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**Common Formative and Summative Assessments:  
The Impact on Student Achievement...**

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## Common Formative and Summative Assessment: The Impact on Student Achievement...

### Impact of Common Formative and Summative Assessments on Student Achievement



Research says that teachers often spend up to a third of our professional time on assessment related activities (Herman & Dorr-Bremme, 1982; Crooks, 1988, Stiggins & Conklin, 1992) (qtd. in Stiggins, Teams, 1999). "Yet we know from research...that few teacher-designed tests and assessments meet the most basic (assessment) standards..." (Wiggins, 1996). We also know that that only a "few (of us) were taught to meet the standards of good (assessment) practice during (our) undergraduate or graduate-level training (Schafer & Lissitz, 1987, Stiggins & Conklin, 1992)" (qtd. in Stiggins, Teams, 1999).

Therefore, we may lack some of the skills that we need to be good



assessors, so there is "the danger that student progress may be mismeasured, day to day, in classrooms across the nation. This

means that all the critically important day-to-day instructional decisions made by students, teachers, and parents may be based on misinformation about student success. The result is the misdiagnosis of student needs, students' misunderstanding of their own ability to learn, miscommunication to parents and others about student progress, and virtually no effective assessment *for learning* in classrooms" (Stiggins, 2002). Nor can we count on unit tests or quizzes in textbooks to measure the state standards, benchmarks, and grade level content expectations that our students must learn because these resources were not designed for just our state or just our students. Therefore, their alignment with our students' instructional needs is, at times, tenuous at best.

What is the answer? "The solution is straightforward ...a school must



use assessments that actually measure the content that teachers teach" (Marzano, 2003) and students must learn to master the state expectations. The best way to do this is to have "teachers...work together to develop assessment techniques, reflect

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upon their practice, analyze data on student achievement, and generate new strategies for becoming more effective in achieving their shared goals” (DuFour, 1999). In this way the “dimension of professional growth (that teachers need to become assessment literate) can be handled efficiently, flexibly, and effectively by using learning teams, in which teachers and administrators take joint responsibility for developing their collective assessment literacy” (Stiggins, Teams, 1999) by designing and using common formative assessments that are based upon the State Standards, Benchmarks, and Grade Level Content Expectations.

Research says “professional development — when closely aligned with the school and district standards and assessments that students are measured against — produces greater returns on investment (Sykes, 1999). This approach starts with the student in mind (with) staff development that is coherent and sustained over time, focusing on student learning, engaging students, incorporating higher-order thinking, and building a learning community that produces greater results for educators and students (Garet, et al., 2001; Wenglinski, 2000)” (qtd. in Killion, 2002

Elementary; Killion, 2002, High school). Everyone benefits from this professional development model.

As the teachers are coached through the process of developing professional learning communities and become assessment literate designing common assessments to be used on an ongoing basis throughout instruction:



- ✚ “Teachers benefit because their students become more motivated to learn. Furthermore, their instructional decisions are informed by more accurate information about student achievement. Teachers also benefit from the savings in time that result from their ability to develop and use classroom assessments more efficiently” (Stiggins, 2002).
- ✚ “Parents benefit...in seeing higher achievement and greater enthusiasm for learning in their children. They also come to understand that their children are learning to manage their

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own lifelong learning” (Stiggins, 2002).

- ✚ “School administrators and instructional leaders benefit from the reality of meeting accountability standards and from the public recognition of doing so” (Stiggins, 2002).



Most of all, students “benefit from assessment for *learning in several critical ways:*

- ✚ First, they become more confident learners because they get to watch themselves succeeding (Stiggins, 2002).
- ✚ This success permits them to take the risk of continuing to try to learn. The result is greater achievement for all students - especially low achievers, which helps reduce the achievement



gap between middle-class and low-socioeconomic-status students (Stiggins, 2002).

- ✚ Furthermore, students come to understand what it means to be in charge of their own learning - to monitor their own success and make decisions that bring greater success. This is the foundation of lifelong learning” (Stiggins, 2002).

Given all of this, it is little wonder that Rick Stiggins says, “If we seek excellence in education, then the time has come to invest whatever it takes to ensure that every teacher is gathering dependable information about student learning day to day and week to week and knows how to use it to benefit students. This action must be central to all future school improvement efforts, because, if assessment is not working effectively in our classrooms every day, then assessment at all other levels (district, state, national, or international) represents a complete waste of time and money” (Stiggins, *Assessment, Student Confidence, and School Success*, 1999). Therefore, effective common summative and formative assessments are an important key to academic success for all students.

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