



semester's) instruction. In a sense, the pretest provides information for the classroom teacher as well as instructional leaders at the school and district level.

Each star in Figure 1 represents a formative assessment event. These events may occur at any time, even multiple times in a single day. Focusing on very specific segments of instruction, they provide information to students and their teachers that is both evaluative (What have you learned?) and directive (What do we still need to do?). Depending on the level of specificity, these assessments can also be diagnostic (Why do you continue to experience difficulties in this area?). The pretest guides instruction in a general way, while the formative assessments continue to guide instruction in much more specific ways. At each formative assessment, the teacher and student are able to assess the student's current functioning and either move forward with confidence that the student has mastered the current material, or identify material that needs further review.

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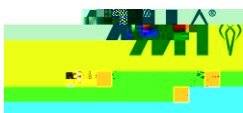


Table 1: The Three Tiers of Assessment

Feature	Formative	Interim	Summative
What is their primary purpose?	Feedback to adjust ongoing teaching	Evaluation of student progress; informing decisions at classroom, building, and district level	Evaluation of student learning after an extended period of instruction; student grading and faculty/course evaluation
On what do they focus?	Short-term goals and objectives; material recently covered	Short- and intermediate-term goals; material covered over a period of weeks	Long-term goals, all material covered in a course or grade
What kinds of items do they contain?	Highly focused, curriculum embedded; they may not appear to be test items at all but part of instruction	Combination of general and specific items; they look like traditional multiple-choice and constructed-response test items	Full range of cognitive levels (depths of knowledge) with focus on concepts and rules, rather than details; item types are similar to those found in interim assessments
Who creates them?	Classroom teachers, with some help from outside experts as necessary	Outside experts and teachers from around the district or state write the items; classroom teachers may assemble items into tests, or outside experts may do so	Outside experts create the items; teachers from around the district or state review the items; district or state staff and outside experts assemble test forms from approved field tested items
Who administers them?	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher or Proctor
How frequently are they administered?	Could be daily	Every several weeks	Once or twice a year
Who uses the results?	Teacher, Parents/ Guardians	Teacher,	

