

WCSD Assessment Philosophy

We strongly believe that

- Assessment is the **continuous process** of collecting information **to make decisions** about teaching and learning.
- A **balanced** assessment system is essential for determining and reporting the learning needs, progress, and achievement of students at the **state, district, and classroom** levels.
- The most impactful assessment **comes from a teacher** with well-planned units, lessons, and multiple strategies designed to **elicit evidence of student learning**.
- Assessments must begin with **clear purpose, targets and design** to provide information from which to make valid inferences.
- **The assessment itself should never be the learning target.**
- Assessment use must always **adhere to the intended purpose** of the assessment.
- Practicing for an assessment by focusing on specific items and tested skills does not promote lasting student achievement.
- **Formative Assessment Processes including close, purposeful observation** provide valuable data integral to student learning at *every grade level*.
- **Self-assessment, goal-setting and self-monitoring** activities enhance student self-efficacy.
- **Clear, specific, and timely feedback** must accompany assessment.

“No matter how much data we scramble to collect, until the student knows what to do, assessment from without has no impact” --Spandel, 2009



A well-designed assessment program will support the District's strategic plan, align with the adopted State Standards and encompass the following elements:

Element #1: **Balanced assessment** programs must include a variety of assessments **both for and of learning** to provide teachers and students with the **information** they need to progress toward **College/Career Readiness**. Adopted standards-based curricula provide the basis for clear targets, state accountability assessments show a summative evaluation of student achievement at a point in time, interim assessments administered at defined intervals gauge student progress, and continuous classroom assessment measures progress towards those targets to inform day-to-day feedback. Students must be given opportunities to be assessed both **formatively and summatively** throughout the school year.

Element #2: **Informed decisions** are based on data from a variety of assessments administered within recommended guidelines. The assessment **time frame and suggested use** for implementation at **all levels** (state, district, and school-site) must be **published** and followed by WCSD staff.

Element #3: **Formative Assessment** is not a test item, a test, or a series of tests but rather **a planned process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes**. Formative assessment begins with clear learning targets and success criteria that have been **clearly communicated to the students** followed by frequent formative checks and the delivery of useful feedback (teacher to student, student to student, administrator to teacher) to facilitate goal setting and self-assessment.

Element #4: **Meaningful assessments serve clear and appropriate purposes, reflect clear and valued student learning targets, and are designed to yield accurate results about the learning targets**; all WCSD assessment users must **understand the elements of quality assessment**.

- **Purpose:** The assessment purpose must be clear for both designers and users. Before designing an assessment, determine the appropriate purpose by asking the questions, "Who will use the results and how they will be used?"
- **Targets:** All assessments (for and of learning, informal and formal) must be aligned to clear learning targets informed by the adopted standards. The granularity of the target will depend on the purpose of the assessment. Targets must be clearly communicated to the students.
- **Design:** It is important to match the intended learning targets to the appropriate assessment method. Of the four basic methods (selected response/short answer, extended written/constructed response, performance assessment, personal communication), no one design choice is superior to the other; the selection is dependent upon the learning target and the purpose of the assessment. The sampling size must be large enough to inform the decisions users intend to make. All items must be clear and free of bias to produce valid data.

Element #5: **Students** are the most **important users** of assessment **information** and must be instructed about the different types of assessments. Teachers need to show students how to use available assessment data as a basis for **self-evaluation and goal setting**.

Element #6: Assessment is an integral part of the **data-driven cycle** PDCA or PDSA – *Plan, Do, Check/Study, Act*. **Regularly scheduled PLC time must be reserved for deep analysis of assessment data** to inform instruction, encourage learning and enhance student achievement.

