

teaching practices. Once again, we find both formative and summative applications. Table 2.4 lists the answers to our driving questions for these users.

We can make the following generalizations on the basis of the information in Table 2.4:

- The focus is on broad domains of achievement, not specific objectives of instruction (group results) fill the need.
- As with the instructional support level, results summarized across students
- As with the program support level, periodic assessment will suffice—typically once a year.
- At this level too, assessment procedures must be standardized across contexts and over time. The decisions to be made require it.

Again, this is the domain of the standardized test.

**Table 2.4**

Instructional- and policy-level assessment users and uses

Decision Maker	Decisions	Information Needed	Assessment Implications
<b>Superintendent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What standards are to be met?</li> <li>• Which of these standards are students mastering or making appropriate progress toward in what schools?</li> <li>• Did enough of our students meet standards this year?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning targets in the form of achievement standards organized by grade and subject</li> <li>• Information revealing patterns of achievement within and across schools</li> <li>• Proportion of students meeting each standard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessments must accurately reflect these standards</li> <li>• Comparable evidence of student learning status collected periodically during the year</li> <li>• Annual assessments need to reveal how each student performed on each standard</li> </ul>
<b>Various Policy Makers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What standards are students expected to master in our schools?</li> <li>• How many of our students are meeting standards?</li> <li>• Did enough of our students meet standards this year?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning targets in the form of achievement standards organized by grade and subject</li> <li>• Scores reflecting patterns of achievement within and across schools and districts</li> <li>• Proportion of students meeting each standard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessments must accurately reflect these standards</li> <li>• Comparable evidence of student learning status collected periodically</li> <li>• Annual assessments show how each student did on each standard</li> </ul>
<b>School Boards, Legislator, Departments of Education, Business and Community Leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What standards are students expected to master in our schools?</li> <li>• How many of our students are meeting standards?</li> <li>• Did enough of our students meet standards this year?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning targets in the form of achievement standards organized by grade and subject</li> <li>• Scores reflecting patterns of achievement within and across schools and districts</li> <li>• Proportion of students meeting each standard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessments must accurately reflect these standards</li> <li>• Comparable evidence of student learning status collected periodically</li> <li>• Annual assessments show how each student did on each standard</li> </ul>

## Generalizations Across Users and Uses

Having reflected on Tables 2.1–2.4, do any general conclusions come to your mind regarding the role of assessment in determining and enhancing the effectiveness of schools? Try the following and see if you agree:

- Obviously, assessment is intricately woven into the effectiveness of school functioning. Often the depth and complexity of the contributions of the various assessment levels are surprising to many educators. As teachers and instructional leaders, we must all face this complexity and come to terms with it.
- Students count on many people at all levels and in all decision-making contexts to use sound assessment results in productive ways. Every question listed in the tables is critical to student well-being. This is why we must continually strive for the most valid assessments—those that fit the purpose and reflect the target most closely. It is a moral, ethical, and professional imperative of the highest order.
- Considering the tables together, it is clear that both information gathered continuously on individual student mastery of specified material and information gathered periodically for the purpose of comparing students serve important roles. Different users need different information at different times in different forms to do their jobs.

Given this summary of all of the decision-oriented users and uses of assessment, it becomes clear that we need to maintain a balanced perspective about assessment's valuable role at all levels. High-quality classroom assessment serving its important users must be balanced with high-quality interim and annual standardized assessments serving their important users.

## Therefore, the Keys to Assessment FOR Learning

This book is about how to use the classroom assessment process in the service of student success. We speak here not merely of dependable assessment OF learning, but also of dependable assessment FOR learning. We seek to use the process and its results, not merely to keep track of learning, but to help students learn more. The tools and strategies offered herein will permit you to help your students go on internal control and take responsibility for their own learning.

Both assessment OF and FOR learning are important. In the case of the former, we use assessment to verify that students have met standards in an accountability sense. For instance, statewide standardized tests ask students to demonstrate that they have met required achievement standards. Or in the classroom, teachers administer final examinations to determine a student's report card grade. These are periodic events that happen after learning is supposed to have occurred, to let others know if students have learned.

But assessment FOR learning is different. In this case, we rely on the process not merely to check for learning, but to increase it. These are the assessments that we use early in learning to diagnose student needs. These have no place in the gradebook. They are the assessments that we conduct while learning is happening to help students see and feel in control of their own ongoing growth. In short, these are continuous assessments that we use to inform students about themselves during learning.