Activity 1.1

An Abbreviated Assessment Audit Model

Learning Targets for the Activity

- Understand the process used and information required to complete a formal assessment audit.

- Understand the type of information yielded by an audit and how it can be used to further quality assessment practice.

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is for participants to experience a simplified version of an assessment audit. Doing this activity will help demonstrate how some components of an assessment audit function, and can help you tailor the experience (create different grids, adjust column categories, etc.) to your local program for future audits.

The activity has three parts. Each part contains a blank table grid to fill out with your relevant information. Please note that this may not be a group activity in the traditional sense. Different participants may take responsibility for different sections, some of which require analysis and more time than a group activity allows. Once all the information is gathered and the forms are completed, groups can then process the information with the prompts provided.

Time

Variable: multiple sessions over the course of a day or longer, plus prep time to gather the necessary materials.

Materials Needed

- School calendars or other documents that detail or list the assessments being administered to students, and the district Comprehensive Assessment Plan, if one exists. You'll also need a copy of state standards and district learning goals by subject and grade level. Note that this activity may involve gathering information from a variety of sources.

Suggested Room Setup

Tables and chairs for groups of up to eight members.

Part 1: A Model for Identifying Gaps in Your Assessment Plan

Please note that this exercise relates *only to the top three levels* of the five shown in Figure 1.1. It does not pertain to classroom assessment, either summative or formative. The column headings are flexible, and as many as desired can be added.

Directions

1. Once you have gathered your assessment documentation, begin to enter the details according to the column headings. Start with only district-level assessments for a district perspective or school-level assessments for a building-level perspective.

2. Examine the chart once completed; what stands out in each column? Make notes of what the participants conclude from their observations.

3. Next, identify which columns seem to generate the most discussion. For example, in looking at the two columns for standards and district curriculum, do there seem to be redundancies in the measurement of certain content standards?

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4. What do you notice about the amount of testing time, the comparison of time across the different subject areas, or the testing schedule in relation to the calendar or school year? Does a picture form of who are the predominant users of the results? How much information might make its way to the classroom for instructional use or improvement?

5. Do the results say anything about the comprehensiveness of the assessment system currently in place? That is, is there evidence that all valued learning outcomes are being assessed, or does it appear to be only those that are easily measured? How can you tell?

Part 2: Record of Required State, District, and School Assessments

The previous organizer was meant to focus on the overall picture of assessment within your system external to the classroom. This organizer assists in narrowing the focus to the use of assessments across grade levels and content areas. This organizer can be used separately for the district, for a set of schools, or for just a single school. This activity is a precursor to part 3, which will select only one subject area for further examination.

You can adapt this grid just as you could the one from part 1. You might want to know more about the mix of summative and formative assessment, the mix of assessment methods, or the similarities and differences between locally developed assessments and assessments purchased off the shelf from a test publisher. You can also start to get more specific about the learning goals being assessed and those omitted.

Directions

1. Using the same assessment documents as needed for part 1, and completed in Figure 1.2, list the assessments by the grade level administered and the content area being measured, using Figure 1.3 to record the results.

2. Next, examine the results first for anything that stands out regarding what is being measured across grade levels and content areas. Do some grade levels or content areas appear more heavily affected than others? Is that important or not, planned or happenstance? Is there balance in meeting informational needs—who is requiring the information and when?

Note: Developed with Dr. Linda Elman.

Part 3: Assessments in a Content Area

This organizer is another way to look at some of the information displayed in Figure 1.3, and it allows you to narrow your analysis from part 2 and determine the assessment picture across any single given content area. For example, if you choose to look at only the math assessments administered during the year, by grade level, for the top three levels of the pyramid in Figure 1.1, this would be one way to display that information. Remember that this model is focused on assessments that do not originate in the classroom.

Directions

1. Using the completed Figures 1.2 and 1.3 and any other necessary information, begin to fill in the cells of Figure 1.4 according to the column headings.

2. Analyze the table for balance in purpose, users, and grade levels tested.

3. Do the assessments inform all the various users of the assessment information, or are they more focused on a few users?

4. Does the assessment information meet all users' needs?

5. Do you have any observations about the grade-level spread of the assessments?