



ACTIVITY 1.1

Formative or Summative?

PURPOSE

Balanced systems blend assessments across multiple levels for both summative and formative purposes, each separated from the other by how the results will be used. Although it is possible for an assessment to be used in both ways, most are best suited for one use or the other, and in fact are usually designed for that primary use. In this activity participants classify each assessment type listed as either formative or summative.

This activity is a precursor to Activity 2.1, “Conducting an Assessment Audit.” That activity asks teams to build an inventory of assessments being conducted in their school or district and analyze it on a number of levels. Understanding and agreeing on what is and is not formative or summative as practiced in this activity will help you conduct your audit.

TIME

20–30 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

None

SUGGESTED ROOM SETUP

No special room arrangements needed

DIRECTIONS

1. Make sure every participant is viewing a copy of Figure 1.4. Give everyone a few minutes to read the column headings across the top of the table and the row headings in the left-hand column. Notice that the right-hand column of the table headed “Is the Use Formative or Summative?” is left blank.
2. After everyone has reviewed the table, discuss each row to determine whether its use is formative or summative. Attempt to reach consensus on each example. If there is disagreement, team members should explain their classification rationale by answering the question, “What is formative/summative about that use?” Remember that many assessments can pull double duty, but for this activity the focus is on the use as given. You may find that some uses you classify as formative may also extend into assessment *for* learning where students are also involved in improving learning.
3. When you have completed your discussions, refer to the authors’ completed form (Figure 1.8) at the end of Part 1. Discuss any differences of opinion.

Figure 1.4 Formative or Summative?

Type of Assessment	What Is the Purpose?	Who Will Use the Information?	How Will It Be Used?	Is the Use Formative or Summative?
State Test	Measure level of achievement on state content standards	State	Determine AYP (adequate yearly progress)	
		District, Teacher Teams	Determine program effectiveness	
State Test (cont.)	Identify percentage of students meeting performance standards on state content standards	State	Comparison of schools/districts	
		District, Teacher Teams	Develop programs/interventions for groups or individuals	
District Benchmark, Interim, or Common Assessment	Measure level of achievement toward state content standards	District, Teacher Teams	Determine program effectiveness	
		District, Teacher Teams	Identify program needs	
	Identify students needing additional help	District, Teacher Teams, Teachers	Plan interventions for groups or individuals	
Classroom Assessment	Measure level of achievement on learning targets taught	Teachers	Determine report card grade based on how well the student performs	
	Diagnose student strengths and areas needing reteaching	Teacher Teams, Teachers	Revise teaching plans for next year/semester	
			Plan further instruction/differentiate instruction for these students	
		Teachers, Students	Provide feedback to students	
Understand strengths and areas needing work	Students	Self-assess, set goals for further study/work		

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