

Classroom Assessment

Teachers commonly evaluate students' progress in a number of ways - chapter tests, unit tests and pop quizzes. They use these test results to assign grades, but they don't usually use these results to revise instruction for those students who are not succeeding.

Other types of assessments are used more as evaluation tools by administrators or teachers. At one extreme are year-end achievement tests, which are given once a year, often near the end of the school year. These tests provide an indication of a student's overall progress for the year. The results are usually received many weeks or months after administration. This does not allow teachers to try alternative approaches if they find that students do not score well on the test. Annual achievement tests are an example of summative assessment because they focus on the outcomes of student learning.

Year-end assessments are primarily designed to:

- Estimate growth in knowledge and/or skills from one year to the next
- Identify academically at-risk students
- Evaluate students' progress compared to national norms

At the other extreme, progress monitoring consists of frequently administered tests that provide feedback on skills currently being taught. With progress monitoring, information on student learning is gathered repeatedly throughout the year rather than in one testing session and results are available immediately. This allows teachers to evaluate student learning and the effectiveness of instruction in an ongoing fashion and make necessary changes to improve students' academic progress. Progress monitoring is an example of formative assessment because student learning is evaluated on a regular basis, providing useful feedback about performance to both learners and instructors.

Progress monitoring is designed to:

- Estimate rates of improvement for each student
- Identify students who are not making adequate progress and need additional or alternative instruction

Evaluate the effectiveness of instruction so teachers can create better instructional programs

Summative assessment:
evaluation administered to measure student learning outcomes

Formative assessment:
ongoing evaluation of student learning to provide continuous feedback about performance to both learners and instructors

Please see the table below for a brief summary of these two methods of assessment

	Year-End Testing	Progress Monitoring
Type	Summative Evaluation	Formative Evaluation
Administration	Once during the year	On a regular basis
Availability of Results	Many weeks after administration of assessments	Directly after administration of assessments
Comparison of Results	National scores and averages	Individual, classroom, or district scores and averages
Use of Information	Judge student outcomes	Evaluate and modify instruction
Type of information provided	Student scores at a 4.3 grade level in math	Student writes correct answers to two digit subtraction with regrouping at a rate of 85 correct digits per minute