

Local Comprehensive Assessment System Quality Criteria

Introduction

Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems (LCAS) are a vital part of a broader educational system aimed at enhancing students' learning and enabling every student to meet proficiencies. A **comprehensive assessment system** contains the information needed for making decisions that enhance, ensure, and/or improve quality, equity, and opportunity. A **balanced assessment system** contains a variety of information so that users can explore a wide range of questions in order to gain fresh perspectives on how to improve outcomes for all students. The assessment system and its structures support individual students, and provide information about how well the system is working (VTmtss Field Guide, 2019).

Additionally, a **high-quality assessment system** should include assessments of higher-order cognitive skills (e.g., evaluating, revising, and synthesizing data and information) and critical abilities (e.g., collaboration, problem solving, reflection, and research). These assessments should be valid, reliable, and fair; representative of content and concepts taught through curriculum and instruction; and critical for informing teaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2013). These are all components of a high-quality system.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to support the implementation of strong Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems as defined by the [Education Quality Standards](#):

Education Quality Standards (EQS)

2123.2. Development and Implementation of Local Comprehensive Assessment System.

Each supervisory union shall develop, and each school shall implement, a local comprehensive assessment system that assesses all of the standards approved by the State Board of Education; employs a balance of assessment types, including both formative and summative assessments; enables decisions to be made about student progression and graduation; informs the development of Personalized Learning Plans and student support; provides data that informs decisions regarding instruction, professional learning, educational resources, and curriculum; and reflects strategies and goals outlined in the district's Continuous Improvement Plan.

The performance criteria of the assessment system shall be clear and be communicated to teachers, administrators, students, parents and other community members. Students and parents shall be informed at least annually regarding progress toward achieving the standards. This includes providing information in students' native languages or otherwise accessible formats.

To summarize, Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems are required by EQS. Supervisory unions and school districts must implement a system that includes a balance of assessment types and provides information about student proficiency in a variety of ways, clearly communicates performance criteria, and identifies methods for communicating student progress.

Quality Criteria

1. **Theory of Action:** An assessment system has a theory of action aligned to the Continuous Improvement Plan that states how assessments are connected to intended outcomes as well as how the parts of the system are related.
2. **Continuous Improvement Plan:** The assessment system reflects strategies and goals from the Continuous Improvement Plan.
3. **Equitable Access:** Assessments provide equitable access for students with diverse needs and backgrounds.
4. **Standards and Skills:** Assessments are aligned to clearly described standards/proficiencies for **ALL** content areas and transferable skills.
5. **Alignment:** Assessments are aligned PreK-12 and across classrooms within a grade level to support learning and avoid unnecessary duplication.
6. **Comprehensive:** Multiple measures, including universal screeners, diagnostics, progress monitoring, formative and summative assessments, performance assessments, and state assessments, comprise a comprehensive assessment system ([Streamlining and Strengthening Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems](#), 2017).
 - a. **Universal Screeners** - Assessments that are used with all students to inform teachers about where students are performing relative to grade-level standards, which students need intervention, and how to adjust instruction and curriculum to affect students' success.
 - b. **Diagnostics and Progress Monitoring** - Assessments that are given in order to plan instruction and/or intervention to meet the needs of students who need additional supports or new challenges. This may mean more formal and frequent assessment for some students in order to improve outcomes.

- c. **Formative Assessment** - An intentional practice by teachers used to monitor progress, provide ongoing feedback, and modify instruction to meet the needs of learners. Learners use formative assessment to identify strengths as well as areas in need of improvement. Since the goal of formative assessment is to improve learning during the learning process, these assessments are typically not graded.
 - d. **Summative Assessment** - An assessment that is used to evaluate the degree of learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period—typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year. The assessment results are typically reported and are evaluative, rather than diagnostic.
 - e. **Performance Assessment** - Any learning opportunity or assessment that asks learners to perform or demonstrate knowledge, understanding, or skills. Performance assessments yield a tangible product and/or performance that serves as evidence of learning of content, transferable skills, and/or practices. Performance assessments present situations that require learners to apply their learning to a new context and can be designed by the learner or teacher. Performance assessments are sometimes referred to as performance tasks.
 - f. **State Assessment** - Assessments that provide information on students’ mastery of state standards and allow educators to plan improvements to their teaching through a better understanding of a student’s progress. The testing program also provides parents and community members with the combined results for all the students in the school, and for major student groups, as one gauge of how well the school is meeting the educational needs of each and every student.
7. **Role of Data:** Summative state assessments are used to inform professional learning for educators and curriculum development; state assessment data can be used as one piece of a student’s data profile but should not be used as the sole criteria for making a critical decision about a student.
8. **Data Usage:** Data from multiple assessments are used to generate evidence of student learning, personalize instruction, update program design, and inform the development of personalized learning plans.
9. **Performance Assessments:** Performance assessments, including student-designed assessments, are developed/identified to allow students to apply learning in new contexts and, when possible, shared with an authentic audience. Benchmarks are available for calibrating student work.
10. **Formative Assessment Practices:** Formative assessment practices are used as an essential strategy for improving teaching and learning, providing opportunities for students to receive and apply feedback.

11. **Transparent Assessment Tools:** Teaching and assessment tools, such as learning progressions, learning targets, proficiency scales, and rubrics, are evident and provide clear guidelines to teachers and students regarding assessment goals.
12. **Information Sharing:** Students, educators, and parents/guardians can access information about the ongoing progress of student learning.
13. **Systemic Structures:** An underlying systemic structure that includes professional learning opportunities and time for collaboration and calibrating scores is in place to facilitate an understanding of assessment literacy and support the use of data.

References

Darling-Hammond, L., Herman, J., Pellegrino, J., et al. (2013). Criteria for high-quality assessment. Stanford, CA: Stanford Center for Opportunity

[Modernizing the Teaching Workforce for Learner-Centered, Competency-Based, Equity-Oriented Education](#)

[Strengthening and Streamlining Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems: Guidelines and Support for Leadership Teams](#)

[VTmtss 2019 Field Guide](#)