



## Interim Assessment: What are some key characteristics?

In their article: “Moving towards a comprehensive assessment system: A framework for considering interim assessment,” Marianne Perie, Scott Marion and Brian Gong list twelve purposes of interim assessment organized into three broad categories. Results from interim assessments can be used to:

1. monitor student achievement,
2. predict future performance on another assessment, or
3. provide information useful for program evaluation.

In order to efficiently construct valid assessments, educators need to understand these categories of purposes and the characteristics of assessments that achieve those purposes. Regardless into which of the three categories the intended use of the interim assessment falls, sound assessment design principals, including the use of a test blueprint, will help ensure that the assessment built will provide reliable and valid results.

Tests built for different categories share some assessment characteristics (content alignment); other characteristics are unique to a single category (statistical

relationships between scores). Understanding, very clearly, what you want from your interim assessment will allow you to create or find an assessment that is likely to meet your needs.

### Interim assessment to monitor student achievement

Interim assessments built to monitor student achievement can be used to answer questions such as “How are students (either individually or by group) doing on their journey to master the content?” (mastery), or “What gaps are there in a student’s learning?” (diagnosis). Assessments in this category can also provide information to teachers on pacing as well as motivation for learners to continue their progress toward mastery.

Characteristics of assessments built for this purpose will include things such as broad or deep sampling of the content domain (depending on whether the purpose is determining mastery or diagnosing learning), test items written so that incorrect responses provide insight into the thinking of the students, and temporal scheduling to coin-

cide with the expected time that the learning is to take place.

### Interim assessment to predict performance

Interim assessment can be used to predict performance on a future assessment, usually a summative, high-stakes assessment. Prediction can range from a fairly narrow claim that a student is or is not likely to score proficient or better on the summative test to an actual predicted score a student will earn on the summative test. In both cases, of highest concern is the statistical relationships between the scores on the interim assessment and the summative assessment.

There needs to be an interpretable relationship between these two scores in order for there to be reliable prediction. As the desired prediction becomes more broad, increasing attention must be paid to factors such as alignment between the content of the interim assessment and that of the summative assessment. Statistical relationships between test scores—and not the tests’ similarity of format and content—are the most important consideration

when using an interim assessment for prediction. In fact, in some cases, the test used as a predictor might not resemble the summative test.

## Interim assessment for program evaluation

Program evaluation is an important aspect of public education, and interim assessments can be built to be useful in this process. If the program evaluation is designed to evaluate multiple possible pedagogical approaches, the assessment must align to the curriculum of the instructional unit and be equally sensitive to the instructional activities of each approach.

Interim assessment also can inform decisions on how to modify the instructional offerings to improve delivery to future students based on the performance of current students. In this case, the interim assessment may be built much like an assessment designed to assess student mastery. More specifically, content alignment and range of item difficulties will be important.

Regardless which of the three categories the intended use of the interim

# To learn more

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**Start with purpose when choosing assessments**  
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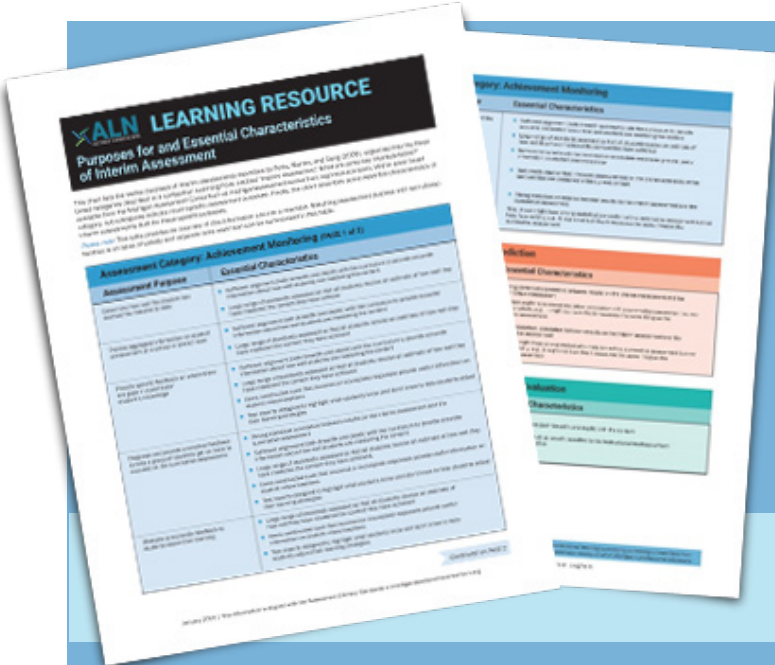
**“Moving toward a comprehensive assessment system: A framework for considering interim assessments”**  
 by Marianne Perie, Scott Marion, Brian Gong. National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc. (2009)  
<http://ncaase.com/docs/PerieMarionGong2009.pdf>

assessment falls into, sound assessment design principals, including the use of a test blueprint, will help ensure that the assessment built will provide reliable and valid results.

As you can see there are some characteristics of assessments that are shared by tests built for different categories (content alignment) and there are some that are unique to a single

category (statistical relationships between scores). Understanding, very clearly, what you want from your interim assessment will allow you to create or find an assessment that is likely to meet your needs.

Reference: Perie, M., Marion, S. & Gong, B. (2009). Moving toward a comprehensive assessment system: A framework for considering interim assessments. *Educational measurement: Issues and practice*, 28(3) pp. 5-13.



A companion chart—“Purposes for and Essential Characteristics of Interim Assessment,” available from the Michigan Assessment Consortium—lists the twelve purposes of interim assessments described by Perie, Marion, and Gong (2009). The chart organizes the purposes into the three broad categories described above. Within each broad category, sub-categories indicate more specific assessment purposes. Finally, the chart describes some essential characteristics of interim assessments built for these specific purposes.

View or download that companion chart in the Assessment Resource Bank at [www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org](http://www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org)

The Michigan Assessment Consortium's Assessment Learning Network (ALN) is a professional learning community consisting of members from MI's professional education organizations; the goal of the ALN is to increase the assessment literacy of all of Michigan's professional educators.