P-1: Create or obtain assessments

TEACHFORAMERICA

Consider pre-made tools
After you establish your vision for mastery, look for pre-made assessment tools that might fit what you need.

Why should I consider pre-made tools?

An effective assessment (especially an end-of-the year assessment) is challenging to construct and often takes years of testing it, analyzing the data, and perfecting each question. There are assessment experts in the field developing tests and test items, and we encourage you to leverage the high-quality work of the experts out there. Doing so will make the monumental task you are embarking on just a bit more manageable.

Where can I find existing assessment tools?

There are a variety of different sources for finding existing tools. Try looking at veteran teachers, standardized tests, district resources, textbooks, etc. Teach For America corps members and alumni can also check the Resource Exchange (in the Teaching and Learning Center on www.tfanet.org) or your regional Student Achievement Toolkit.

What should I do when I find pre-made assessment tools?

- **Evaluate assessment items for quality and fit**
  - Be vigilant – don't blindly adopt an existing assessment without thinking critically about how it fits your students' needs
  - Determine if the assessment items are aligned to your learning goals. As you do this ask the following questions:
    - *Which items on this assessment align directly to the high-priority learning goals of my state?* You will want to note on the assessment that these items can be used as is.
    - *Which items on this assessment only partially align to the high-priority learning goals of my state?* (This may mean that items are not at the appropriate levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, or that they leave out some component of a learning goal). You will want to note on the assessment that these items will need to be modified.
    - *Where will I need to supplement for high-priority learning goals that are not included on this assessment?* You should keep track of any learning goals for your state that are not included on your assessment.
    - For end-of-the year assessments, *does the assessment cover all the major components of my course?* Content-specific guidance for considering this question
      - **Elementary:** Although you ultimately need goals in each area, you have likely only chosen to focus on reading, writing, or math for the moment, which is fine. Within the area that you're focused on now, does your assessment measure the major strands of your course? For example, if you're focused on reading, does your assessment measure both comprehension and fluency? If you're focused on math, does your assessment include opportunities for students to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills?
      - **English Language Arts:** Does your assessment include opportunities for students to demonstrate their writing, skills in addition to their reading skills?

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- ▪ **Math:** Does your assessment include opportunities for students to demonstrate their ability to solve problems that require higher-order thinking? Does your assessment include opportunities for students to demonstrate their reasoning (e.g. graphs, proofs)?
- ▪ **Science:** Does your assessment include opportunities for students to demonstrate their scientific inquiry and reasoning skills?
- ▪ **Social Studies**: Does your assessment include opportunities for students to demonstrate both content knowledge and skills? Does your assessment include items that ask students to demonstrate higher level thinking about the course content?
  - o Review the qualities of effective assessments (available in the How To section of the P-1 page) and use these to evaluate the existing resources

- **Carefully edit the assessment items to meet your needs**
  - o Before you use an assessment, always modify and tailor it to fit your students when necessary
  - o Remember you can pick and choose different parts of existing assessments – using pre-made tools is not an all-or-nothing deal
  - o If you find an assessment item you feel is perfect for a specific learning goal, you can use it as it currently exists. You may find it helpful to create a chart to organize your learning goals and test items. This will help you keep track of the items you find and the items you will need to build from scratch.

  - o If you find assessment items that are close to what you need, but they aren't exactly right, you can tweak the model items to fit your needs. For example, the wording and style of the question might make it efficient and able to elicit true mastery. However it might not be aligned to your learning goal - maybe it's asking students to perform at a different level of Bloom's than the learning goal. You can change just a piece of the item to make it work for you.
  - o If you cannot find any model assessment items that meet your needs, you can try your hand at developing your own. Just remember to apply what you know about the characteristics of effective assessment items.
  - o When you edit the assessment items, make sure they align to your initial vision of what you need students to do to show mastery

- If you use a scripted curriculum, read below for extra guidance on evaluating and adjusting your program's assessment

- If you find all the assessment items you need – and have evaluated their alignment and quality – then move on to developing your grading and tracking systems.

- If you didn't find all the assessment items you need, you may need to supplement your assessment. Proceed to the next step – deciding what assessment methods and question types to use

Guidance for evaluating and adjusting assessments in a scripted curriculum

The assessment given to you by your scripted curriculum has been designed to assess students on specific content at the level of rigor established by the learning goals provided in the curriculum. This may or may not match the content and rigor of the learning goals you are required by your state and district to teach. It is your job to identify where things match up and where gaps may exist.

The most essential guiding question you need to ask yourself as you examine your unit assessment is:

- o **Will the program's assessment test my students on <u>each</u> learning goal in the unit at the level of rigor needed?**

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We suggest the following approaches to checking the validity of your pre-made unit assessment:

1. Work through each learning goal in your unit and match each one to an item or items on the assessment. You want to be sure each learning goal is assessed at least once. The learning goals that are of higher priority should be assessed more than once so you can be confident than you have enough evidence that your students did indeed master these very important goals.

2. Look for assessment items in which the content of the question is aligned to the content of the learning goal, but the task is not at the same level of rigor demanded by the learning goal. Maybe the item is too easy; maybe it is overly difficult. You will have to adjust these items so that students are performing at the same level described in the learning goal.

3. You may have added learning goals to your units as you created your long-term plan. These certainly will not be tested on the unit assessment as it is written. If you have unit learning goals for which questions don't currently exist, follow the guidance above for adopting existing resources or read about how to create your own assessment items so they are aligned and effective.

4. There is also a chance that you deleted learning goals from the unit when you created your long-term plan. Check for extraneous assessment items that are testing skills and concepts you will not be teaching in the unit. You can remove these items completely.