



Closely and continuously monitoring student progress for informed, effective, and highly individualized instruction



Teachers use a variety of assessment data to monitor progress and individually adjust their instruction to meet the needs of each and every student.

Yes, it's a lot of work; important, necessary, and effective work.

"Why do we have so many different assessments," and "How do they impact classroom instruction?" These are questions that we get from time to time.

The key is that they are part of the instruction. Assessment work connects directly to the professional learning that is embedded in the daily work of staff. All teachers work in a collaborative team called a "Professional Learning Community"

or PLC, regularly reflecting on and answering four fundamental questions to improve student learning:

What is it we want all students to learn?

How will we know when each student has learned the learning targets?

How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning, or how will we deepen the learning for students who are exceeding expectations?

What do we need to know and be able to do so we are able to collectively clarify student expectations, assess progress, and respond to student needs effectively?

As you can see, the professional learning teachers engage in as a PLC is directly related to student learning needs identified through student assessments.

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The Spring Lake Park School District has been working to build a strong comprehensive assessment program balancing "Assessments for Learning" and "Assessments of Learning."

These assessments are used to produce far more informed and effective instruction and help gauge the effectiveness of our curriculum and programs.

"Assessments for Learning" are *formative assessments* that happen while learning is occurring. They are used to diagnose student needs, plan instruction, and provide students with feedback they can use to improve their work.

An example of this would be an assessment given during a unit to measure student progress towards the identified learning targets so that the teacher can modify instruction accordingly.

"Assessments of Learning" are *summative assessments* used to sum up achievement at a particular point of time. These occur *after* learning has happened.

These assessments are used to measure achievement status at a point in time for the purpose of reporting and accountability.

For example, unit tests and the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA-II/III)s are examples of

Assessments of Learning. The results of unit tests are reported to parents on report cards.

People often ask why the district has so many different assessments and how they impact classroom instruction.

The results of the MCA-II's are reported to the state and are used as an accountability measure for schools across the state as part of the No Child Left Behind law.

The variety of assessments are important because they answer different questions for a variety of users.

To help understand the different assessments in Spring Lake Park Schools, see the Assessment Plan link on our Accountability webpage. It provides an overview—including this year's schedule—of the assessments used throughout the district.

By creating a strong assessment program that balances Assessments of Learning and Assessments for Learning, the Spring Lake Park School District shows its commitment to continually monitoring student progress and improving instruction.