UCPS
UNION COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Testing vs. Assessment in Union County Public Schools

What is an assessment?

Assessment is the systematic process of documenting and using empirical, or observational, data on the knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs held by students. The purpose of giving an assessment is for teachers to use the results to improve student learning. By taking an assessment, teachers try to improve student learning. More specifically, assessments help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and point out target areas that need work. This can occur after a lesson, after a specific skill is introduced, or after a series of topics have been presented and usually do not take a great deal of time to administer. Assessments are non-evaluative and therefore do not results in grades or credit.

What is testing?

A test is used to examine someone's knowledge of something to determine what that person knows or has learned. It measures the level of skill or knowledge that an individual has obtained over time or through instruction. Grammar tests, mid-term exams, final projects, essay papers, end-of-grade (EOG) exams, end-of-course (EOC) exams, and college entrance tests, are all examples of tests students may encounter. Information from the administration of these instruments is commonly used to evaluate student learning. The end result is most often the assignment of a grade, credit for a course, or student placement in a subsequent course (i.e. placement test).

Where do benchmarks fall?

Benchmark assessments (e.g. NC Check-Ins), sometimes called interim assessments, are designed to occur between formative (evaluate how one is learning) and summative assessments (evaluate what one has learned). They are fixed assessments, evaluating students against specific learning goals rather than simply taking a quick pulse of understanding. However, unlike tests, the purpose of benchmarking is *not* to determine content mastery or assign a grade. Instead, benchmarking is used to identify students' strengths and weaknesses and use that information to guide future instruction, and support success on later summative and high-stakes tests.

So, what's the difference between an assessment and a test?

Tests and assessments are sometimes used interchangeably, ***but they do mean something different***. A test is a "product" that measures a particular set of skills or knowledge that should have been learned/obtained. Meanwhile, assessment is commonly viewed as a procedure instead of a product. Assessment is used before, during, and after the instruction has taken place. After you've received the results of your assessment, you can interpret the results and alter instruction to best suit the needs of the learner. Tests are done after the instruction has taken place and are a way to gather results on a group of learners for the purpose of evaluation.

To summarize……

Assessment	Testing
Is ongoing	Provides closure
Improves quality	Judges quality
Individualized	Applied against standards
Not graded	Graded
Provides feedback	Shows shortfalls
Process-oriented	Product-oriented

Growing Possibilities.

NC Check-In Testing Windows

Reading/English Language Arts Grades 4-8
Window #1 November 1-7
Window #2 February 14-20
Window #3 April 20-24

Math Grades 3-8 and Science Grades 5 and 8
Window #1 November 8-15
Window #2 February 21-27
Window #3 April 24-30

Math 1 (Yearlong Course)
Window #1 December 9-13
Window #2 April 20-24

Math 1 (Semester 1)
Window #1 October 25-31
Window #2 December 9-13

Math 1 (Semester 2)
Window #1 March 12-18
Window #2 May 15-21

Growing Possibilities.

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