

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

8.3 *Faculty use a variety of curriculum-based assessments aligned with learning outcomes and instructional practices to assess student learning, including formative, summative, authentic performance and student self-assessment.*

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

Benchmark 8.3 is about the connection between curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Data is used to identify the practices/processes that are creating positive results and those are replicated to the greatest extent possible. This requires educators to place as much emphasis on formative feedback as on summative assessments, and support each other in the use of a variety of assessment practices. It means creating a shared vision of the role of assessment in learning and what constitutes growth-producing feedback, versus the role of traditional assessment. Only then can teachers fully embrace assessment as a means to an end, not just an end-point.

II. As a review team member, what evidence do I look for?

Here are a few fundamental guiding questions for teachers to ask (or to ask teachers) in order to be able to point to examples of the extent to which the assessment described in Benchmark 8.3 is actually taking place at the school:

- How does the curriculum (not the textbook) guide your instruction and assessment practices? Are assessments aligned with the curriculum?
- What artifacts do you have to show the use of a variety of assessment methods in different content areas?
- Do teachers use formative assessment? Summative assessment? Authentic assessment? Student self-assessment? If yes, how does each of these forms of assessment impact instructional practice? How pervasive are these assessments in all grade levels and in all content areas?
- What input do students have into how they will demonstrate their learning?
- How are assessment practices aligned between grades and content areas?

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III. What are the key differences between the levels of the rubric?

At level **3-Fully Meets Benchmark**,

teachers use formative assessment to adjust instruction quickly, while learning is in progress. Formative assessment is viewed as practice and student are not penalized for moving through the learning process.

The feedback provided to students gives them information as to where they are and what they have to do next. Students have options in how they will demonstrate their learning. The curriculum, not the textbook, guides instruction and assessment decisions. Assessments are authentic, stemming from real-world situations and scenarios. Assessments focus on critical-thinking and demonstrated learning. Teachers are expected to vary the types of assessment used in their classroom and they are given the time and support needed to become proficient in using them.

At level **4-Exceeds Benchmark**,

assessment tools and practices in all content areas are evaluated to determine their effectiveness in measuring what students know and are able to do and the context in which they will use their knowledge now and in the future. Formative assessment is used by students to self-assess and set goals, giving them control over their own learning. The school provides a student-centered, hands-on, project-based environment where assessments are authentic to real-world situations and scenarios. Assessments are designed to support individual student learning outcomes. Students and teachers continually use data from assessments to self-assess their teaching and learning practices to improve performance.

At level **2-Partially Meets Benchmark**,

there have been efforts by some teachers to vary the types of assessments they use. Although the textbook plays a major role in determining what assessments will be used in most classes, some efforts have been made to include formative assessment practices and providing options in demonstrating learning. There is some evidence that data from assessments are being used to inform instructional practices.

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At level **1-Does Not Meet Benchmark**,

teachers do not distinguish between teaching and learning. Assessments are generic and do not give a realistic picture of student learning. The textbook - rather than the expected learning outcomes identified in curriculum - dominates instruction and assessment. Traditional evaluation practices inhibit student learning by focusing on “one-size-fits-all” summative assessments and incorporating non-academic criteria (such as attendance, effort, and behavior).

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Determine the alignment of the textbook to the expected curriculum
- Support teachers in their use of a variety of assessment methods
- Promote collaboration in planning projects and designing assessments
- Establish an expectation of assessment results being used to inform instructional practices

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Define the role of assessment and develop grading practices school-wide that support teachers in designing assessments based on the curriculum and student learning needs
- Allow students to have a voice in how they will demonstrate their learning
- Work collaboratively to plan authentic performance tasks that are interdisciplinary and require the appropriate use of formative and summative assessments

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Institutionalize processes/protocols that allow teachers to continually evaluate their assessment practices based on student learning data
- Define expectations school-wide for authentic performance tasks that reflect high levels of rigor and relevance
- Adjust evaluation practices to support a student-centered, hands-on, project based environment

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- Continually ask students to self-reflect on their learning and set goals to give them control over their own learning
- Provide job-embedded and on-going support for teachers as they self-assess their assessment practices
- Design assessments to support individual student learning outcomes

V. What are key terms for common understanding? (Refer to the NCEA Glossary for the key terms listed below.)

Formative assessment
Summative assessment
Authentic performance
Rigor
Relevance