

## Designing Assessment to Improve Student Learning

### What can you expect to get from this module?

The purpose of this training is to help school teams re-think the way they use assessments in the classroom and the school as a whole. Schools that take an active role in designing and implementing assessments that address the needs of all users of assessment information can promote learning and higher achievement. The module draws on the work of Rick Stiggins, among others, and includes in-depth discussion and application in the areas of assessment OF learning (AOL) and assessment FOR learning (AFL).

### What *shouldn't* you expect to get from this module?

This module focuses on the design and use of assessments and assessment systems in the school, but does not provide detail in analyzing data. It is recommended that participants already have a basic familiarity with data analysis.

### Who should take this training?

This module is for school leaders and potential school leaders. The audience may include school teams of principals, aspiring leaders, teacher leaders and others who are members or potential members of the school's instructional leadership team. **NOTE:** In order for this training to have significant impact, the principal **MUST** be part of the school team being trained.

### Other SREB Leadership Curriculum Modules that support this module:

There are no formal prerequisites for this SREB module. However, participants may find it helpful to have attended the modules *Using Data to Focus Improvement* and *Creating a High-Performance Learning Culture*.

### What will you have to do to get the most from this module?

Participants must commit to attending as a team, completing the prework, attending two initial days, completing homework assignments and attending two separate follow-up days. It is important for teams to have time to reflect and apply what they have learned between the initial training and the follow-up session.

### Big Ideas in This Module

- Classroom assessments should be aligned to state/district standards.
- Information from classroom assessments should be used to guide instructional decisions.
- Balanced assessment is an integral part of a comprehensive assessment system — a way of gathering and using different data to make a variety of decisions.
- No single test holds all the answers. By using different assessment types, we have a richer picture of where we are, where we need to go, and how we can get there.
- Whenever educators use the results of an assessment to diagnose, to make corrections or revisions, or help students understand what they need to do, it can be considered AFL.
- There is a role for both AOL and AFL, and most schools need more emphasis on AFL.
- The keys to quality assessments FOR learning include: clear purpose, clear targets, sound assessment design, good communication, and student involvement.
- Part of our work in creating a balanced assessment system is developing high-quality classroom assessments that help students advance toward clear targets.
- Effective feedback is specific, relates to the learning target, provides a pathway for improvement, is given in age-appropriate language, and is prompt.
- The use of zeros is mathematically unsound.
- Grades are summative assessments, not formative ones.
- Grades should communicate the student's level of achievement toward grade level standards. Other factors should be noted separately.
- Grades should reflect achievement at end of grading period.

**Module Design.** *Designing Assessment to Improve Student Learning* is a four-day workshop (2+1+1). It includes prework and homework assignments. Each section is described below.

**Prework.** Participants read four articles about current issues in assessment and take notes based on study questions. They also obtain the required text to bring to the first session.

**Introduction and Overview (one hour).** Participants introduce themselves and discuss some of the “hot button” words in assessment. They also begin to complete the prompt, “A perfect assessment system is...”

**Building an Understanding of Balanced Assessment (remainder of Day One).** Participants discuss the relationship among curriculum, assessment, and instruction, and the vital role assessment plays in a standards-based system. Then, they look at the purpose and uses of different types of assessment. They differentiate assessment *of* learning (AOL) from assessment *for* learning (AFL) and learn how both are needed to make decisions in a balanced assessment system. They refine their answers to the prompt, “A perfect assessment system is...” and discuss how well-balanced assessment is in their buildings and how they can improve their assessment systems.

**Homework (self-paced).** Participants, assigned to groups, read information about a particular type of assessment in preparation for a participant-led activity on Day Two.

**Keys to AFL and Different Types of Assessments (six hours).** Participants learn about the “keys to assessment FOR learning,” and they apply these concepts as they create their own assessments. During a “lunch and learn” activity, they prepare presentations on the different types of assessments in Stiggins’ book. They then use a rubric to evaluate different types of assessments.

**Homework.** Participants distribute surveys, conduct interviews, and gather assessments to get a better picture of assessment at their schools. There is also a short reading in preparation for Day Three.

**Feedback to Improve Learning (six hours).** Participants look at how to provide effective descriptive feedback — feedback that makes a difference in learning and student achievement. They also share the work they did between Days Two and Three and practice giving each other descriptive feedback. Finally, they develop a feedback rubric and create a plan for improving feedback at their schools.

**Homework.** School teams gather a variety of feedback samples from their schools and conduct targeted teacher and student interviews about feedback practices. The team discusses their findings from all these sources and prepares a short presentation on their findings, to be presented on Day Four. There is also a short reading in preparation for Day Four.

**Grading Practices (six hours).** Participants share their work to date, then complete a series of exercises to explore the how and why of grading. Grading issues explored through small group activities and readings include the purpose of grades, what to include in final grades, and the use of zeroes. School teams synthesize this information to determine what grading practices should change at their schools and how to lead this change.