

Common Assessment Desired Outcomes

Giving a common assessment is not an end in itself, but a means to better measure teaching and student learning. To this end, whenever your team reviews common assessment data, consider the following critical outcomes and essential questions to get the most out of your common assessments.

We give common assessments so we can . . .

. . . Identify which students have not demonstrated mastery of essential standard(s).

Because we give common assessments to measure student mastery of essential standard(s), common assessments should identify those students who need additional help and support. Additionally, if an assessment measures more than one essential standard, then the test results must provide more than an overall score for each student, but also delineate specifically which standards each student did not pass.

Essential Question: Which specific students did not demonstrate mastery?

. . . Identify effective instructional practices. Because our teachers have autonomy in how they teach essential standards, it is vital that common assessment data help validate which practices were effective. This can be done best when common assessment results are displayed in such a way that allows each teacher to compare his or her students' results to other teachers who teach the same course.

Essential Question: Which instructional practices proved to be most effective?

. . . Identify patterns in student mistakes. Besides using common assessment results to identify best instructional practices, this data should also be used to determine ineffective instructional practices. When analyzing the types of mistakes that failing students make, note patterns that point to weaknesses or gaps in the initial instruction.

Essential Question: What patterns can we identify from the student mistakes?

. . . Measure the accuracy of the assessment. Analyze the validity of each test question. Over time, this will build a team's capacity to create better assessments.

Essential Question: How can we improve this assessment?

. . . Plan and target interventions: The ultimate goal of any professional learning community is to ensure high levels of learning for all students. If your team uses common assessments to identify students in need of additional help, determine effective and ineffective instructional practices, and measure the validity of the assessment, you will have the information needed to plan and implement targeted interventions to assist the students that need help.

Essential Question: What interventions are needed to provide failed students additional time and support?

