

## Chapter 2 Understanding Why We Assess

### Chapter Focus

**Assessments are used to make decisions.** How do these decision-makers think about the assessment with regard to two purposes: formative and summative?

A formative purpose or application is one wherein the assessment supports, nudges, or redirects student learning

A summative purpose or application is one wherein the assessment verifies that learning has been attained

### Our Balanced Assessment Mission in Public Education

Decision makers consider both the assessment process and its results. Who are these decision makers? Decision makers are found at three levels.

1. *Classroom Users and Uses* – think here of yourself as the decision maker . . . the decision relates to what should I teach next?

2. *Interim/Benchmark Assessment Users and Common (often standardized) tests* – think here of your fellow teachers and school building as the decision makers; for example, the program faculty, curriculum committees . . . the decision relates to how can we as a staff intervene to make learning better?

3. *Users and Uses of Annual Standardized Tests* – think here of the taxpayers as decision makers; your community, your region, your state and your nation . . . the decision here is high stakes for you and relates to funding and continued employment.

#### *Generalizations across Levels of Users and Uses*

1. Clear purposes are important at all levels for the data collected to have valid use.
2. Assessment is a complex system that competent professionals need to understand at all levels.
3. Student well-being is at stake

#### *Therefore, the Keys to Assessment FOR Learning*

In between periodic assessment OF Learning we rely on a steady flow of assessment FOR learning – experiences that help the students see and feel in control of their own learning growth. We present student-friendly versions of the target and provide a learning continuum toward this target by assisting their movement along it. They are growing to become decision makers themselves.

### Summary: Assessment for Many Purposes

### Practice with Chapter 2 Ideas