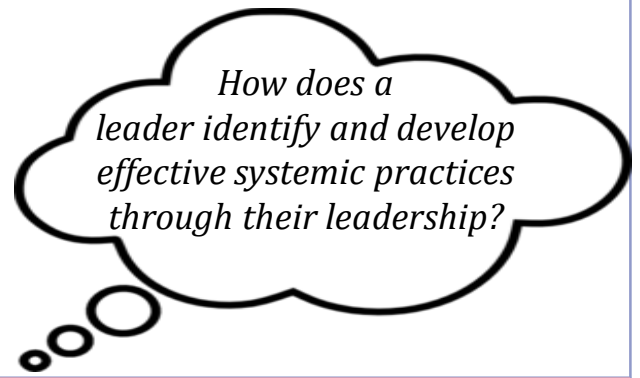


Critical Question #3

How do we know students are learning (Reflect)?



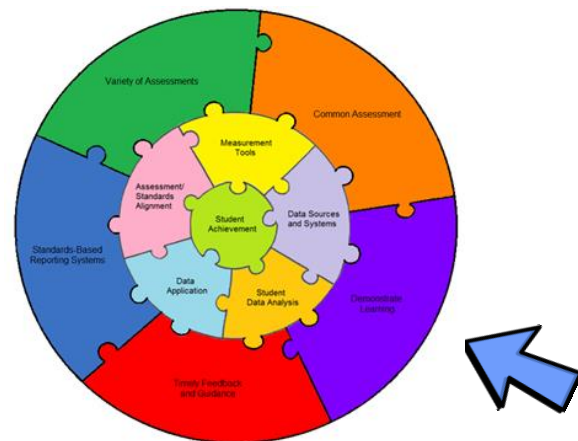
Fundamental Practice 8. Students integrate and demonstrate their learning through authentic performance tasks or assessments.

Performance assessment, also known as alternative or authentic assessment, is a form of assessment that requires students to perform one or more tasks rather than taking traditional paper-and-pencil tests. For example, a student may be asked to explain historical events, generate scientific hypotheses, solve or explain complex math problems, converse in a foreign language, conduct research, or create a project on an assigned topic. Experienced raters—either teachers or other trained staff—then judge a student’s work based on an agreed-upon set of criteria. Performance assessments can reinforce learning for students when they are able to apply their learning in authentic ways, and they allow educators, as suggested by Larry Ainsworth (2010), a “window into student understanding and application of their concepts and skills.”

Highly effective performance assessments are inquiry based, often involve problem solving, require higher-order cognitive processes, integrate big ideas, and create connections among curriculum areas and/or learning progressions. They require that students actively develop their approaches to the task under defined conditions knowing that their work will be evaluated according to agreed-upon evaluation criteria. This requirement distinguishes performance assessment from other forms of testing. Some examples include: open-ended or extended written responses, research papers, etc.; extended tasks or assignments; portfolios as collections of a variety of performance-based work; scientific or research projects; designing and building models; debates supporting or contradicting a theory; and problem-based or project-based learning.

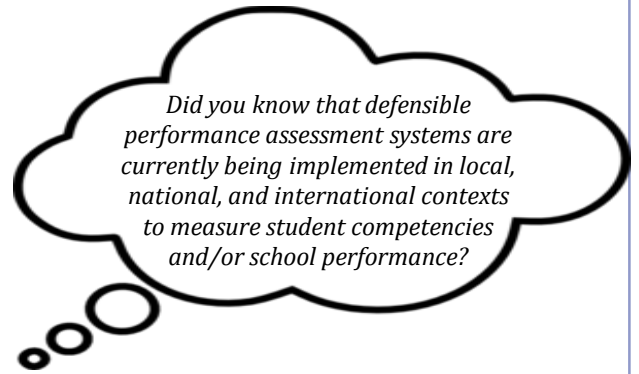
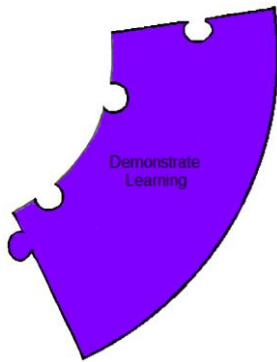
Guiding Questions:

- How are performance assessments used to measure and understand student learning?
- How do teachers access resources to design performance assessments?
- How are teachers integrating grade-level concepts or skills into performance assessments?
- How are higher-level cognitive processes integrated into performance assessments?



Reflections:

1. As a leader, what is my role in ensuring this fundamental practice is taking place in my district and schools?
2. What are current barriers that are getting in the way of successfully implementing this fundamental practice systemically in my district and schools?
3. When I return to my district/school, I will complete the following three action steps to begin enhancing our (my and my staff’s) application of this fundamental practice:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____



Building a Credible & Defensible Performance Assessment System

The following steps can be used to build a performance assessment system, as shown in Figure 1.

- 1) For each content area/discipline, the first step is to define the **performance outcomes**, or learning targets, that the performance tasks will assess. The performance outcomes serve as the foundation for the development of the scoring rubrics and performance tasks. To ensure content validity, performance outcomes are aligned with state or national standards, college readiness standards, and the core skills of the discipline.
- 2) Based on the performance outcomes, **task parameters** (or “task shell”) are defined to ensure that the designed performance tasks will measure the desired outcomes.
- 3) **Common scoring rubrics** are developed to assess student work, are aligned with the performance outcomes, and are organized to represent key dimensions of performance. Written to reflect students’ developmental trajectories, rubric levels make clear distinctions between levels to facilitate reliable scoring.
- 4) Content-specific **performance tasks** are designed using a backward-planning tool to ensure alignment with the performance outcomes, specific content standards, or other learning targets.
- 5) After collecting student work samples from across school sites, **benchmark** work samples (those representing different levels of performance on the rubric) are selected for training purposes. Teachers are trained to score student work with the common scoring rubrics. Those who pass the standard for scoring accurately are considered reliable scorers (**calibrated**).
- 6) Teachers and other participants who have been trained to score and are calibrated in a particular content area participate in scoring the student performance tasks in that content area. These scores are collected and analyzed. The results inform program review and instructional practice as well as provide the basis for further revisions of the performance outcomes, rubrics, and tasks.
- 7) To check on score reliability and the comparability of scores across teachers and schools, two strategies may be followed: an independent external audit of local school scores may be conducted, or some percentage of student work may be double-scored at the school site. A combination of these two methods may be used to check score reliability within and across schools.

8) Additional research is conducted on students’ performance task scores and work samples to evaluate the following: **Content validity** (whether these work samples truly measure state content standards or represent college readiness skills); **Concurrent validity** (how consistent students’ performance tasks scores are with students’ grades, SAT scores, or other standardized test scores); **Predictive validity** (how well students’ performance task scores predict performance in college); & **Consequential validity** (what students learn from completing a performance task, or what teachers learn from implementing these tasks)

Connect to Resources

For additional resources on performance assessments, visit the critical question 3, fundamental practice #8 section of the tool kit.

To view this article in its entirety:

<https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/events/materials/2011-06-linked-learning-performance-based-assessment.pdf>

