

New Mexico Public Education Department

Balanced Assessment System

Providing New Mexico educators, students, and families robust information to ensure progress and opportunity for every New Mexico student



Introduction to the New Mexico Balanced Assessment System

The mission of the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) is to improve student learning. One of the important foundations of that mission is ensuring the development and administration of valid, reliable, fair, and meaningful assessments that:

- Measure the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction
- Include data systems and structures that provide students, teachers, administrators, and stakeholders with the information needed to make informed decisions
- Produce a measure indicating progress toward readiness for college and career
- Uphold the belief that all students can learn and achieve at high levels
- Hold schools and the PED accountable to create equitable opportunities for all students

An assessment system is balanced when the assessments in the system are *coherently* linked through a clear specification of learning targets, they *comprehensively* provide multiple sources of evidence to support educational decision-making, and they *continuously* document student progress over time (NRC, 2001).

Why is assessment information important?

All elements of a school’s culture, including student aspirations and a code of conduct that promotes positive learning behaviors, benefit from the use of student learning data. Improving instruction is nearly impossible without it. The data-driven cycle of assessment, analysis, and action, which is indispensable for increasing student achievement, must be deeply embedded in the school’s culture and a top priority for schoolwide improvement (Fenton & Murphy, 2020).

Data-driven instruction is the philosophy that schools should focus on two simple questions: First, how do you know whether students are learning? And second, when they are not, what do you do about it? Simply put, data-driven instruction is the practice of using information

gathered from learning results to determine what comes next in instruction.

New Mexico is helping the state’s school districts implement balanced systems of assessment. To that end, PED is offering three assessment system components that districts can use to support and align their assessment strategy, providing the foundation for identifying effective instruction and promising practices within the district and school. As explained below, the three components are known as formative, interim, and summative assessment. This integration of all three assessment components provides multiple measures of student learning.



New Mexico Balanced Assessment System

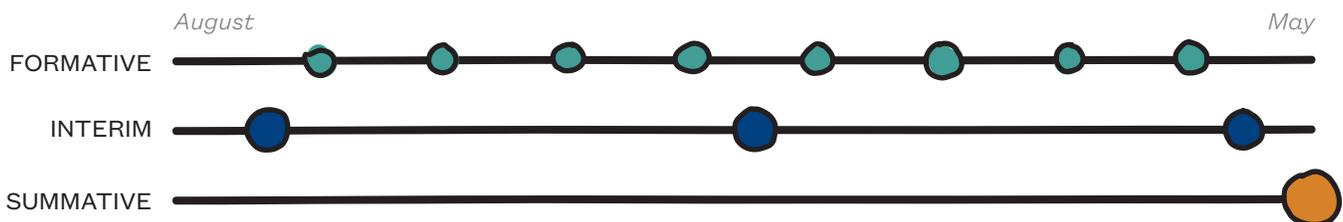
Formative Assessments	Interim Assessments	Summative Assessments
Descriptions		
<p>A planned, ongoing process used by students and teachers to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of intended learning outcomes and support students to become self-directed learners.</p>	<p>Assessments administered during instruction to evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic goals, which inform educator and policymaker decisions at the classroom, school, and district levels.</p>	<p>Assessments that support various types of determinations (e.g., proficiency, competency) at the end of a defined instructional period, such as a unit of instruction or a school year, to evaluate students' performance against a set of learning targets for that period.</p>
Use of the Results		
<p>Teachers provide specific and timely feedback to students and adjust instruction "in the moment" or plan future instructional activities or units.</p>	<p>School and district instructional leaders, along with teachers, use the data to determine whether student growth toward grade-level expectations is adequate and set goals for future growth.</p>	<p>School and district instructional leaders plan resource allocation, evaluate programs, plan professional learning, and help select curriculum materials.</p>

Each type of assessment has specific purposes and uses, but whether they are designed to support the work of teachers and students in classrooms or are used by state and district policymakers to monitor educational trends, **New Mexico's content standards** serve as the through line for all assessments in the system. Formative assessment practices, for example, are regularly embedded in teacher actions that make student thinking visible. These minute-by-minute checks on student understanding are used to strengthen instruction and make in-the-moment adjustments to support student learning. To complement this, interim assessments are used by educators to monitor the progress of students across a school year. These assessments provide insight into how students' knowledge and skills relate to specific

academic goals. While schools and districts have long employed formative and interim assessment tools to support student learning, NM PED has partnered with Cognia to provide formative and interim assessment solutions that are aligned to New Mexico content standards and the state summative assessment.

This guide serves to outline the assessment solutions available to all New Mexico educators. Specifically, it details the purpose of each assessment solution provided, available assessment resources, and information on how to use and access the data gleaned from each. NM PED has made these assessments available to all schools, but it is up to districts to determine how to best leverage these tools to meet their local needs.

Assessment throughout the year



Formative Practices: Strengthen instruction

Formative practices should be an ongoing process used by students and teachers during learning and teaching to elicit evidence of student learning. In a learning partnership, students and teacher use the evidence to improve students' understanding of intended curricular learning outcomes and support them to become self-directed learners. High-quality formative practices are inseparable from instruction and are used to provide in-the-moment feedback to students and for teachers to gain insight into student thinking so they can adjust instruction to best meet students' learning needs.

Why use formative assessment practices?

The primary purpose of formative assessment practices is to provide feedback about student learning. One type of formative assessment is using informal checks during the teaching learning process. Another is to integrate question sets in lesson plans—to assess what your students understand during a lesson so misunderstandings can be corrected as part of the lesson.

What are our new formative resources?

New Mexico's formative resources are designed to help teachers and learners identify misconceptions, define success, and adjust instruction. They include:

- Dozens of pre-assembled, high-quality questions that pinpoint learning targets and include detailed support materials.
- A computer-adaptive universal screening program with flexible progress-monitoring tools that deliver actionable and insightful data.
- Adaptive tools designed to allow students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to demonstrate what they know and can do.

These formative resources are aligned to our standards, so they are consistent with New Mexico instruction and assessment.



New Mexico's formative resources:

For more information about New Mexico's formative resources, see the links below:

- Cogna
newmexico.onlinehelp.cognia.org/formative-assessments
- Istation
www.istation.com/newmexico
- College Board
collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/pdf/using-official-sat-practice-classroom.pdf
collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/k12-educators/advising-instruction/practice-resources/coaching-tools
- Dynamic® Learning Maps
dynamiclearningmaps.org/newmexico



Interim Assessments: Monitor progress

Interim assessments are administered during instruction to evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic goals in order to inform educator and policymaker decisions at the classroom, school, and district levels. The specific designs of the interim assessment are driven by the purpose and intended use, but the results of any interim assessment must be aggregable for reporting across students, occasions, and concepts.

Why use interim assessments?

NM interim assessments provide information at three points during the school year (i.e., fall, winter, and spring) on student progress toward achieving the learning goals for a grade level.

The information can be used to anticipate performance on the NM-MSSA at the end of the school year. This information may indicate whether students' current achievement path (a) is likely to lead to a desired outcome (e.g., reaching Proficient at the end of the year), or (b) indicates that additional instructional attention and resources are needed to alter the current achievement path.

Based on interim assessment information, parents, teachers, school and district leaders, and students themselves can determine what additional instructional attention and resources may be needed.

Results of interim assessments serve multiple purposes at student, school, and district levels. Interim assessments:

- Track and predict student performance and growth toward grade-level proficiency
- Identify students who need additional attention
- Evaluate curricular programs

The results help inform instruction in the short term and guide policy and program decisions in the longer term.



New Mexico's interim assessment resources:

For more information about New Mexico's interim assessment resources, see the link below:

- iMSSA
newmexico.onlinehelp.cognia.org/imssa
- Istation
www.istation.com/newmexico
- College Board
collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/pdf/using-official-sat-practice-classroom.pdf
collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/k12-educators/advising-instruction/practice-resources/coaching-tools



Summative Assessments: Inform program and policy decisions

Summative assessments are designed to support various types of determinations (e.g., proficiency, competency) and are given at the end of a defined instructional period, such as a unit of instruction or a school year, to evaluate students' performance against a set of learning targets for that period.

Why do we use a statewide summative assessment?

Results of the summative assessment are used for multiple purposes. The U.S. Department of Education holds states, including New Mexico, accountable for the performance of their schools and districts. PED uses the results of statewide summative assessments as the foundation of multiple accountability indicators.

At the Local Education Agency (LEA) level, summative assessment results:

- Identify students' performance toward grade-level standards
- Inform accountability policies
- Reveal curriculum and instructional needs for the next academic year

What is our statewide assessment?

The components of New Mexico's comprehensive annual assessments include:

- NM-ASR: Science, grades 5, 8, and 11
- Spanish Reading grade 11
- NM-MSSA: English language arts and mathematics, grades 3–8 and Spanish language arts, grades 3–8
- DLM: The New Mexico Alternate Assessment for English language arts and mathematics in grades 3–8 and 11, and science in grades 5, 8, and 11.
- College admission test, grade 11 (via the SAT® from The College Board®)
- ACCESS and Alt-ACCESS for English learners



The NM-MSSA at a glance:

For more information about New Mexico's summative resources, see the links below:

- NM-ASR
newmexico.onlinehelp.cognia.org
- NM-MSSA
newmexico.onlinehelp.cognia.org
- DLM
dynamiclearningmaps.org/newmexico
- College Board
webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/assessment-3/sat-psat/
- ACCESS
wida.wisc.edu/resources

August

May

SUMMATIVE



Resources

For questions related to New Mexico's assessment policy, see webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/assessment-3.

For a concise history of U.S. education policy, see this *Education Week* [timeline](#).

The U.S. Department of Education provides extensive information, including an [overview of ESSA](#).



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