

# A Vision of Excellence in Assessment

a Rick Stiggins Webinar Series  
for School District Leadership Teams

## Handbook

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This webinar series is offered by the author at no cost,  
in partnership with the Michigan Assessment Consortium.  
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# A Vision of Excellence in Assessment

## a Rick Stiggins Webinar series for School District Leadership Teams

The French philosopher, Marcel Proust, reminds us that a voyage of discovery consists not merely of seeking new landscapes but of seeing through new eyes. This four-part interactive webinar series for school district leadership teams is entirely about seeing new assessment landscapes through new eyes.

As an educational culture, we have been shackled for decades by a vision of excellence in assessment that has prevented us from seeing, let alone benefiting from, proven understandings of how to use assessment to encourage and support student learning and academic self-confidence. This webinar series releases us from a relentless assessment burden by offering assessment systems that meet the information needs of all key instructional decisionmakers, ensuring the dependability of assessment evidence in all contexts. Most importantly, it explores an entirely new role for students as data based instructional decisionmakers who can use assessment to take charge of their own learning success.

This webinar series helps local school district leadership teams understand why and how to do the following:

- [SESSION 1](#): Build balanced local assessment system
- [SESSION 2](#): Put in place a foundation of assessment literacy
- [SESSION 3](#): Tap the positive emotional dynamics of assessment FOR learning
- [SESSION 4](#): Evaluate your own local assessment system for balance, quality and positive impact on learning

Each pre-recorded session is followed by a focused work session designed to advance team thinking about assessment. Sessions can be worked through consecutively in one complete workshop; or they can be completed sequentially over time. Sessions can be worked through by individuals or by teams working together.

Accompanying handouts for use during selected sessions are available in this handbook. They are also linked in each PowerPoint and at the Webinar home page shown below.

Thank you to the Michigan Assessment Consortium, who supports and hosts this series at:

[www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org/event/stiggins-webinars](http://www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org/event/stiggins-webinars)

### About the Presenter



Rick Stiggins is the retired founder and president of the Assessment Training Institute in Portland, OR, a professional development firm with the mission of helping educators face the challenges of day-to-day classroom assessment and helping school leaders develop truly balanced local assessment systems. He has authored numerous articles, books and training videos on sound classroom assessment, assessment for learning and balanced assessment systems. Rick earned a doctoral degree in educational measurement from Michigan State University. He began his assessment work on the faculty of the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. In addition, he has served as Director of Test Development for the ACT, Iowa City, IA; as a visiting scholar at Stanford University; as a Libra Scholar, University of Southern Maine; as director of the Centers for Classroom Assessment and Performance Assessment at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Or; and on the faculty of Lewis and Clark College, Portland.

## Framework of a Balanced Local District Assessment System

LEVEL \ PURPOSE	Formative Assessment for Management of Instruction	Formative Assessment FOR Learning	Summative Assessment OF Learning
<b>CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Key decision maker(s)</i></li> <li>• <i>Important instructional decisions to be made</i></li> <li>• <i>Information needed to inform decisions</i></li> </ul>	<p>Teacher</p> <p>What comes next in my students' learning?</p> <p>Standards in appropriate learning progressions. Evidence of standards mastered and not yet</p>	<p>Student/teacher team</p> <p>Help student know: What comes next in my learning?</p> <p>Student-friendly learning targets in learning progressions; Evidence of student's current place in progressions</p>	<p>Teacher</p> <p>What grade or standards mastered to put on report card?</p> <p>Evidence of student mastery of each required standard</p>
<b>COMMON BENCHMARK TESTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Key Decision maker(s)</i></li> <li>• <i>Instructional decisions to be made</i></li> <li>• <i>Information needed to inform decisions</i></li> </ul>	<p>Teachers; but students may assist in interpreting and acting on results</p> <p>Which standards do we tend to struggle mastering and why?</p> <p>Evidence across classrooms of standards we have failed to master</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instructional leaders, teacher teams, PLCs</p> <p>Which standards are our students struggling to master and why?</p> <p>Evidence from assessments across classrooms of standards not mastered</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instructional leaders</p> <p>Which standards are broad samples of our student not mastering</p> <p>Evidence of standards mastered across broad samples using common assessments</p>
<b>ANNUAL TESTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Key decision maker(s)</i></li> <li>• <i>Instructional decisions</i></li> <li>• <i>Information needed</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>Requires evidence of student mastery of each standard</i></p> <p>Curriculum and instructional leaders</p> <p>What standards did our students not master?</p> <p>Evidence of standards not mastered</p>	<p><i>There is no viable assessment FOR learning role for annual tests</i></p>	<p>District leadership team, school board and community</p> <p>Did enough of our students master required standards?</p> <p>Proportion of students mastering standards</p>

Adapted from Stiggins, Richard (2017) *The Perfect Assessment System*. Alexandria VA: ASCD  
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# Contrasting Dynamics of the Assessment Experiences

## Students who are succeeding

### **Assessments provide:**

Continuous evidence of success

### **Likely effect on the learner:**

Hope rules; remain optimistic

### **What the student is probably thinking in the face of results:**

It's all good; I am doing fine

See the trend? I succeed as usual

I want more success

We focus on what I do well

I know what to do next

Move on, grow, learn new stuff

Feedback helps me

Public success feels very good

### **Actions likely to be taken by the learner:**

Take risks—stretch, go for it!

Seek what is new and exciting

Seek challenges

Practice with gusto

Persist

### **Likely result of these actions:**

Lay foundations now for success later

Success becomes THE reward

Self enhancement

Positive self-fulfilling prophesy

Extend the effort in face of difficulty

Acceptance of responsibility

Make success public

Self analysis tells me how to win

Manageable stress

Curiosity, enthusiasm

Resilience

Continuous adaptation

## Students who are struggling

Continuous evidence of failure

Hopelessness dominates

This hurts me; I'm not safe here

I never get it

I just want one success

Why is it always about what I can't do?

I'm lost

Defend, hide, get away from here

Feedback never helps—don't know what it means

Public failure is embarrassing

Trying is too dangerous—retreat, escape

Can't keep up—can't handle new stuff

Seek what's easy

Don't practice

Give up

Can't master prerequisites needed later

No success—no reward

Self-defeat

Negative self-fulfilling prophesy

Give up quickly in face of difficulty

Denial of responsibility

Cover up failure (e.g., cheat)

Self-criticism is easy given my record

Always high stress

Boredom, frustration, fear

Yielding quickly to defeat

Inability to adapt

Adapted from R Stiggins (2014) *Revolutionize Assessment: Engage Students, Inspire Learning* (Corwin)  
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## Local District Assessment System Self-Evaluation Rubrics

### *Action #1: Balance Your Assessment System*

Definition: Balanced assessment systems serve a variety of different users at different levels of instruction by providing all of them with the information they need to fulfill their responsibilities; such a system balances effective assessment use at the classroom level with interim/benchmark assessment and annual accountability testing to serve both formative and summative purposes. This action urges examination of current levels of balance and movement toward greater balance if needed.

5. Implemented	4	3. Progressing	2	1. Getting Started
All faculty and staff are aware of differences in assessment purpose across classroom, interim/benchmark, and annual level, and know how to use each to support and to verify student learning		There is inconsistency among the staff with respect to the manner in which we use assessments to improve our school; we are aware of the need for balance and have begun to plan for balanced assessment		There is little awareness in the district of differences in purpose, assessment users, or assessment uses across classroom, interim and annual levels of use
Our highest assessment priority is to help students develop the capacity and disposition to assess their own achievement and to use their assessment results productively on their own behalf		Faculty and staff recognize that students are important assessment users who make data-based instructional decisions that impact their own success and have made some progress in helping them do so		Students have not been regarded as key assessment users and there is little awareness of the need to bring them into the assessment process
We have an assessment system in place that is meeting the information needs of classroom, interim and annual test users		We have an action plan in place and have begun to design this balanced system		As yet no such system has been conceived, designed, or developed
We have an information management system in place to collect, house and deliver achievement information into the hands of intended users at classroom, interim, and annual assessment levels		We have an action plan in place and have begun to investigate available information management systems for this use		As yet no such system has been designed, or developed, or purchased
Our school board and community is aware of the need for balanced assessment and is supportive of this priority		We are currently educating our staff, policy makers and community of the need to development an assessment system to meet diverse information needs across levels		Our policy makers and community are unaware of the need to think of assessment in this manner

## Action #2: Refine Achievement Standards

Definition: Achievement standards represent part of the foundation of the assessment system. It is not possible to dependably assess achievement targets unless they have been completely and appropriately defined; that is, clear learning targets are needed to underpin classroom, interim and annual assessments. This action calls for the development of local achievement expectations as a foundation for balanced assessment.

5. Implemented	4	3. Progressing	2	1. Getting Started
We have reviewed and refined our local achievement standards to align with state standards and to represent our highest priority learning outcomes		We are aware of the need for us to develop our own academic standards and are in the process of doing so		We have adopted state standards as ours or are using externally developed curriculum
Our curriculum presents learning progressions in which our expectations unfold over time within and across grade levels in a manner consistent with state standards and the way learning unfolds		We are developing our maps in the form of progressions that link learning prerequisites naturally throughout the learning		We have grade level standards, but they are not articulated or connected with one another in a progression sense
We have deconstructed each of our priority standards into the scaffolding students will climb during their journey to competence; that is, we know the foundations of knowledge, reasoning, performance skills and product development capabilities at each grade level that build to success		We are in the process of deconstructing each of our standards into the scaffolding leading to competence		The deconstruction process has not been initiated
We have transformed the scaffolding level targets that will guide classroom assessment and instruction into student- and family-friendly versions to share with stakeholders as appropriate		We are in the process of learning how to completing those transformations		This transformation process has yet to be initiated
We have verified that each teacher in each classroom is a confident, competent master of the achievement standards that their students are expected to master		We have identified contexts in which professional development is needed to assure teacher competence in terms of our standards and that learning is underway		There has been no investigation of teacher preparedness in their own content area(s)

*Action #3: Assure Assessment Quality*

Definition: Because a variety of very important decisions are made in various contexts based on assessment results, it is imperative that all assessments at classroom, interim and annual levels of use yield dependable information about student achievement. This action urges the evaluation current assessments to verify quality.

5. Implemented	4	3. Progressing	2	1. Getting Started
We have established and understand the criteria by which we should judge the quality of our assessments		We are aware of the need for standards of assessment quality upon which to evaluate our work and are striving to establish our criteria		No such criteria have been identified; no quality control framework exists for us at any level
We have conducted the professional development needed to learn to apply those assessment quality criteria in a rigorous manner		We have a plan in place for conducting that training process to prepare us to evaluate the quality of our assessments		No such professional development has been conducted
We have conducted a local evaluation of the quality of our assessments		We are aware of the need to conduct such an evaluation and are planning to conduct it		There is no awareness of the need for or plans to conduct such an evaluation
As a result of our evaluation for quality, we know that the e assessments we use are of very high quality throughout our systems		We have found that our assessments vary in quality across contexts and we know where the inadequacies are		The quality of our assessments may be poor—we haven't checked

#### *Action #4: Balance Descriptive and Judgmental Feedback*

Definition: Research evidence synthesized from around the world reveals that, when feedback to students take certain forms and is delivered in certain ways, it can positively impact student confidence, motivation, and achievement. This action asks that feedback delivered to students satisfy the conditions necessary to make that happen.

<b>5. Implemented</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3. Progressing</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1. Getting Started</b>
We understand and embrace the characteristics of feedback that permits it to support learning or to evaluate its sufficiency when that is the purpose		We are starting to understand the role descriptive feedback can play in helping students learn but have not taken systemic action to ensure it is present in every classroom.		The feedback we provide is in the form of grades and test scores that judge or evaluate student achievement
We have completed the professional development needed to understand and implement classroom communication practices that both support student learning and judge its sufficiency as appropriate		We plan to offer or are in the process of conducting the professional development needed to balance evaluative and descriptive feedback		No such professional development has yet been considered or implemented
In our classrooms, we appropriately balance the use of descriptive feedback that supports learning and evaluative feedback (e.g., grades) that evaluates the sufficiency of learning		Our teachers are relying more and more on descriptive feedback during student practice to help students improve before they are to be held accountable for their learning		Evaluative feedback dominates in our classrooms



*Action #5: Rely on Learning Success to Motivate Students*

Definition: The common practice of relying on the anxiety and intimidation of accountability to motivate learning works for some students. It will cause those who believe they can achieve academic success to put forth the effort needed to manage the anxiety—it can energize those who have hope of success. But for students who have experienced chronic failure, turning up the anxiety will drive them more deeply into hopelessness. For them, the only motivator that can work is success at learning. If those students cannot experience what they believe to be real and important learning success, learning will stop. This action urges educators to embrace these emotional dynamics as they link assessment to student motivation.

5. Implemented	4	3. Progressing	2	1. Getting Started
Our faculty, staff, leaders, policy makers, and community all embrace the power of student-involved assessment to help all students experience the kind of academic success needed to remain confident and engaged.		We are in the process of helping all stakeholders understand and embrace the power of student-involved assessment during their learning		We strive to motivate all students exclusively by holding them accountable for learning
We have conducted the professional development needed to build our capacity and dispositions needed to use assessment FOR learning to motivate all students to strive for success		That professional development is planned or underway that will result in the development of capacity and dispositions throughout the faculty		As yet no such professional development has been considered or offered
The classroom assessment practices we use rely heavily on student involvement in assessment during their learning to maintain their confidence and motivation		The proportion of our teachers who involve their students in ongoing self-assessment as a motivator is increasingly steadily		Our classroom practices rarely include student-involved assessment practices