

Figure 1.11

High-Quality Assessment Diagnostic and Discussion Tool

Directions: Examine your most recent end-of-unit assessment instrument, and evaluate its quality against the following eight criteria.

- 1. Are the essential learning standards written on the test?** What do your students think about learning mathematics? Do your students think learning mathematics is about doing a bunch of problems? Or, can they explain the essential learning standards and perform on any task that might reflect that standard?

Note: This is a necessary test feature if students are to respond to the end-of-unit assessment feedback when you pass it back. (See HLTA 9, page 103.)

- 2. Does the visual presentation provide space for student work?** Do your students have plenty of space to write out solution pathways, show their work, and explain their thinking for each task on the assessment instrument?

Note: This criterion often is one of the reasons not to use the written tests that come with your textbook series. You can use questions from the test bank aligned to your instruction, but space problems as needed.

- 3. Is there a balance of higher- and lower-level-cognitive-demand questions on the test?** What percentage of assessment instrument tasks are lower-level cognitive demand? What percent are higher-level cognitive demand? Is there a balance? Unless this has been a major focus of your work, your current end-of-unit tests will not score very high in this criterion.

Note: Underline the verbs on your test, and analyze what the verbs are asking the student to do. This will help you to better understand the level of cognitive demand. A good rule of thumb is that the rigor-balance ratio should be about 30/70 (higher- to lower-level cognitive demand).

- 4. Is there clarity with all directions? What does clarity mean to each team member?** Are any of the directions for the tasks confusing to the student? Why?

Note: The verbs used in your directions for each set of tasks are very important to notice when discussing clarity.

- 5. Is there variety in the assessment formats?** Does your test use a blend of assessment formats or types? Did you include questions that allow for technology as a tool, such as graphing calculators? Did you balance the use of different question formats? If you use multiple choice, do you include items with multiple possible answers similar to those on the PARCC, SBAC, or other state assessments?

Note: Your end-of-unit assessments should not be of either extreme—all multiple-choice or all open-ended questions.

