explores reassessment at the school policy level and the classroom practice level.

Participants in this session:

- Understand the essential role reassessment plays within a learning-centered culture.
- Explore the most productive approaches to creating district, school, department, and team-based reassessment policies.
- Learn how to establish a social contract for reassessment and related routines within individual classrooms.

Assessing Student Work: Most Recent, Most Frequent, or Most Accurate?

Sometimes, the most recent evidence of learning is the most accurate; sometimes, it is the most frequent. Tom Schimmer explores standards and circumstances that lead to precise determinations of student proficiency.

Participants can discover the utmost levels of proficiency by considering the depth and breadth of adequate sampling, as well as what they assess. Tom shares guidelines for determining overall grades.

Effective Leadership in Assessment and Grading

With any change effort, leadership matters! Tom Schimmer explores steps leaders can take to transform grading and assessment practices within any context. Tom reviews leadership strategies, mindsets, and practices that maximize the potential success of any implementation effort. He also focuses on the natural evolution of new ideas, ways to plan short-term wins, and

ideas for handling challenges and roadblocks. Whether a leader by title or by influence, participants can make assessment transformations possible and sustainable.

Learning outcomes include:

- Identifying how leaders cultivate conditions to support grading reform
- Understanding the natural evolution of new ideas in an organization
- Exploring ways leaders manage implementation roadblocks and challenges

Redefining Student Accountability

Holding students accountable is often a reason why some teachers hesitate to implement more sound grading practices. Tom Schimmer focuses on systems, structures, and routines that can redefine accountability and reshape a school's culture. Rather than using zeros, late penalties, or other traditional punitive grading practices, teachers can achieve accountability without compromising the integrity of a student's proficiency grade.

Participants can expect to:

- Identify the perils of punitive grading, especially the potential to skew proficiency grades.
- Explore productive methods of accountability within a learning context.
- Review systems that create a culture of real accountability while maintaining student optimism and hope.

Assessing Critical Thinking

Critical thinking sits at the heart of the essential competencies for learners to develop in the 21st century. Tom Schimmer highlights how educators can take advantage of assessment fundamentals to gauge critical thinking seamlessly.

Participants learn 1) how *specifist* and *generalist* views can contribute to schools developing a comprehensive approach to critical thinking, 2) tools to support assessment, 3) instructional implications for creating critical thinking opportunities, and 4) dispositional habits of critical thinkers.

Participants can expect to:

- Examine the overlap and contradiction between the two dominant psychological views of critical thinking.
- Review why and how the assessment of critical thinking relies on clearly articulated performance criteria.
- Explore how learners can develop into critical thinkers by cultivating habitual behaviors and dispositions.

Katie White

Ensuring Powerful Learning Through Soft-Edged Assessment

Making assessment decisions in any learning context can be challenging, and, when those contexts change, things can feel even more complex. Sometimes, despite best intentions and dedicated work, assessment processes result in holistic needs not being met and practices not being aligned with beliefs and values for students and teachers. This can ultimately affect the validity of our assessment processes.

Katie White explores assessment using the analogies of hard and soft edges within the paradigm of assessment that powers learning. Participants learn to maximize assessments to ensure efficacy and positive outcomes for learners and educators.

Participants in this session:

- Explore the metaphor of hard and soft edges relating to assessment decisions and comprehensive needs for teachers and students.
- Consider how to “soften the edges” of assessment to ensure hope, efficacy, and achievement for every student.
- Reflect on personal contexts and plans to leverage assessment to empower learning.

How Changing One Thing Can Change Everything: The Power of Learning Continuums

Teachers want to enhance student learner outcomes, but it is hard to know where to start. Learning is a complex process, and each piece plays a vital role in student success.

Changing a single aspect of the teaching and learning cycle can affect everything else, resulting in positive outcomes for teachers and students. Katie White explores the power of creating learning continuums.

Participants in this session:

- Explore the story of a young learner and her shifting investment in her learning journey.
- Learn how to design targets and criteria for a learning continuum or progression.
- Use the continuum or progression to enhance assessment design and response in personal teaching contexts.

Feedback That Works

Feedback is one the most effective ways to grow learning, but not all feedback is equal. Katie White focuses on the ins and outs of effective, timely, and ongoing feedback as part of the formative and summative assessment process.

Participants in this session:

- Discover the qualities of effective feedback.
- Explore strategies for offering feedback to learners.
- Apply feedback strategies to personal contexts.

Flexible Assessment in Shifting Contexts

The events of the past year and a half in education have made many aspects of assessment and instruction feel uncertain. We may find ourselves asking: How do I assess learners accurately when teaching online or in hybrid contexts? How do I engage in assessment when students can no longer move freely and collaborate easily, even when face-to-face? How do I make assessment work when consistency and predictability feel like distant realities?

In this session, Katie White explores the foundations of assessment that remain constant regardless of the learning environment and then follows up with a practical exploration of the aspects of assessment that may flex according to student and teacher realities.

Participants in this session:

- Explore the aspects of assessment design and response that will remain consistent, regardless of learning context.
- Investigate the aspects of assessment design and response that can flex in order to address student and teacher needs and realities.
- Consider ways to enhance assessment validity and confidence in relation to personal contexts.

Students as Partners in Assessment

Strong self-assessment in classrooms leads to investment and growth for learners through co-constructed learning experiences that precisely address student needs.

What do teachers do when learners have not yet refined the skill of self-assessment? They build subskills that provide foundations for student ownership. This session explores the power of self-assessment to nurture hope and efficacy in learners. By empowering students to monitor their own learning and make decisions in support of goals, educators can support the development of learners who are confident and capable.

Participants in this session:

- Explore the characteristics of students who are partners in assessment.
- Explore the subskills of self-assessment that work together to develop assessment-proficient learners.
- Consider ways to embed self-assessment into personal learning contexts.