

# Sensible Assessment Practices in Action



Connecticut State Department of Education  
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## Introduction

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*Sensible Assessment Practices in Action* is designed to support district administrators and teachers to plan and support students throughout the school year. Suggestions and resources consist of short, topic-specific focal areas that can be implemented from the district level down to the individual classroom.

This resource complements the [Sensible Assessment Practices](#) document and embeds key information contained in the guiding documents, [Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together](#), [Plan for Reimagining Connecticut Classrooms for Continuous Learning](#), and [Connecticut's Framework for Accelerating Educational Opportunity and Access](#).

**The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) recognizes that students learn best when they are in-person with their educators and friends. As a result, the CSDE continues to support districts in the 2021-22 school year to ensure students have access to in-person learning while in the safest environments possible. Please note that remote learning (as referenced in this document) may occur in very limited circumstances when students and/or staff are in COVID-19 isolation or quarantine ,or the school/district is addressing localized outbreaks. Additionally, remote learning may be used in individualized circumstances for students with elevated risks from COVID-19 exposure.**

## Gathering Data



[Connecticut Sensible Assessment homepage](#)

*“A strong start sets the stage for meaningful learning and powerful impacts. Teachers need to be mindful of the place their students are in the learning cycle. Surface learning sets the necessary foundation for the deepening knowledge and transfer that will come later...”*

— Douglas B. Fischer, *Visible Learning for Literacy, Grades K-12: Implementing the Practices that Work Best to Accelerate Student Learning.*

As educators plan for the school year ahead, and collaborate with vertical and horizontal teams within their school districts and programs, they should keep in mind local and state data sets that are available to help make informed decisions about student learning and progress.

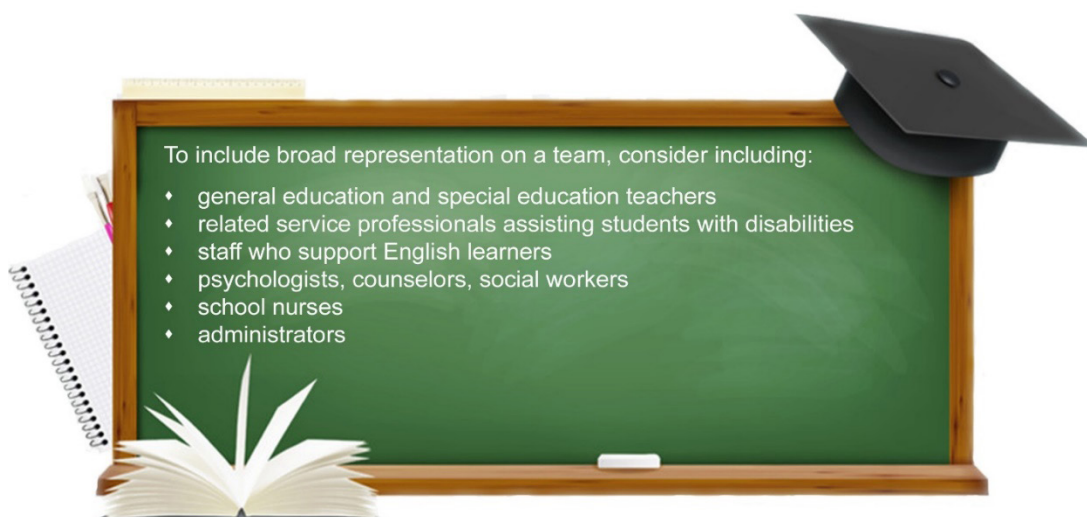
**Vertical teams** refers to educators from the current school year, purposefully communicating with the educators who worked with those same students in the previous school year. The educators who worked with students in various learning models (remote, hybrid, in person) and during the summer months can offer insight into students' strengths and weaknesses, motivation, interests, and emotional wellbeing. Creating opportunities for educators to network throughout the school year, particularly when analyzing data, will ultimately support the goals and action plans created. The focus is to improve the quality of teaching and learning and enhance student progress. Administrators should be certain that time and space is created for all teachers to regularly network vertically to identify the progression of essential learning outcomes.

**Horizontal teams** refers to all educators from the current school year, across one grade, purposefully communicating about students. Districts should design teams that include parent and community representatives to help provide equitable opportunities and access for all students, especially those who are most vulnerable. Teams assume the same critical roles and responsibilities, no matter how the instruction is provided.



*Read the definition of [Horizontal and Vertical Teams](#)*

A broad representation of expertise is recommended to maximize the planning and guidance by team educators.



## Finding Data

Educators already recognize that it is most beneficial to make interpretations based on multiple sources of information. Teachers can obtain quantitative information from [EdSight](#), which is public, and from local data systems. Established teams will need to obtain some student-specific data from district administrators, such as information from EdSight Secure.

### Other quantitative measures might include:

- summative assessment scores from past years
- interim assessment scores from previous years and the current year
- district-wide assessments including diagnostic and benchmark assessments

### When examining data, look for patterns by school, by grade, and by student groups to develop interpretations, possible rationales, and action plans.

Educators might utilize an instructional unit as a tool to collect other valuable information. Remember the type, content, and sources of student information may be different for students with disabilities particularly those with significant cognitive disabilities.

- Use student performance on informal assessments, such as a piece of student writing, a small project, or an assignment to provide feedback and supplemental instruction to help gauge students' relative skill status.
- Employ a range of regular formative assessment practices that are integrated into lessons to provide actionable feedback to students.
- Apply the results of ongoing formative assessment practices as another source of student information to adjust instruction, target incorrect or partial understanding, and to create supports to meet the diverse needs of students.
- Create flexible, short-term groupings of students based on formative assessment practices and alter them as necessary.

Remember that grades are not as important in the pre-assessments because they are meant to inform instruction.



#### **Read or download:**

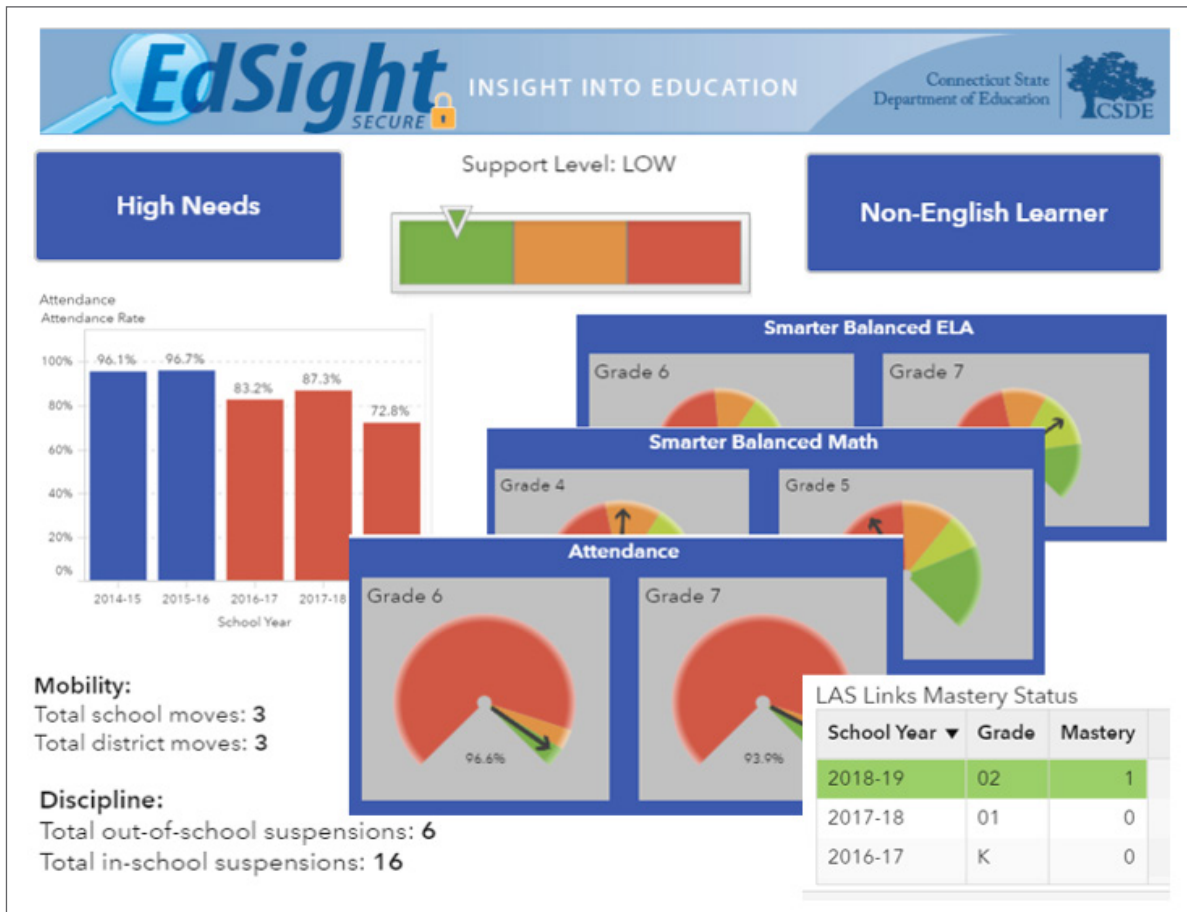
*Blog: [Five Formative Assessment Strategies to Improve Distance Learning Outcomes for Students with Disabilities](#)*

Schools might want to administer standardized measures to determine performance levels in a subject area, but doing so at the beginning of the school year may lead to unintended consequences such as misdirected focus or interpretation, incomplete analysis due to the complexity of the concerns at this time, or creating additional areas of concern that may be unrelated. However, using the results from standardized tests may be beneficial to the local school and district planning teams during the summer months as they plan for the year ahead.

In [Accelerate CT](#), a list of additional areas for data collection are available and include attendance, disciplinary action/disciplinary concerns, student mobility, English language proficiency, and Individualized Education Program (IEP) progress reports. [The Early Indication Tool](#) combines data collections to provide districts with a means to examine students' levels of need, facilitating quick and appropriate intervention.

## The Early Indication Tool

The Early Indication Tool (EIT) is a data analytics and visualization tool that uses statistical methods to differentiate the levels of support that individual students may need to reach academic milestones. The EIT assigns one of three support levels for most students: low, medium, or high.



For a detailed explanation of the EIT and how this new tool supports educators with valuable data on incoming students, watch this [video](#) or access this [document](#).

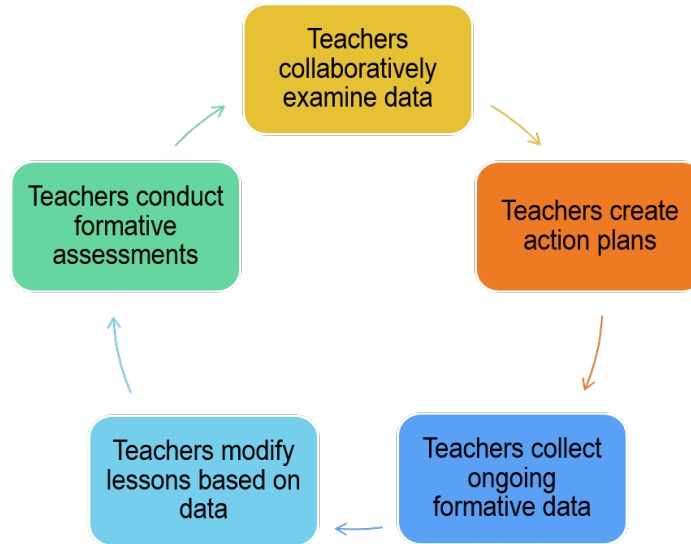
The Early Indication Tool is only available on EDSight Secure. The primary purpose of the EIT is to allow for timely student interventions by district and school staff, with the ultimate goal of improving student engagement and outcomes. Preparing graphic representations, as shown above, often make the information more comprehensible for students, parents, and other stakeholders.

When discussing qualitative and quantitative data, creating action plans, and developing instructional units, teachers will need to focus on meeting students' basic needs to ensure engagement in learning. When learners have to focus their attention on having basic needs met or avoiding a negative experience, they cannot concentrate on the learning process. In conjunction with parent/family engagement, teachers and school administrators should use a platform or means to communicate school and community supports to help meet those basic needs (i.e., information about meals provided to students, contact information for local, community aid, resources for mental health). Remember to communicate with families as parents are a critical source of information, allowing for the identification of necessary supports that may be not be evident without their engagement.

Schools need to provide a safe and inclusive learning environment to support all students, especially those who are most vulnerable. Analyzing data is an important first step. However, the real impact on student achievement occurs when teachers create an action plan and then use it to guide instruction, collect ongoing formative data, examine multiple sources of data, and adjust teaching to meet the needs of each student. This cycle then begins again.



Read or download an article on [Using Data Inquiry Cycles.](#)



This chart and a detailed explanation for using data inquiry cycles can be found at [EL Education K-8 Language Arts Curriculum.](#)

An action plan is a framework to provide comprehensive progress monitoring that incorporates measurable goals and objectives that can be met within a reasonable time frame. The evaluation methods and the type of data collected to determine if students are progressing toward meeting the goals and objectives set needs to be clearly defined within the action plan. Students progress when strong action plans address four key questions:

- What skill or content will I teach?
- How will I teach it?
- When will I teach it?
- What evidence will I collect to know if my students are learning the skill or content?

## Incorporating Social-Emotional Learning



[Connecticut Sensible Assessment homepage](#)

Teachers may find dramatic disparities in students' experiences as they return to school. Experiences during the time students are not in school due to COVID-related circumstances or serious illness affects both their physical and mental well-being. Teachers will need to intentionally reflect on the student's readiness to learn. They may have needs that require support before they can access learning. To facilitate this reflective process, it is essential for the teacher to create a community in which students can experience a sense of belonging and acceptance, regardless of their personal, family, and community experiences.

Students typically have experienced varied levels of structural and behavioral expectations during remote learning. These conditions, combined with students' varied ability levels to regulate their emotions and understand the perspective of others and other key stressors, support the purposeful inclusion of social-emotional learning for all students.

Social-emotional learning is the process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

At any time students may be experiencing trauma, financial instability, food insecurity, family discord, or health issues. Some children have suffered the loss of a home, or the loss of family or friends. They may be experiencing a range of stressful experiences and intense emotions such as anxiety, fear, and sadness that will continue to impact them in predictable and unpredictable ways throughout the year and beyond. It is important to include school-employed mental health professionals on educational teams. Communication with paraprofessionals, parents or guardians, and community partners who have critical roles should also be considered. Read a [list of social-emotional family resources](#).

A classroom community can be developed regardless of the mode of learning (remote, in person, hybrid), through ice-breakers or theme weeks, personalized videos, teacher office hours, and one-on-one check-ins. It is about making connections and establishing relationships. Regardless of the platform or location, these suggestions will support student engagement. Without taking the time to build community at the outset, any formal learning and subsequent assessment may artificially depress student achievement. A safe and inclusive learning environment fosters creativity, inspiration, and deeper learning.



**There are a lot of wonderful suggestions for virtual theme days!**



Students who are returning to school have experienced different environments and behavior expectations. School staff should focus on directly teaching and modeling age- and grade-appropriate behaviors they expect to see from their students, even more than they have in the past. It is imperative that students are provided with predictable environments that are safe and inclusive. Having a well-designed, consistent continuum of support, engaging appropriate school staff in a timely manner, and regularly communicating with families will facilitate a smoother transition for both students and teachers.

Be prepared for students to exhibit behaviors based on their potentially high levels of sadness, anxiety, depression, fear, and even anger. These behaviors may present themselves in a variety of ways and can vary across some days or times within the day. Students will be incredibly vulnerable. Continue to reinforce positive behaviors and skills you want repeated, rather than being punitive. Recognize when behaviors indicate that a child needs more individualized assistance and engage appropriate mental health professionals such as school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers.

Encourage students and families to make time to focus on the present, being intentional and thoughtful about where they are and how they are feeling. There are several methods that can help students practice this skill such as deep breathing, exercise, or guided meditation. Through the direct teaching of self-awareness, students' will develop better coping skills and ultimately practice better decision making.

To support all students' growth as they learn to understand and manage their responses to the world around them, consider creating a Break Area. The Break Area can include posters with positive statements or prompts for activities to engage in while on "break" such as the various types of breathing exercises or yoga presented above, or even stretching exercises.

Teachers will need to be proactive in their planning rather than waiting until a problem presents itself to employ these various supports. Provide validation whenever possible by saying something like, "I know this might feel scary or overwhelming." Encourage them to engage in activities that help them self-regulate such as exercise, deep breathing, regular routines that promote self-care, rest, and a healthy diet.

Teachers can model empathy and patience so that students can apply these same strategies when they encounter peers who are struggling.

Teachers should carefully observe signs for students in distress and offer more personalized support from the school team. Given that student responses to stressful events are unique and varied, some students will exhibit behaviors such as irritability or clinginess, while others may regress, demand extra attention, or have difficulty with self-care, sleeping, and eating.

Not every child will feel comfortable talking about their experiences or worries, some students may not even have the language skills to be able to name their set of experiences and feelings. Teachers may use a variety of modalities to support student experiences through art, music, games, journal writing, and other activities that promote self-reflection and expression.

## Promoting Student Self-Assessment

Whenever educators are integrating social-emotional learning, the ability for students to identify their own emotions and regulate them is important. For information on a variety of self-assessment strategies, try visiting [ReadWriteThink](#), where you will find strategy guides, a professional library, classroom resources and videos, meetings and events, and online professional development for all educators.

## A Final Note

The most critical assessment that teams, both vertical and horizontal, should consider is one centered on their students' social and emotional health.

Districts and schools need to engage all possible supports for students based on the changing needs during the pandemic. Resources for academic, behavioral, and social-emotional support are available on the CSDE COVID-19 [Resources for Families and Educators](#) webpage. Additional materials, available on the [CT Social Emotional Learning Hub](#) (part of the CT Learning Hub), provides on-demand resources to inform, educate and develop compassionate learning spaces anytime, anywhere.

### **Additional Resources**

Jacobson, Rae. “[How Mindfulness Can Help During Covid-19](https://childmind.org/article/how-mindfulness-can-help-during-covid-19/),” *Child Mind Institute*. <https://childmind.org/article/how-mindfulness-can-help-during-covid-19/>.

Williamson, Tina. “Ten Breathing Exercises for Kids with Anxiety or Anger,” *Mindfulmazing*. <https://www.mindfulmazing.com/about-me-2/>.

Dunn Buron, Kari. “[The Incredible 5-Point Scale](http://www.5pointscale.com/)”. Copyright ©2020 <http://www.5pointscale.com/>

## Engaging Families



[Connecticut Sensible Assessment homepage](#)

Finding strategies to maintain partnerships with students and their families is critical at a time when information is fast paced and ever evolving. School districts must provide access to district, school, and classroom information in equitable ways (i.e., providing communications in alternative languages, using a designated, user-friendly communication platform). Engaging families is a critical part of a student's learning process and relies on the sustainability of critical relationships in a school community. Each student and family contributes to the overall fabric and enhances the cultural diversity of a school community.

Over the last two years, the brick and mortar schoolhouses have come to look quite different from school to school. The connections between families and school communities have never been more important than they are today. Gathering spaces may look, sound, and feel quite different, but school administrators have taken measures to foster student and family connections in other ways, often through the use of virtual spaces.

This page provides recommendations and tools that educators can use to build and enhance relationships with the parents (or guardians) during an ever changing learning landscape.

Planning how to [communicate regularly with parents](#) will promote involvement and enable families to support their learners at home or in-school. As this pandemic persists, it is important to know what students and their families may be facing so that educators can best meet these needs by providing access to available resources in the school and local community. Schools can offer information about school meal options and meal distributions, make recommendations about mental health supports in the community, and other special services that are available at the local level. When it comes to bridging student learning and progress, there should be consistent and ongoing communication with families that addresses subjects like student attendance, student engagement, and learning progress. When engaging with families, encourage parents to ask questions and share concerns about their child's learning and progress.

*Family Engagement is a full, equal, and equitable partnership among families, educators and community partners to promote children's learning and development from birth through college and career.*

The [Full, Equal and Equitable Partnerships with Families](#) is Connecticut's framework for engaging families. Published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood and the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy, this resource provides a starting place for districts as they develop a community of learning with family engagement in the forefront by identifying three key areas of focus: 1) *Full* — which means that school communities fosters inclusive participation from their educators, students, families and community partners so that all school and community entities are included; 2) *Equal* — which means that all parties are aware that they reciprocally have valuable perspectives to share; and 3) *Equitable* — which means that families are empowered to work with the school and local communities to break down barriers of inequity and injustice. Full and equal partnership is needed to conduct this work and create long-lasting family relationships. The Guiding Principles advocate educators to:

- ✓ ***Build collaborative, trusting relationships focused on learning.***
- ✓ ***Listen to what families say about their children's interests and challenges.***
- ✓ ***Model high-quality learning practices.***
- ✓ ***Share information frequently with families about how their children are doing.***
- ✓ ***Talk with students about how they want teachers and families to support their learning.***
- ✓ ***Co-develop cultural competence among staff and families.***
- ✓ ***Support parents to become effective leaders and advocates for children.***

Guiding Principles from the [Full, Equal and Equitable Partnerships with Families: Connecticut's Definition and Framework for Family Engagement](#)

Determine and use the family's preferred method of contact, and communicate consistently to alleviate miscommunication. Be clear about methods and times for families to reach out to school administrators and/or teachers. Validate families by encouraging them to express their concerns. Be certain that families who are not speakers of English have access to all information in their native language.

Here are a few communication strategies that have proved to be successful in many Connecticut school districts:

**Tips for district- or school-level educators:**

- Offer getting-to-know-you meetings in smaller, informal, or virtual settings.
- Provide weekly/monthly updates on school curriculum, special projects, and school schedules.
- Offer monthly virtual Office Hours for families.
- Respond to what students and families say about social and emotional issues. Consider establishing an advisory system, so that all students have someone who knows them well and who can be their advocate in the school and the primary contact for their families.
- Include a Family/Community webpage on your district/school website that provides important information related to accessing technological support for student learning devices, Meal/Food Service Programs, community supports for mental health, and student enrichment activities.
- Provide a list of key school contacts with their names, phone numbers and email addresses (i.e., school counselor, technology coordinator to help troubleshoot school devices, classroom/subject area teacher(s)).

At the school or classroom level, teachers can use student and parent conversation starters or questionnaires to learn more about values and goals parents/guardians have for their children. Results from these surveys can give educators deeper insight into their students' strengths, interests, and personal needs. It also gives teachers an opportunity to incorporate new ways to engage students in the learning environment while also seeking out ways to reinforce relationships and create a networking system with other families and school community staff.

**Tips for school or classroom teachers:**

- Offer getting-to-know-you meetings in smaller, informal, virtual settings.
- Provide weekly/monthly updates on classroom curriculum and special projects, school schedules, and student updates.
- Host "virtual classroom visits" for families to see first-hand what their kids are doing in class and how the classroom is set up for learning.
- Offer virtual activities for families, such as cooking, eating a snack, or playing a game together. If virtual activities are not preferred, parents may prefer conducting a phone call with the teacher or school staff.
- Ask for parental assistance to better understand a child's thoughts or actions.
- When asking for support from families on skill development, make sure directions are clear and provide a model.

**Below is a list of resources to support your work with students and families.**

[\*Connecticut Family School Partnerships\*](#): The Connecticut Family School Partnership brings together the expertise and resources of five diverse educational and family advocacy agencies committed to developing a Connecticut family engagement model that creates a culture of full, equal and equitable partnerships between families, educators, and community partners to elevate student success.

[\*Learning to Grow Together to Reimagine the Possibilities: Snapshot of Best Practices and Innovations in Teaching, Learning, and Community Building for 2020–21\*](#)

[\*Connecticut State Department of Education Resources for Families\*](#): This webpage provides access to parent/guardian resources related to the whole student (e.g., nutrition, learning resources, and social/emotional health)

[\*Get Connected\*](#): As part of the Everybody Learns Initiative, eligible students and their families may qualify for assistance in obtaining access to 12-months of free at-home broadband.

[\*8 Strategies for Building Relationships with ELLs in Any Learning Environment\*](#): This article provides examples of how educators can build genuine and cohesive relationships with English learners and connect to their experiences to promote instruction.

[\*Top tips for teachers on engaging parents in learning\*](#). The Guardian, June 28, 2015. This article provides suggestions from various schools about how to engage parents in the learning process.

## Building a Community in the Classroom



[Connecticut Sensible Assessment homepage](#)





One of the most important ways to help students feel safe and more in control is to build daily routines. Many elementary classrooms use morning meetings or 1:1 conferencing to check-in with students and state the goals for the day (or week). Community in a classroom can be built in person and routines are still possible even with asynchronous distance teaching and learning. Students who know the expectations may have increased agency and accountability in their learning and will have a greater connectivity with the teacher and classroom community. All students, including students with disabilities, students with emotional support needs, and language learners all benefit from established routines, particularly when provided with visual supports for these routines.

Given that masks are worn by students and teachers as a protective measure against the spread of COVID, there are ways to improve communication during learning. When establishing the classroom norms, encourage students to speak loudly and clearly especially since lip reading is not possible when masks are worn. If possible, teachers should always project their voice clearly through a microphone, or use an amplification device if available. For students with hearing loss, teachers should consider wearing a clear face mask to make lip reading possible. Additionally, consider the ways in which hand signals or symbols can be used for specific communication purposes or classroom management. Below is resource that identifies 5 hand signals that can be used for managing class discussions both online and offline.

**Consider using hand signals in class for students to communicate.**

# 5 HAND SIGNALS

## FOR MANAGING CLASS DISCUSSIONS ONLINE AND OFFLINE

				
1 I agree.	2 I disagree.	3 I have a question.	4 I'd like to add to that.	5 I can paraphrase.

**edutopia**

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Source: Edutopia, with illustrations by Gracia Lam

### Online Learning Sites for Distance Learning

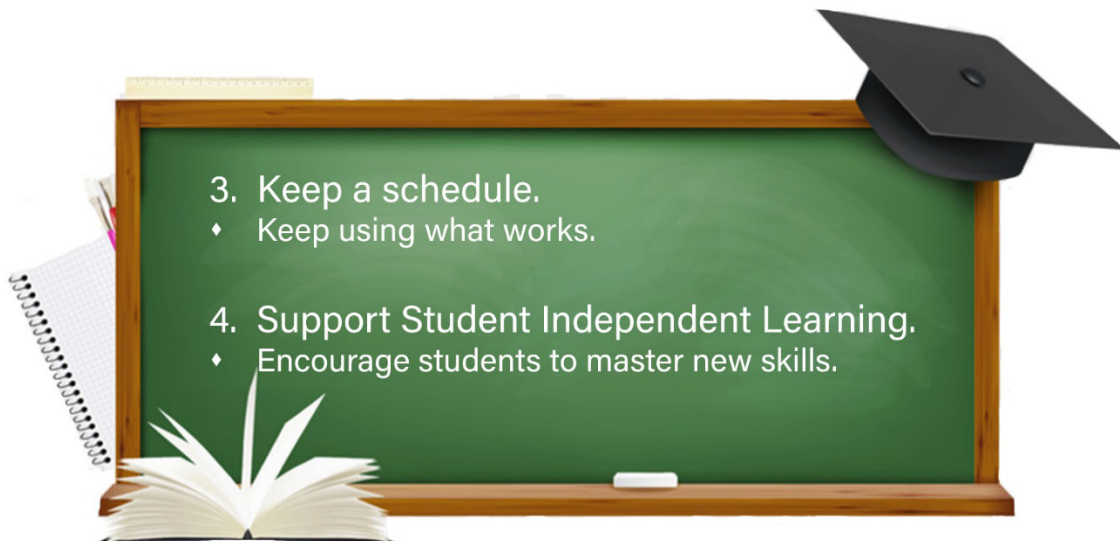


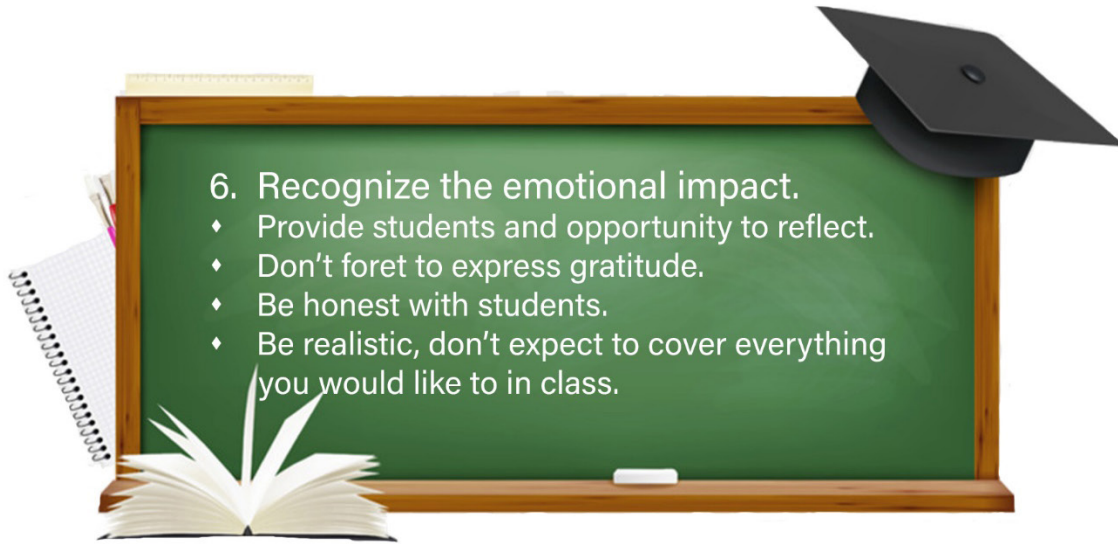
For distance learning, there are multiple options available to create check-in meetings or opportunities to chat, and sites to share videos. Some sites that offer the ability to record and share information are [SeeSaw](#), [Flipgrid](#), or a private [YouTube](#) channel. Flipgrid, Youtube, [Padlet](#) and aspects of [Google Classroom](#) do not require a paid account to utilize these tools. Direct teaching of classroom norms and the modeling of how to manage a schedule, especially as learning environments shift from in-person to remote, will create more student independence and better learning opportunities.

The following are strategies developed by Khan Academy for adapting your communication skills during remote learning to make learning more personalized and promote connection between students, families, and their digital classroom.









**Read or download:**

[7 Tips for Effective Remote Learning](#) by Khan Academy

You can also watch this [video](#) that presents information regarding 7 Tips for Effective Remote Learning.

Teachers will need to directly teach or even reteach the expectations for in-person and virtual environments. Model respectful behavior and encourage students to advocate for themselves if they feel they need to connect with support staff.

Not every child will feel comfortable talking about their experiences or worries, some students may not even have the language skills to be able to name their set of experiences and feelings. Teachers may use a variety of modalities to support student experiences through art, music, games, journal writing, and other activities that promote self-reflection and expression. Furthermore, teachers can model empathy and patience so that students can apply these same strategies when they encounter peers who are struggling.

Regardless of the learning platform, teachers will need to plan for and adapt units for delivery and clearly communicate with parents and guardians. Students will need to be familiar with tools and be taught how to use them effectively so they can participate actively. This same information will need to be shared with families to ensure that they are also engaged in the education of their children. When addressing the mental health of students, facilitate classroom meetings in collaboration with school-employed mental health professionals such as psychologists, counselors, and social workers, to allow students to collectively process their experiences as events and experiences shift throughout the school year.



# Creating Interactive and Inclusive Lessons



[Connecticut Sensible Assessment homepage](#)

## Focus on the Standards

High-quality instruction is designed around the Connecticut Core Standards. Students should be actively participating in meaningful work as educators use formative measures to determine what students already know, and what they need to know. This commitment ensures that teachers can continue to provide high-quality instruction, while providing students extensive opportunities for learning.

Along with the commitment for improving learning is student access to technology and online learning resources. The Connecticut State Department of Education created an online repository of family, student, and educator resources in the [Connecticut Learning Hub](#). These materials support educators' ability to differentiate, personalize, and scaffold for intentional, high-impact planning and alignment to assessment targets. The resources supplement student learning and provide teachers and teams of educators with materials to support curriculum planning, enhance instructional materials, and support the formative assessment process.

For easy access, this Sensible Assessments module contains a variety of resources related to the Connecticut Core Standards and tips for creating interactive and inclusive lessons using the framework for Universal Design.

Before we begin, note these resources available on the CSDE website that capture the breadth of content of our state standards.



### **Read or Download:**

[Next Generation Science Standards \(NGSS\)](#)

[Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Frameworks](#)

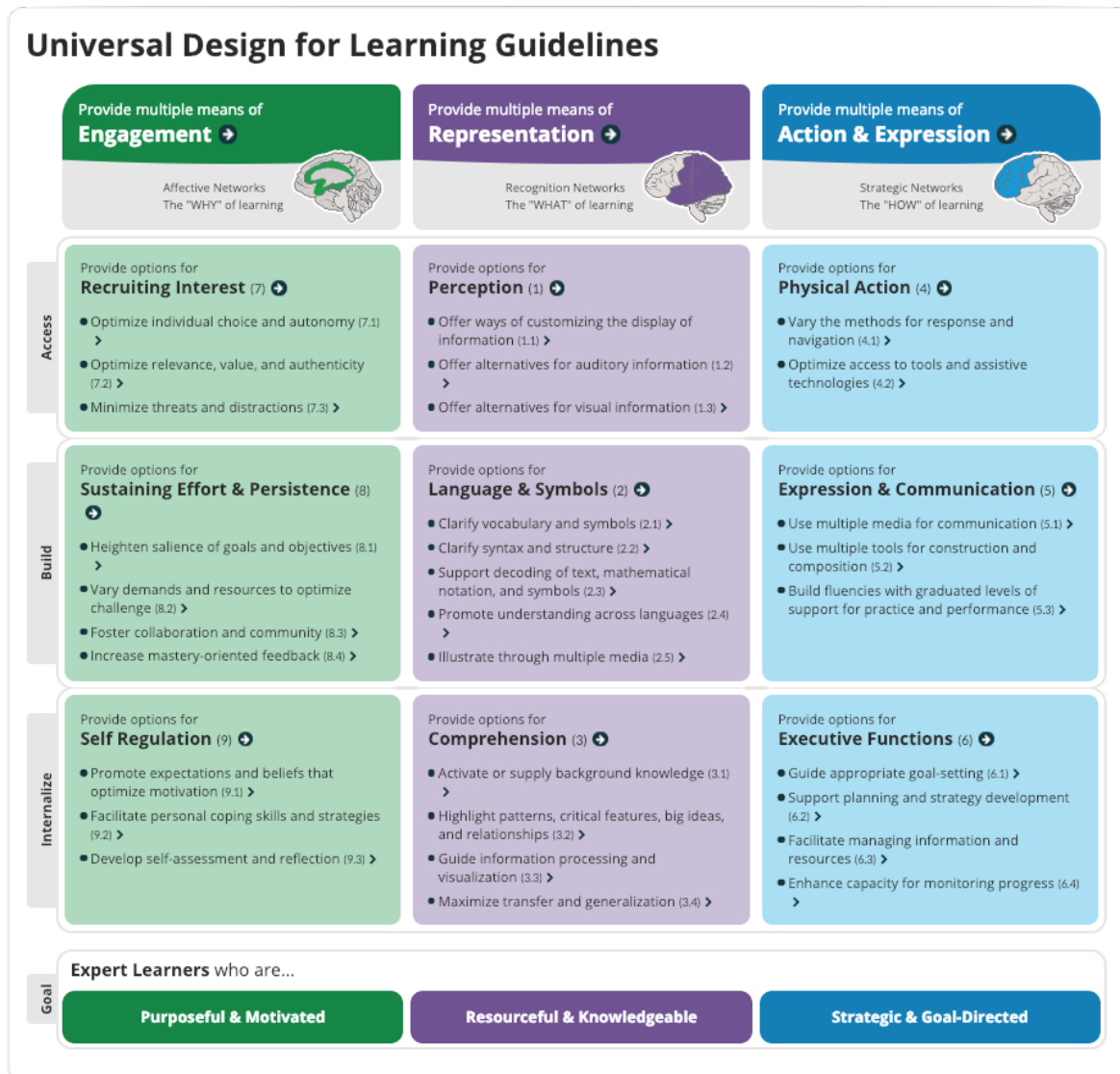
[Connecticut Core Standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts/Literacy](#)

The Educational Standards for Curriculum Alignment is an extension of the learning hub that provides a list of academic areas (i.e., art, career and technical education, early childhood, English language arts, math, science, and social studies) with direct access to those state standards.

## Incorporating Universal Design for Learning

Teachers know that instruction must be accessible to all learners across all abilities and cultural backgrounds. Teaching should be intentional and delivered in a way that meets the needs of all learners, regardless of whether the learning environment is in-person or remote.

Teachers can promote accessible instruction by incorporating the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Universal Design for Learning is a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged. Incorporating the principles of UDL reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are English learners.



[UDL Guidelines](#)

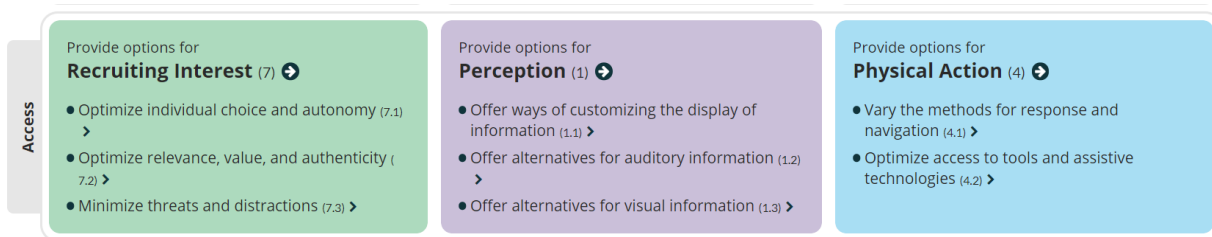
The first principle is [engagement](#), which addresses the “why” of learning. Students all learn and interact differently. Some students are most comfortable working alone, while others prefer to work with peers. Certain children are extremely self-motivated, while others can be more reticent to participate in a project or begin an activity.

The second is [representation](#) and captures the “what” of learning. This speaks to the fact that students learn and internalize information and concepts differently. A different approach to teaching and learning might be required for students who are English language learners or students with an IEP.

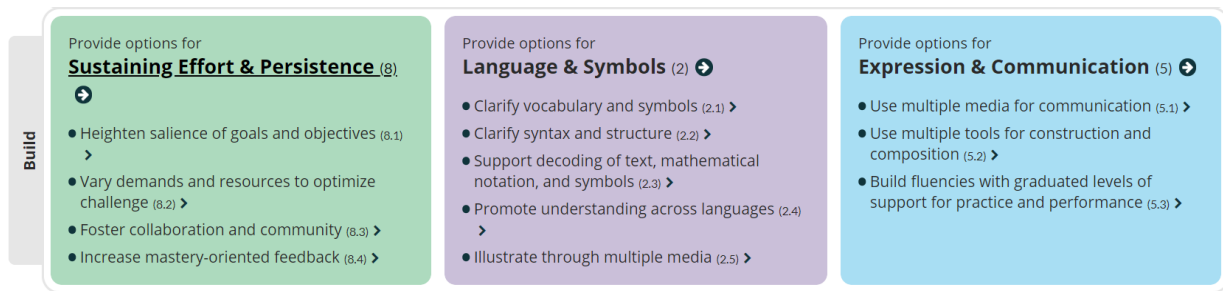
Finally, the third principle is [action and expression](#), which focuses the “how” of learning. Everyone has different ways of expressing themselves and some students may be better writers. Others may prefer to express themselves orally. Students who are English Learners or students with an IEP may need to express themselves in ways that do not include speaking or writing.

The chart can be used both vertically and horizontally to structure unit development. Vertically, the guidelines are organized according to the three principles of Universal Design.

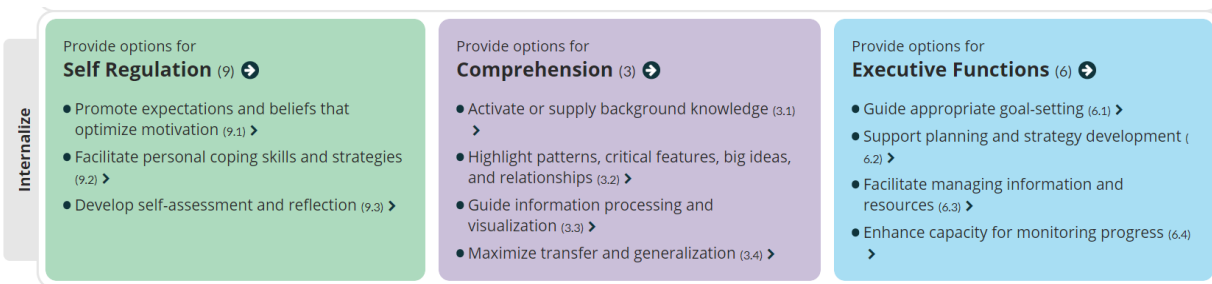
When examining and incorporating the content of this chart horizontally, each row offers specific goals aligned to the three overarching principles of learning.



The **Access** row suggests ways to reach learning goals by offering options, not necessarily in the content learned, but in how students choose to access the content helps them connect to lessons. Students not only have some autonomy in their learning, but in how they demonstrate understanding, using authentic activities and incorporating ways for students to make sense.

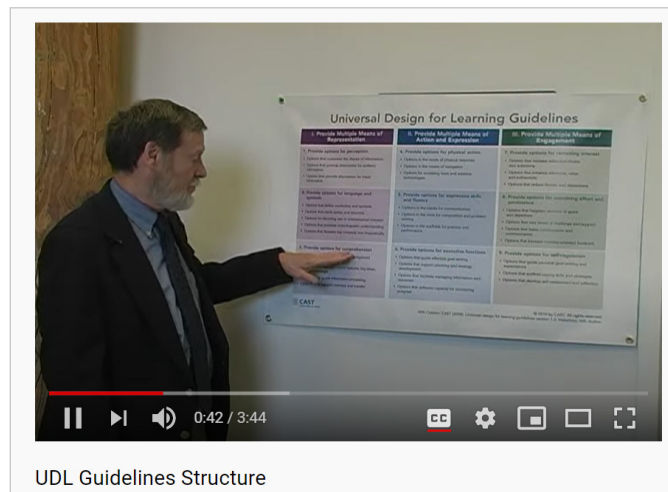


The **Build** row suggests ways to foster a sense of community and to encourage students to collaborate, presenting information in multiple manners or alternative formats. This includes using various types of media and expanding on the way text is defined. Students can express their understanding of a concept using multiple modalities.



The **Internalize** row suggests ways to empower learners through self-regulation, teaching coping skills and strategies, activating and validating prior knowledge, and enhancing students’ abilities to monitor their own progress and plan accordingly.

The [video](#) below provides an overview of the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines.



UDL Guidelines Structure

These guidelines are just that, guidelines, and can be used in myriad ways to help students reach a specific learning goal. Most educators already incorporate these strategies, but we all need to be certain that any remaining barriers to learning have been removed. This may mean working with students while they use their computers in the classroom to prepare for the possibility of a switch to all remote learning.

Mitigate difficulties and build routines while students have support from the teacher and their peers to prepare for a fluid transition, should that be necessary.

- Use student performance on early informal assessments, such as a piece of writing, a small project, or an assignment to provide feedback and supplemental instruction to help gauge students' relative skill status.
- Employ a range of regular formative assessment practices that are integrated into the lessons given in the first few weeks of school, or following a period of remote learning, to provide actionable feedback to students.
- Apply the results of ongoing formative assessment practices as another source of student information to adjust instruction, target incorrect or partial understanding, and to create supports to meet the diverse needs of students.
- Create flexible, short-term groupings of students based on initial profiles and alter them as necessary.

## Access for All Students

The students in our classrooms bring an incredible collection of strengths and abilities, personal narratives, and eclectic experiences that make the learning community a powerful place for exploration. The diversity of our school staff and student community helps bring forth a deeper understanding of humanity while forging relationships that make those in the school community feel more connected to each other and the world around them. Furthermore, when diversity is embraced and nurtured in the classroom, students deepen their interactions and relationships in their community and that ultimately promotes academic, social, and personal growth.

As we move forward with the goal of meeting the unique and diverse needs of our student learners, we must be mindful and ensure that our communication and teaching modalities are accessible to all students including English learners, students with alternative modes of communication, and students with significant cognition disabilities. This requires flexibility in how teachers plan and deliver their instruction, while accessing different learning tools and strategies to meet the varying needs of the students in the classroom.

## Resources for Accessibility and Supports

A critical component for developing inclusive instruction is planning for the needs of your students to ensure they can access instruction and demonstrate their understanding. We have already shared some resources and the Universal Design for Learning principles that guide quality planning. Whether students are learning remotely or in a school building, we want to share some more resources that are related to specific student needs. Pulling from multiple sources such as these or any you discover will allow you to create a responsive, educational masterpiece, particularly if your student is identified as an English learner, a student with disabilities, a student who is dually identified, or a student needing tiered intervention or intermittent support.

## The 5-15-45 Tool for Teachers

Teachers should review TIES Lessons for All: [5-15-45 Tool](#). This tool allows educators to use instructional materials in a way that makes them accessible and inclusive for all student learners, including those students with significant cognitive disabilities.

The TIES Distant Learning#21: [Distance Learning and Deaf blindness](#) articulates how teachers can be more proactive and inclusive in the delivery of instruction through distant learning based on student learning experiences during the first months of remote learning (spring 2020).

Consider student needs as learning environments shift from in-person to remote often with little warning. Furthermore, consider students having difficulty responding to the varied schedules for returning to in-person learning, as well as students who have been identified with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or other disabilities, often have difficulties with executive functioning. You may observe these areas of need when students are asked to problem solve, organize their work, focus, and sustain effort to name few.

### Additional Resources

[The Ties Center](#)

[Deaf Education Library](#)

[Resources for English Language Learners](#)

[Multilingual Learners](#)

[Special Education Resources for Educators](#)

[Presentation: Tips for Managing Hearing Loss During COVID-19](#)

[NCEO Five Formative Assessment Strategies to Improve Distance Learning Outcomes for Students with Disabilities](#)

Remember that even if a resource is listed as helpful for a specific disability category, it can be adapted for and be effective with other student populations.

## Reducing Communication Barriers

Although it is critical to support the use of masks or face coverings to prevent the potential transmission of COVID-19 while in school, masks do not provide optimal access to speech, lip reading, or facial expressions. In some cases, masks are a communication barrier for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, English learners, and students with disabilities. Masks distort sounds and make it more difficult for many students to understand what is being said. Students with respiratory conditions may need additional considerations to maintain appropriate safety protocols. Consider wearing clear masks or face shields that provide personal safety while also ensuring greater access to communication: both verbal and non-verbal.

## Modeling a Grade 5 Unit



[Connecticut Sensible Assessment homepage](#)

As outlined in the [Sensible Assessment Practices](#) document, one of the early planning tasks for educators involves designing the first unit of instruction for the start of the school year. These first units should not only engage students but also ensure that students, including those with high needs, will have a high probability of success with that unit. Some educators may approach introductory lessons as a time to review the important pre-requisite standards for new learning in the current grade. The length of a review unit will depend on the needs of the students in the classroom and it may last as little as a few days but is definitely not intended to extend beyond 2–3 weeks. However these units are developed, they should be highly engaging and promote success for all. Units should be designed based on collected data in areas including, but not limited to:

- assessment/data literacy
- formative assessment practices
- differentiated instruction and personal learning
- learning progressions of the Connecticut Core Standards; and
- blended learning (i.e., class that combines in-person classroom teaching with online instruction) approaches/tools.

For modeling purposes, we have created a Grade 5 unit, which you would be able to modify for the grade you teach, that incorporates procedures and activities across content areas that can be done on-site or remotely.

This unit is intended to promote community building, validate the range of emotions students are experiencing, and reinforce classroom norms and behaviors across content areas.

We chose, *The Fun We Had*, by Isaac Asimov, as our anchor literary text and supported that text with informational articles found online. Text complexity placemats for the anchor and supporting texts determined these to be appropriate for Grades 5 and 6.

### Start with a Poll

Rather than beginning the unit with a text, we suggest starting with an online poll as a way to break the ice and share experiences. This poll will be used to incorporate math activities and to encourage students to delve deeper into the responses captured.

Designing a class poll gives you the opportunity to gather important information about student experiences and to perform an emotional check-up on students. Students may be able to provide information about their own perceived areas of weaknesses and those skills they need to improve. This is also a chance to determine if students have difficulties using their devices at a time when support is a step away.

When results are explored in the various math activities woven into the unit, the analyzing of this valuable qualitative data can provide **students** with the opportunity:

- to group and classify student responses
- examine differences and commonalities among responses
- to offer social and emotional benefits in which students validate their peers' feelings and experiences by illustrating that others have encountered similar circumstances

This type of poll creates opportunities for the **teacher**:

- to better understand the specific situations of the students during any school closings
- to gain some insight into any difficulties students and their families may have suffered
- to follow up with mini-lessons to reinforce or reteach those skills students felt were unsupported with during the closure
- to glean more information specific to individual students

As a potential added option, students can create a similar poll to use with parents to help expand the information received and to build a link between the school and home community.

The math activities used to review poll responses serve as a formative assessment for teachers concerning grade-level math skills.

Using the information from the poll, students can be asked to work individually or in pairs with the information collected, to present it in multiple manners, and draw conclusions. The same information can then be used to answer short word problems, compare and contrast, determine percentage versus actual numbers, or converting to percentages or fractions.

Based on conclusions, students can brainstorm follow-up areas of interest that will develop ideas for lessons, such as remote learning study habits or computer skills, and these new ideas will be student driven and authentic.

The Fun They Had, by Isaac Asimov, is a short story written in the 1950's about school in the year 2157 and amazingly enough, there is a resemblance to remote teaching and learning!

**Consider the following:**

- Students can read the story as a whole group, in pairs, or alone.
- Provide information about the author and the time in which this was written to better understand what a classroom or school day might have been like in the 1950's.
- Ask someone who went to elementary or middle school at that time to join you for a brief interview on the phone or on a digital platform. The guest can share their experiences in school and even compare them to the experiences in schools now.
- Create a PowerPoint of images and quotes for students to reference.
- Provide a timeline of inventions used in schools across each decade. This can be made by the teacher or students can research this and present their own timelines.
- Students could answer the question, "What did the author get right about remote learning?" in a discussion or in writing.
- Instead of simply writing to a prompt, consider asking them to create a current job description compared to the job description for 2157.

To give learners options on how to interact with the text, we offer two videos of the Fun They Had. The first video is of the text being read aloud, however, there is no closed captioning. The lack of captioning hampers access for some students.

*[The Fun They Had: The video of the story by Isaac Asimov being read aloud.](#)*

The second video is a reading of the text while the text is displayed. While this is not the same as captioning, it will provide access to students who need to follow along using the text as support.

*[The Fun They Had: A video of the story by Isaac Asimov being read aloud that shows the text during the reading.](#)*

Other options you will need to consider, depending on your students' needs, may include braille text, text-reader programs, text presented with an interpreter, simplified text using support such as Boardmaker symbols, or the use of an augmentative or assistive communication device.

Remember to create activities that are universally designed and meet the needs of all your learners. Think about how students will engage.

- Do they have choices?
- How will students demonstrate their understanding?

Consider a large group activity to create a [concept map](#). Then, create topic area work groups with tools such as graphic organizers or sentence completion models.

If you choose to conduct a [close read](#) of the text while annotating, you can break students into groups or model this as a whole class activity. Revisit sections of the text you marked during your first read. Annotate details that you notice. Make a list of questions you might still have. Write one conclusion you can from the story and support it with evidence from the text. Pair the text with other literary or informational articles aligned to the theme of the anchor text. Apply similar paired or group activities to give students an opportunity to analyze, evaluate, collaborate, and explore using critical thinking skills.



We want the students to understand that thousands of other children across the country shared similar experiences during the extended school closures and varied learning environments. To reinforce this fact and to validate how students feel about the experience of learning remotely, we chose two informational texts to pair with the literary anchor text.

Howell, Taylor. May 1, 2020. "Students Share Thoughts on Learning From Home" Cumberland Times. [https://www.times-news.com/news/education/students-share-thoughts-on-learning-from-home/article\\_2e34f381-3428-555c-81dd-ac3185a762a3.html](https://www.times-news.com/news/education/students-share-thoughts-on-learning-from-home/article_2e34f381-3428-555c-81dd-ac3185a762a3.html)

Mascorro K., Sanchez, D., Echeverria, V., & Maharaj, R. June 3, 2020. [Student perspectives: the pros and cons of distance learning](https://edsource.org/2020/student-perspectives-the-pros-and-cons-of-distance-learning/632498). EdSource. <https://edsource.org/2020/student-perspectives-the-pros-and-cons-of-distance-learning/632498>

## The Connecticut Learning Hub

Exposing students to multiple texts across a topic, and including fiction and non-fiction, provide additional opportunities to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students and their varying support level needs. As a resource to locate texts and activities, we used the [CT Learning Hub](#), which can be found on the CSDE main page. The CT Learning Hub provides access to curated tools and resources to accelerate learning and advance equity.

Students can then focus on sharing their opinions on distance learning. Encourage them to think about what would have made the situation better or easier for them. Have students work with peers to brainstorm ideas to solve some of the issues that arise from the discussion. To support visual learners, consider asking students to make a Venn diagram representing the pros of distance learning, and the positive aspects of in-person learning. Try to have them find aspects of both that overlap.

A culminating activity that includes art, writing, and speaking, all of which can be done remotely or in person, is this lesson by the [Smithsonian Learning Lab](#) that provides students with an engaging opportunity to learn from the experts about the basics of curating an art exhibit. The video below introduces students to a variety of techniques and designs used by professional artists and museum curators all of whom design and build their own small exhibit as examples.

Students determine a theme, which might be remote learning, gather objects to represent that theme, and then photograph it. The photograph can be labeled and the student can write about the pieces they have chosen and what they represent. Later, students can present to the class or make a video of their speech. Teachers might pair students and have each pair share their mini-exhibit and explanation with each other. Then, students present to the whole group about what they learned about their partner to promote the building of positive culture and group cohesion. Teachers can incorporate brainstorming activities along with guidelines to make this activity as open or structured as needed.

[View pictures](#) of completed exhibits from the Smithsonian Design at Home Mini Exhibit or browse Smithsonian Distance Learning Resources.

As the school year continues, remember that starting with activities that promote equity, build community, and allow for success are the perfect way to ease students back into the classroom.

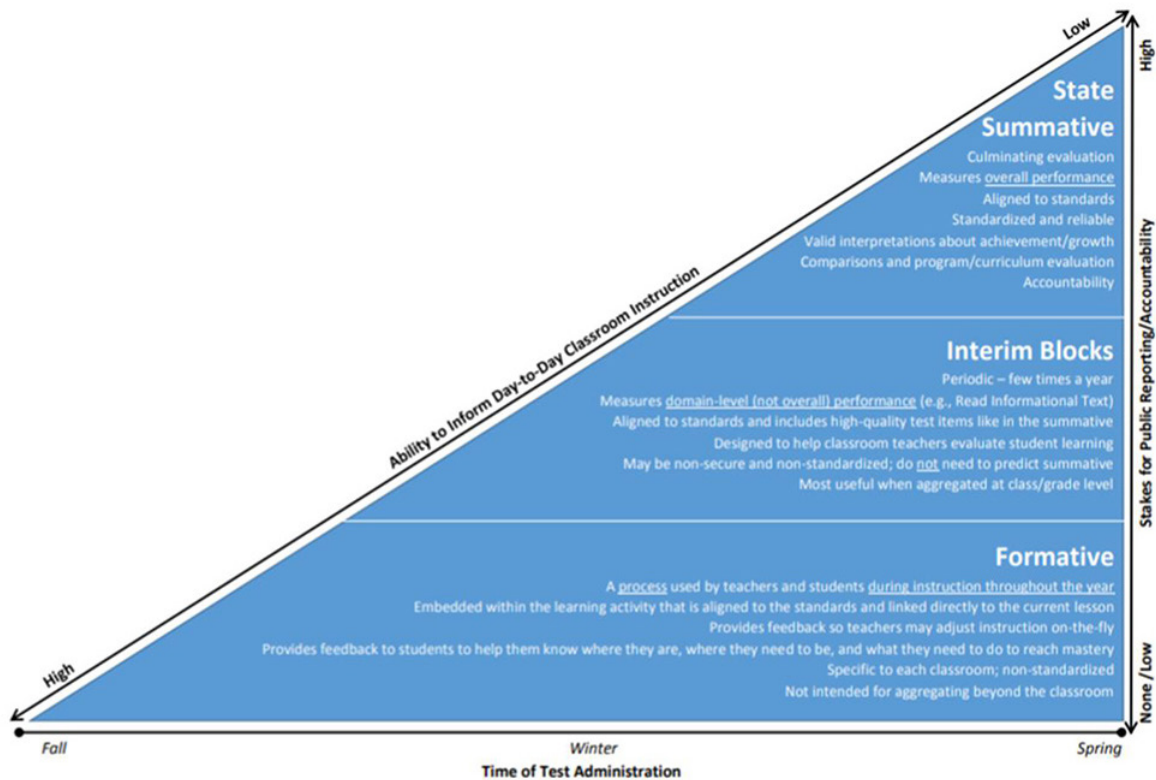


## Assessment and Instruction



[Connecticut Sensible Assessment homepage](#)

**Now what?** Over the course of the school year, you have gathered critical information about your students, planned for and created a nurturing environment, and developed units incorporating principles of Universal Design for Learning. Now, you need to transition students and their instruction to on-grade learning and naturally, on-grade assessment logically follows. Though there are many types of assessments available, educators need to know the value and the purpose of an assessment prior to administration.



The goal is administer assessments that will provide the information required or desired, without over testing students or narrowing curriculum by teaching to the test. [The Types and Purposes of Student Assessment in Education: An FAQ](#) is a document that explains the various student assessments.

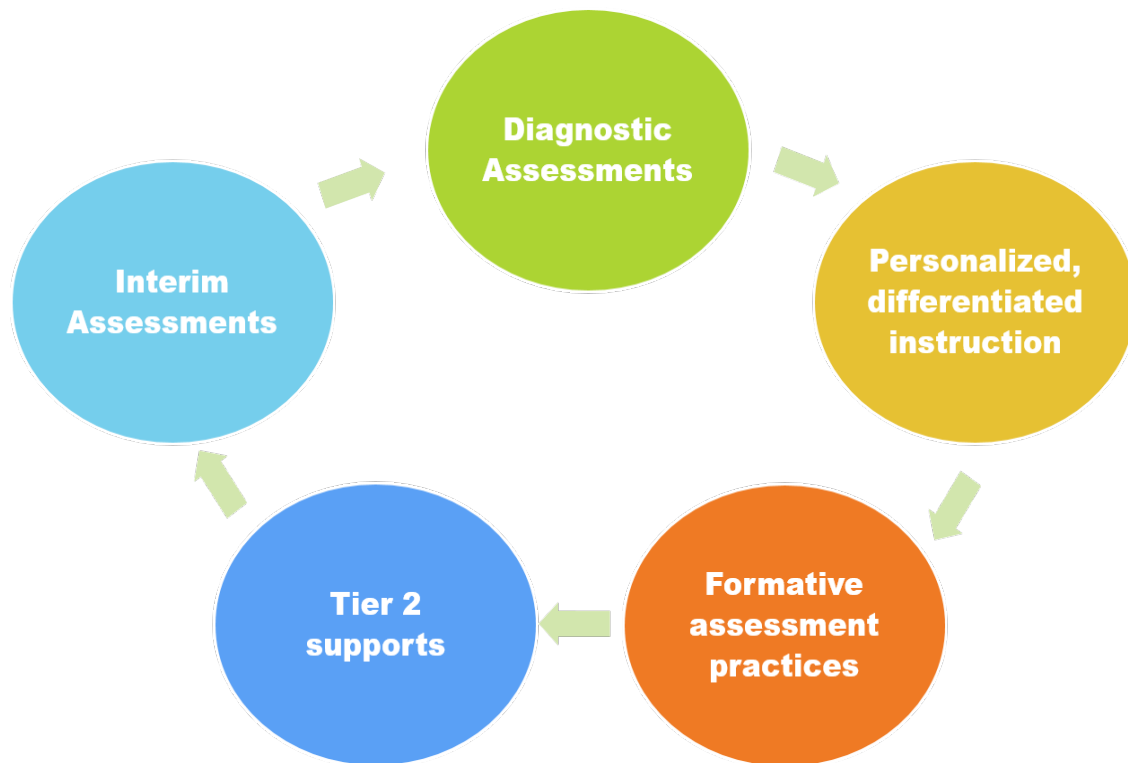
### The Assessment Process

There is no single assessment that can meet the needs of all stakeholders and purposes. Therefore, the selection of assessments must be purposeful with the assurance that the results will be used to make informed and appropriate decisions.

*The CSDE published four volumes of resources to support lesson development and learning activities in response to COVID-19. [Volume 3](#) includes information specific to student data, grading, assessment, and professional learning.*

**Formative assessment practices** and **interim assessments** have a valuable influence on daily instruction and learning, while results from the end-of-year **summative assessment** can be used with other important indices to capture the extent of growth and performance on the grade-level standards. These assessment results, combined with other sources of student-specific data, can then be used for planning.

### The Instruction and Assessment Cycle



**Diagnostic assessments** may be used to identify strengths and weaknesses in the pre-requisite skills for the on-grade content. Teachers may choose to use the existing and available diagnostic assessments in the district for desired purposes if the available assessment allows for valid interpretations of students' strengths and weaknesses relative to the defined purpose.

Teachers should provide **differentiated instruction** that covers the grade-level content, but the instruction should be personalized to the needs and interests of students.

The use of **formative assessment practices** and **Tier 2 supports** will further inform students' understanding and mastery of the skills taught. Formative assessment practices allow teachers to gauge the impact of their teaching by eliciting evidence of student learning, providing actionable feedback, and adjusting their teaching. Tier 2 supports should be offered based on the information derived from the formative assessment practices. The support can be either embedded in the classroom or provided separately, based on student's need.

The incorporation of optional interim assessments can be embedded within the local curriculum to serve as short assessments. The Smarter Balanced Interim Assessment Blocks for mathematics and English language arts can further inform educators about the strengths and weaknesses of the students in their class. Teachers may choose to administer an aligned, on-grade block at the end of a unit to evaluate learning mastery. Some schools have chosen to use purchased assessments in lieu of the interims.

Regardless, the same cycle then continues for each instructional unit for the remainder of the year.

### Diagnostic Assessments

Diagnostic assessments are:

- a type of low-stakes pre-assessments used by teachers to gauge how much information a student has about a particular topic
- typically administered at the beginning of a unit, lesson, quarter, or a specific period of time and are not used for grading
- administered before content instruction begins

- aligned to the principles of Universal Design for Learning
- allow teachers to refine lesson plans and incorporate differentiation based on the results
- influence the extent for how much and which types of background knowledge is needed as teachers introduce the content
- used to create flexible, short-term groupings based on student profiles

Keep in mind that diagnostic assessments differ from formative assessment practices. The results of diagnostic assessments become the foundation that supports the teacher's developing unit or lesson goals, while formative assessments are used *during* instruction to gauge ongoing student understanding of the content, allowing for timely adjustments during instruction.

For the many districts that have developed their own units of study and corresponding lessons, they have also developed pre-assessments or mini performance tasks aligned to each lesson for the purpose of informing instructional decisions. Furthermore, teachers have developed and used their own assessments based on learning targets that are considered pre-formative in nature. Some examples include one-minute response, entrance tickets, KWL charts (graphic organizers), anticipation guides, and concept sorts. Keep in mind, these types assessments focus on content, topic, and conceptual knowledge. Similar pre-assessments or mini performance tasks have been developed for other content areas. So, in this sense, the aforementioned assessments can be used to identify students' strengths or weaknesses, especially in the prerequisite skills for on-grade content.

A more common occurrence might be to use specific subtests from standardized diagnostic instruments to provide information in areas not assessed by screening or progress monitoring. Examples of common diagnostic assessments include the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments, the NGSS Interim Assessments, Developmental Reading Assessments, DIBELS, or easyCBm.

**Diagnostic Assessments can also be informal:**

- surveys
- questionnaires
- text book pre-course tests
- error analysis of math problems or computation
- analysis of student work samples from class assignments
- observations
- teacher-student conferencing

As a reminder, we encourage the use of diagnostic assessments only when there is a clear expectation that they will provide new information about a student's learning needs that can be used to develop more focused or powerful instruction.

## **Differentiated Instruction**

Differentiated instruction is an instructional framework that emphasizes the ways that teachers structure their instruction to meet the varying needs of their students.

Teachers can differentiate at least four classroom components to provide more effective instruction:

- The content, which is the identified skills or information taught
- The instructional process or the tasks and activities the student will engage in to learn the content
- The products or culminating activities and projects that allow the student to demonstrate their understanding and extend their knowledge
- The learning environment or altering the organization and structure of the classroom

Teachers provide differentiated instruction throughout lessons by reacting to responses provided by students. A few examples of strategies that can be incorporated to support students' learning and academic progress involve altering the presentation of the content, providing manipulatives and models, allowing choices in tasks or methods for final products, or encouraging students to select aspects related to the timing or order of tasks.

Flexible grouping can be used to address not only the needs of students experiencing difficulties, but also those of high-achieving students who are ready to move on to a more complex skill or to explore a particular topic in more depth than is usually provided by the curriculum. The manipulation of the components of differentiated instruction allows the teacher to address the needs of all students in the class in real time. Students who may be struggling with a particular concept can be grouped together, even in a virtual breakout room. Students, such as English learners, who may need more focused information and vocabulary development, can be supported as well.

## Scientific Research-Based Intervention

Scientific Research-Based Intervention (SRBI) is not new to Connecticut teachers. In fact, the implementation of research-based interventions that facilitate success in the general education setting for a broad range of students has been a focus in Connecticut for more than a decade.

The model is based on three tiers of instruction that are part of a comprehensive educational system involving scientific, research-based core general education practices and interventions, with supports from a wide range of support services personnel. These tiers should not be viewed as categorical placements or as “gates” to special education. Rather, when interventions are designed to meet specific students’ needs, implemented with fidelity, and include data demonstrating students’ progress, most students will not require special education services.

*The CSDE published four volumes of resources to support lesson development and learning activities in response to COVID-19. [Volume 4](#) offers a variety of resources that focus on tiered instruction, [SRBI](#), and [MTSS Behavioral Resource](#).*

## Tier 1 Instruction

Effective Tier 1 instructional practices create a crucial base for the tiered model of SRBI; the success of the other two tiers rests heavily on the practices in Tier 1.

There are varieties of effective instructional strategies such as flexible groupings or the use of graphic organizers that can be applied across a wide array of content areas. All students within each tier need to be monitored to confirm progress and it is important to identify struggling learners who need additional support as well as students who are excelling and are in need of enrichment activities.

In Tier 1, “at risk” students receive supplemental instruction during the school day in the regular classroom. This is often accomplished through differentiated instruction. The use of flexible small groups can help in this differentiation, with various groupings providing opportunities for additional practice or explicit instruction in specific areas. Additionally, teachers can offer opportunities for student discourse and reflection, while providing ongoing feedback as part of formative assessment processes. Tier 1 students who would benefit from supplemental, focused instruction are those students who have been identified as English learners (ELs).

## Tier 2 Instruction

Students who are not able to demonstrate success on important benchmarks despite adequate instruction differentiated to meet their needs, should receive Tier 2 instruction. Tier 2 instruction is short term, lasting anywhere between 8 and 20 weeks, while the student remains part of the general education system yet receives supports from specialists.

Interventions must be research based, be reasonably feasible for educators to use, and accurately target the student’s area of difficulty. These interventions are provided as supplemental and do not replace core instruction.

Accurate pinpointing of individual student’s needs and selection of appropriate interventions are critical to the success of Tier 2 interventions. Tier 2 is typically implemented with groups of three to six students all of whom have similar needs. Teachers use modeling, active participation, corrective feedback, and self-monitoring, in addition to a variety of other strategies. The teacher and intervention teams should monitor the progress of the interventions used and determine their effectiveness.

Providing Tier 2 intervention remotely can be difficult. However, teachers can attend to the needs of struggling learners using the “breakout” room feature on digital platforms with assistance from non-instructional staff so that small group instruction can occur. Consider providing “packaged” video content for pre-teaching and the building of foundational skills. Be sure to collaborate with interventionists, special educators, and language support staff to identify evidence-based strategies and schedule distance learning to ensure that students who receive support from an interventionist continue to do so. It is extremely important that teachers connect with families regularly by phone, text, or e-mail to answer questions. And lastly, make use of supports for student access, language, and communication needs and resources that are at a student’s ability level and are content relevant.

### Tier 3 Instruction

For students making inadequate progress with Tier 2 instruction, intensification of interventions should be considered.

The primary difference between Tier 2 and Tier 3 involves the intensity or individualization of the instruction. Greater intensity can be achieved with a smaller teacher-student ratio, a longer duration of instruction, and more frequent progress monitoring. Tier 3 instruction requires careful planning and should be provided by specialists or other trained educators.

While Tier 3 instruction provided remotely may present unique challenges, teachers can maintain the use of current intervention programs as much as possible or make needed modifications to those programs so they work in a remote learning environment. Structure distance learning so that the time spent on intervention is proportional to the grade-level content instruction that occurs in the classroom. Educators might conduct one-to-one virtual meetings with students to provide targeted support and continue to collect data by using various platforms such as Kahoots, Google Forms, or the Interim Assessments.

Remember to adjust the interventions based on data analysis so that the intervention is effective, and always connect with families regularly by phone, text, or e-mail to communicate the child's progress and answer any remaining questions they might have.

### Formative Assessment Practices

Good instruction employs [formative assessment practices](#) and although we are certain many of you already know, it is worth reminding everyone that formative assessments are not “tests.” Formative assessment is not used for grading, rather it can be used before instruction, to find out where students are, and during instruction, to find out how they are progressing, something that benefits all students, especially at-risk learners.

Formative assessment is a planned process that informs learning as it is taking place: real time, minute-to-minute, day-to-day. Formative assessment practices are embedded within all facets of tiered instruction and help guide differentiated instruction by connecting the dots between teacher instruction and student learning.

For more information on the Formative Assessment Process, watch this [video](#) from Smarter Balanced.

The process is two-fold. It involves both the teacher and student as they work through the cycle that asks: Where am I going? Where am I now? And, where do we go next?

- The teacher begins the process by establishing and communicating clear learning targets and criteria for success.
- The teacher builds opportunities for students to become active participants in their learning through self-assessment and inquiry, while providing clear, actionable feedback based on criteria.
- As teachers facilitate this process, students have opportunities to revise assignments. This is where the magic of learning happens.

*Let's take a moment to dive a little deeper into the power of formative assessment practices!*

Formative Assessment Practices are a series of effective teaching practices, inseparable from instruction, which provide actionable evidence of learning for teachers and students at any point in time. Formative assessment is central to equitable learning, and when aligned to the principles of Universal Design for Learning, ensures that every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, across race, gender, ethnicity, language, or disability enabling educators to facilitate a learning environment that meets the various needs of a diverse group of learners.

Effective formative assessment practices support teachers in the process of identifying where students are in their learning and providing the right resource at the right time. It is used before instruction to find out where students are, and during instruction to find out how they are processing.



**Read or download:**

[Fundamental Insights About Formative Assessment](#),

published in October 2018 by the Council of Chief State School Officers



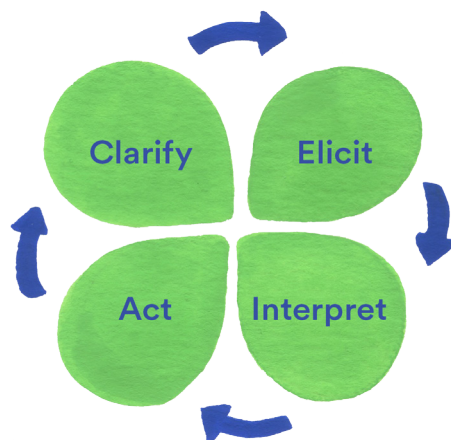
Formative assessment practices include clarifying the purpose of the learning and providing exemplars so students clearly understand the expectations. Teachers should use activities that engage students, eliciting evidence of their learning, and providing feedback that helps learners know what they need to do to continue learning. Students are encouraged to consult with their peers and view them as learning resources, which in turn increases student ownership of learning. Formative assessment is a critical evidence-based leveler that can positively impact both teaching and learning.

## Tools for Teachers

SMARTER BALANCED

### Understanding the Formative Assessment Process

The Formative Assessment Process is a deliberate process used by **teachers and students during instruction** that provides actionable feedback that is used to adjust ongoing teaching and learning strategies to improve students' attainment of curricular learning targets/goals.



#### Watch the video

Learn more about the [Formative Assessment Process](#).



#### Clarify

Determine **Learning Goals**, or what students will know by the end of the lesson. Goals describe “big ideas” or concepts and reflect academic standards. Learning goals are written in student-friendly language, beginning with, “I understand...”

Establish **Success Criteria**, or the evidence teachers and students use to determine how students are progressing toward learning goals. They are also written in student-friendly language, beginning with, “I can...”

#### Elicit

Engage in a learning event or activity that prompts and generates **evidence of learning**. Evidence should be tightly aligned to the learning goals and guided by success criteria.

Consider student needs, interests, and learning styles when deciding how to elicit evidence so that students can **demonstrate their understanding** in different ways to meet the success criteria. Use multiple sources of evidence to draw accurate conclusions about student learning.

#### Interpret

**Review evidence** to determine students' progress toward learning goals and success criteria. Interpreting is about using evidence to **identify the gap** between where students are and where they need to be. Students can analyze evidence of their own learning and discuss with teachers and peers. Interpreting evidence is not a single event, but part of an ongoing process throughout instruction.

#### Act

Teachers determine and initiate appropriate **instructional next steps**. These may not be the same for all students and must take into consideration each student's readiness, interests, and learning preferences. Students receive feedback that is specific about what they need to do next in the learning process.

Help your students achieve their learning goals. Explore the **quick guide** to [formative assessment strategies](#).

Examples of formative assessment practices include questioning students about content, regular discussions about ideas or concepts, or informing instruction based on quizzes, assignments, or homework. Another formative assessment practice is to watch and listen before intervening when students are working.



**Read or download these resources pertaining to formative assessments in distance learning:**

[Formative Assessment in Distance Learning](#)

[Remote Learning and the Formative Assessment Process](#)

[Five Formative Assessment Strategies to Improve Distance Learning](#)

[Outcomes for Students with Disabilities](#)

The formative assessment process is most successful when teachers, students, and parents or guardians work together on what students are learning, monitor how the learning is progressing, and adjust and readjust as the learning and situation change.

## Interim Assessments

The interims are a useful way to check student progress and to gather information about learning that can alter the instruction provided. Interims offer flexibility, and can be used for professional development or in class with students in a variety of ways.

[Interim Assessment Blocks](#), which are broken into two categories: IABs that measure 3-8 targets or Focused IABs that measure fewer than three targets. All Interim Assessments, including NGSS Interim Assessments, can now be given without the use of a secure browser. This means, even in situations where remote teaching and learning is occurring, all Interim Assessments are available to inform educators.

For more information on the Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments, watch this [video](#) or visit our [Interim Assessment web page](#).

These optional, short assessments can be used informally by browsing items from the [Assessment Viewing Application](#) by grade or content area to meet specific learning purposes and goals. Items can be presented to students in a lesson as a “Do Now” activity or can be used to model a concept. You can use specific items or an entire block as a pre- or post-test activity to check on students’ progress.

Additionally, teachers can formally administer the IABs to students at home or in the classroom and all scores will be available in the [Centralized Reporting System](#).

Don’t forget that a benefit to using the Interims is that embedded designated supports and accommodations are available for eligible students using Interim Assessments, assuming the supports are identified in the student’s TIDE profile. For more information on available universal tools, designated supports, and accommodations, refer to the [Accessibility Chart](#). And remember, petitions for Special Documented Accommodations are not needed for use on interim assessments.

Some non-embedded designated supports are only available with a paper copy test such as large print or braille tests. The teacher should carefully consider what is needed for a student to access the interims.



**Read, download, or view these related resources:**

Smarter Balanced resources available in Tools for Teachers:

- Using Interim Connections Playlists ([document](#) or [video](#))
- Individual Student Assessment Accessibility Profile: A Tool to Support Students ([document](#) or [video](#))

[Quick Guide to Administering Smarter Balanced and NGSS Interim Assessments Remotely](#)

[Supporting Distance Learning Using Interim Assessments](#)

[Using Smarter Balanced and Next Generation Science Standards \(NGSS\) Interim Assessments Remotely: Considerations for Non-Embedded Universal Tools, Designated Supports, and Accommodations](#)

[Smarter Balanced Remote Learning Website](#)



**Tools for Teachers**  
SMARTER BALANCED

Discover **classroom resources** you can use today.  
Educator-created lessons, activities, strategies, and professional development to help tailor instruction and boost learning.



Access [Tools for Teachers](#) through the [Connecticut Comprehensive Assessment Portal](#).

[Video: What is Tools for Teachers?](#)

[Video: How Tools for Teachers Supports Educators](#)

[Tools for Teachers](#) is a new site for instructional resources and professional development. It features lessons and activities developed and vetted by teachers. All resources are aligned to the standards and have formative assessment and accessibility strategies embedded within them. Each Interim Assessment Block has a corresponding Connections Playlist that offers options for lessons based on students' performance on the IAB. Suggestions for intervention for students who perform below standard on a block, sample items to incorporate when teaching a skill, and related academic vocabulary are also a part of this valuable resource. All Connecticut educators with access to TIDE are automatically provided access to Tools for Teachers from the [CT Assessment Portal](#).

## Lexile® and Quantile® Measures

The CSDE provides Lexile and Quantile measures for Smarter Balanced Summative results to both parents and districts. These measures, provided by MetaMetrics, are supported with a number of free resources for parents and educators in Connecticut. The [Lexile Framework for Reading](#) and the [Quantile Framework for Mathematics](#) web pages have information and resources designed to help students.

*Educators can access these tools for free in the [Hub](#) using their school email to register. Parents, too, can access the Hub for free once they register, however, tools are limited. You must use Google Chrome to visit the Hub.*

The Lexile Framework® for Reading has been linked with the Smarter Balanced Assessment in English Language Arts for Grades 3-8. Similarly, the Quantile Framework® for Mathematics has been linked with the Smarter Balanced Mathematics Assessment for Grades 3–8. Students in Connecticut also may be receiving Lexile and Quantile measures from a variety of different tests, such as the ICAs, and other programs used by local schools. With Lexile and Quantile measures, educators and parents can support student learning at school or remotely.

**What Is a Lexile Measure?** There are two kinds of Lexile measures: Lexile reader measures and Lexile text measures. Lexile reader measures describe a student's reading strength. Lexile text measures describe how difficult a text, such as a book or magazine article, is for a general reader. Lexile measures are expressed as numbers followed by an "L" (for example, 850L), and range from below 0L for texts that are appropriate for early fluent readers to above 1600L. Comparing a student's Lexile measure with the Lexile measure of what they are reading helps gauge the "fit" between a student's ability and the difficulty of text.



# UNDERSTANDING LEXILES



Anthony is reading at a Lexile of 500L. If he wants a fun, easy read, a book with a Lexile of 450L would be ideal for him. His teacher may want to provide him with a book that is a Lexile of 550L or 600L to stretch his abilities. However, a book that has 700L would likely require significant support for him to comprehend.



450L



575L



700L

Visit the [Lexile Hub](#) for free resources and tools.

To learn about the Lexile tools available, visit the [Lexile Overview page](#) to find explanations and Quick Start Guides for each resource. This [video](#) provides an overview of the Lexile Framework for Reading and the associated tools.

**What Is a Quantile Measure?** There are two types of Quantile measures: a measure for students and a measure for mathematical skills and concepts. The student measure describes what mathematics the student likely already understands, and what the student is ready to learn in the future. The skill measure describes the difficulty, or demand, in learning the skill. Quantile measures are expressed as numbers followed by a “Q” (for example, 850Q) and range from emerging mathematician (below 0Q) to above 1600Q. The Quantile Framework spans the developmental continuum from the content typically taught in kindergarten, to Algebra II, Geometry, Trigonometry, and Pre-calculus. Quantile measures help educators and parents target instruction toward learning standards and the mathematical demands of college and careers.

# UNDERSTANDING QUANTILES



## ASSESSMENT

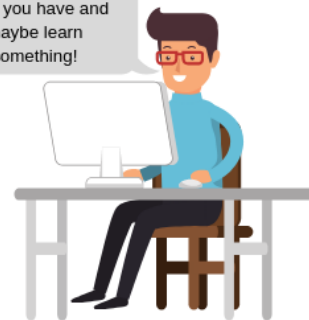
Sydney just received a Quantile measure of 750Q! She is celebrating because she has mastered all of the “prerequisite” skills for 750Q on the Quantile map, including translating between models and numerical expressions.



## CLASSROOM APPLICATION

Sydney’s teacher now has a list of “focus skills” that match 750Q, like translating between models and algebraic expressions. These are the skills that Sydney is ready to learn right now – she already has all of the base skills needed to understand this new concept! Sydney’s teacher plans to help Sydney achieve all of these focus skills to move to higher levels of achievement.

Come in here, kiddo!  
Let's practice the new skills you have and maybe learn something!



## AT-HOME

Learning shouldn’t start and end in the classroom. That’s why Sydney’s dad is taking the time to practice prerequisite skills with Sydney to keep those skills fresh. He may also work with her on her focus skills to help her learn new things that she is ready to learn!

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