

Interrogating the Value of Classroom-external Assessment: A Foundational Discussion for the Field

Session Organizers: NCME Classroom Assessment Committee, State and Local Assessment Leaders SIGIMIE, and Large-scale Assessment SIGIMIE.

Chair/Moderator: Dustin Van Orman, Western Washington University, Co-Chair of the NCME Classroom Assessment Committee

Presenters:

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Shenghai Dai, Washington State University; Former Chair of the NCME Large-Scale Assessment SIGIMIE

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Submission Type: Organized Discussion

Abstract

This collaborative, interactive, organized discussion presents three perennial questions about external assessments, including large-scale state tests: 1) Who benefits from external assessment in the current landscape, and under what conditions? 2) How might we build on what is known about how external tests can promote learning while also serving the purposes of measurement? 3) How can external assessment results and reports be used to inform instruction, student learning, and families' support of students? The session will bring a diverse set of partners to the table to share information across partner groups, increase understanding, question assumptions, and generate new ideas. Presenters will provide a foundational overview and background information on each question. Session attendees will play an active role in sharing their expertise and wonderings in small group discussions. The results of the session will be used to spur additional collaborations among different groups within and beyond NCME.

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Perspective

External assessment in education (e.g., standardized testing) is a fixture in K-12 education. It is mandated by state and national governments in the U.S. (e.g., No Child Left Behind Act, 2002; Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015), resulting in many products that have been adopted by educational systems to monitor student achievement. Our session interrogates the questions: whether, how, and why external assessment/measurement is useful and for whom?

Extensive scholarship has demonstrated that high-quality classroom assessment practices can have extensive impacts on student achievement, motivation, and skills in learning (Andrade et al., 2021; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Lee et al., 2020; Leenknecht et al., 2020; Shute, 2008). While various models have been proposed to describe how classroom-based and classroom-external assessments might together support monitoring and use of learning evidence (e.g., Herman, 2016; Marion et al., 2024), in practice, there is scant evidence (e.g., Herman, 2010; Shute et al., 2008) for the effectiveness of large-scale/standardized assessment or the impacts of assessment reports on teacher practice, student learning, or family engagement.

We propose an organized discussion with the aim to bring a diverse set of partners to the table to share knowledge, experience, and expertise across professional roles to increase understanding and identify ways to collaboratively improve educational assessment systems for the benefit of students, teachers, other core partners, and society.

Session Organization

Part 1: Leaders within NCME's Classroom Assessment Committee (CAC), State and Local Assessment Leaders (SALAL) SIGIMIE, and Large-scale Assessment (LSA) SIGIMIE will provide brief five-minute foundational overviews and background information on each of the following questions:

1. Who benefits from classroom-external assessment in the current landscape, and under what conditions? (Yi-Chen Wu & Shenghai Dai)
2. How might we build on what is known about how classroom-external tests can promote learning while also serving the purposes of measurement? (Heidi Andrade)
3. How can classroom-external assessment results and reports be used to inform instruction, student learning, and families' support of students? (Dustin Van Orman)

Part 2: Attendees will choose a question to engage with and move to a table/area of the room to engage in collaborative discussion with other attendees and presenters. Each question group will choose a timekeeper, notetaker, and reporter.

Part 3: Reporters from each group will share a summary of their discussion.

We will collect notes from attendees and follow up with those in attendance. We will use the results of discussions to spur future engagement opportunities and SIGIMIE/Committee activities for NCME members after the Annual Meeting—for instance in a series of webinars.

Significance

This session will actively engage NCME members in learning, sharing, and problem-solving around some of education's most pressing issues. Through NCME CAC, SALAL, and LSA collaboration, this session has the potential to ignite new scholarship, changes to common/problematic practices in educational assessment, and future cross group collaborations. We intend to use the results of this session to spur other collaborative opportunities between our members and the NCME community.

References

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