

Table 2.2

Program evaluation and development: assessment users and uses

Decision Makers	Decisions	Information Needed	Assessment Implications
Instructional Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What standards are students expected to master by subject across our range of grade levels and classrooms? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning targets in the form of achievement standards organized by subject as they unfold within and across grade levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments must accurately reflect these standards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of these standards are students mastering or progressing appropriately toward? Are there problem areas? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information revealing mastery patterns over time within the school year within and across classrooms of this school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparable evidence of student learning status needed periodically during the year
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did enough of our students meet standards this year? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of students meeting and not meeting each standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual state or district assessments reveal how student did on each standard
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What standards are students to master across all classrooms, grades, and schools? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards mastered by grade and subject mapped within and across grade levels across schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments must accurately reflect these standards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did enough of our students meet standards this year? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of students meeting each standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual assessments reveal how each student does on each standard

We can see the following patterns emerge from the information presented in Table 2.2:

- In every case, the decisions to be made focus on the instructional program or the classroom; that is, the effect on groups of students, not individuals.
- Decisions are made infrequently and thus assessment need only be periodic (typically every few weeks or months).
- At this level, heavy reliance is placed on using assessment results from instruments or procedures held constant across classrooms. In other words, some standardization is required if sound information and good decisions are to result.

- The evidence generated must reveal how students are doing in mastering each standard. Assessments that cross many standards and blend results into a single overall score are not going to be helpful, due to their lack of sufficient detail.

These periodic assessments can carry any of a number of labels, including *interim*, *benchmark*, *short-cycle*, or *common* assessments. Under any heading, they will be standardized across classrooms and will be administered every few weeks.

Comparing Classroom- and Program-Level Uses

It should be self-evident that both classroom and program levels of assessment are important because they inform decisions that, if made well, can enhance student learning. But it is critical that you understand that they are different, and that they accomplish different things. Table 2.3 highlights the differences.

Institutional- or Policy-Level Users

The final level of assessment user, policy makers, includes the superintendent, the school board, public officials (appointed and elected), and citizens of the community. They establish achievement standards to guide instruction in classrooms and then demand evidence of achievement to verify that students are meeting the standards. Based on the evidence they receive, they allocate district resources to overcome weaknesses, set personnel policies to regulate who gets to teach, and set procedural policies that guide

Table 2.3
Comparing classroom and program levels of assessment use

	Classroom Level	Program Level
Achievement focus	Student progress toward each standard	Student mastery of each standard
Student focus	Results provide achievement info for each individual student separately	Results are aggregated across students to summarize group results
Frequency of assessment Results inform	Continuous	Periodic (every few weeks)
Assessment methods used	Student and teacher	Teachers and school leaders
Consistency of assessment	All available methods may be used	Typically multiple-choice tests for the sake of consistency
	Can be unique to an individual student	Typically standardized across students (same test for all)