

Table 2.1 (continued)

Decision Maker	Decisions	Information Needed	Assessment Implications
Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have my students met or are they progressing on the important achievement standards? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Status of each student's mastery of each standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School or district needs periodic assessments of standards mastered throughout the year
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did they meet state achievement expectations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Status regarding each student's mastery of each state standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual state or district tests must reveal each student's mastery of each standard
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is my child supposed to learn? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning targets in family-friendly language provided from the beginning of learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments must accurately reflect these targets
Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has my child learned already and what does s/he still need to learn? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments providing information on current status on each learning target 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous accurate classroom assessments used during the learning need to provide picture of progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is my child progressing satisfactorily in meeting the teacher's classroom learning expectations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information gained from my child's self-assessment, or from the teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodic summative classroom assessments must feed into report card grade or summary of classroom standards met
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does my child need the services of a specialized program? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student's learning status in relation to grade- or age-level expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment evidence must show status relative to expected achievement levels
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is my child progressing on the state achievement expectations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Status regarding state standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence needed periodically during the year
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has my child met the state achievement expectations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Status regarding each state standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State assessments must provide evidence of mastery of each standard

Classroom Users and Uses

Students, teachers, and parents gather and use the results of student assessments to inform a variety of decisions that influence both students' motivation and their level of success. Some of these call for the *formative* use of assessment. They support learning: How can we help students understand the target? Self-assess? Improve over time? Others use assessment in a *summative* manner, checking achievement status for accountability purposes: Did the student learn enough?

After reflecting on the classroom-level questions listed in Table 2.1, can you imagine the dire consequences for student success if students, teachers, and parents were to try to answer them based on misinformation about student achievement due to inaccurate classroom assessment? What if students were not hitting the target, but the assessments said they were succeeding? What if they were succeeding, but the assessments said they were not?

Clearly, inaccurate assessments would lead to teacher misdiagnosis of student needs, failure to understand which instructional strategies work and which do not, and communication of misinformation to parents, among other problems.

The point is that accurate information derived from quality classroom assessments is essential for instruction to work effectively and for students to learn. In addition, analyzing the questions in Table 2.1 leads to the following critically important generalizations:

- Although we most often think of students as the examinees and not as examiners, they clearly are assessors of their own academic progress, and they use those results in compelling ways.
- Given the manner in which assessment results fit into day-to-day classroom decision making, assessment must be a regularly occurring process in all cases. These are continually recurring decisions. This is precisely why classroom assessment events are so much more frequent in a student's life than are annual, formal standardized tests.
- At this level, assessment virtually always focuses on each individual student's mastery of specified material. You, the teacher, must set standards of acceptable achievement if your assessments are to show whether students have succeeded.

Program-Level Users

The second level is that of program evaluation and development. Decision makers at this level provide teachers with whatever backup they may need in the form of curricular, professional development, and/or resource support (Table 2.2). Users at this level take advantage of assessment results to determine which standards students are and are not mastering and, therefore, which programs may need adjustments to become more effective. For example, they ask, Did the new reading program we purchased work effectively?