

Assessing Mastery: An Introduction to Performance Task Exemplars



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ASSESSING MASTERY: AN INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE TASK EXEMPLARS

Performance assessments provide a way for students to develop and demonstrate mastery of competencies and standards in any discipline. Unlike traditional assessments of learning, which are assigned *after* the learning takes place, performance assessments are assessments *for and of learning*. Students apply the competencies and standards to a real-world problem or issue, allowing teachers to authentically assess the skill and knowledge development of each individual student. Additionally, performance assessments encourage choice and agency, providing students with the opportunity to showcase their learning in a way that addresses their needs and engages their interest. Performance assessments are designed for a personalized, mastery-based learning experience.

These model performance assessments are meant to support educators as they design their own performance assessments using the Idaho state competencies and standards. They serve as exemplars of how to use a backward design approach to integrate the competencies and standards into a unit-length learning experience that culminates in an authentic summative assessment. Each component of the model performance assessment is explained in the [annotated template here](#).

Here are some key assumptions and design features to keep in mind when reviewing, using, and learning from the model performance assessments:

- Teachers are the intended audience for these model performance assessments.
- The checkpoints are key steps in the learning process and are not individual lessons. When implemented, they may consist of several lessons over the course of several days, depending on students' needs. The checkpoints describe the targeted learning that needs to take place for students to progress forward with the culminating assessment. The learning path may look different for each individual student.
- The design of the performance assessments mirrors the stages of the Learning Cycle: make meaning, investigate, create, share and reflect. These stages are the *cognitive and metacognitive processes* that help learners develop competency with practice over time. Making the Learning Cycle transparent to students is a powerful scaffold teachers can provide.
- The model performance assessments are designed for students to develop and demonstrate a specific target skill level of the competencies. However, the performance assessments are flexible enough to allow students to work at the level that is appropriate to their current learning needs.
- The performance assessments are focused on a limited number of competencies, with two to three subskills. Doing so creates learning opportunities for students to deeply dive into the skills of a few competencies while providing a richer and more focused assessment of student learning.
- The model performance assessments are flexible enough to assess competencies other than those listed. For example, in the performance assessment, “Inch By Inch, Row By Row, Gonna Make This Garden Grow” skills in the Financial Literacy competency could be taught and assessed if students work within a personal budget. In the assessment, “A Call to Action For Mother Earth,” digital literacy skills could be taught during the design thinking process.

MODEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS

Elementary Exemplar: Grade 2 Math & Science

INCH BY INCH, ROW BY ROW, GONNA MAKE THIS GARDEN GROW

- Knowledge of Core Subjects
- Critical Thinking/Creative Problem Solving
- Oral/Written Communications
- Teamwork/Collaboration

We have been asked by the school principal to create our very own school garden. In order to take on this exciting task, we will have to consider many factors using our growing knowledge of math and science. We will need to use our science skills to choose plants that will grow best in our garden. We will need to use our math skills to decide how many plants we can have in our garden based on the measurements of the garden beds we have available. The principal is going to provide us a budget and so we will need to use our addition and subtraction skills we have been developing throughout the year. Finally, we will present our garden proposal and our work to the principal in a class presentation where we all participate. We will each have speaking roles to share what we learn. Let's get started!

Middle School Exemplar: Grade 6 Earth Science & English Language Arts

A CALL TO ACTION FOR MOTHER EARTH

- Critical Thinking/Creative Problem Solving
- Oral/Written Communications
- Citizenship/Civic Responsibility

Together, as a class, we have been learning about how human activity can impact the earth in positive and negative ways. For example, we have learned how increases in human population can affect how much food we have to feed our hungry planet, and how driving cars and eating a lot of meat can impact climate variability. For our final performance assessment, you will combine your learning from this unit, with your design skills, to create a solution that minimizes at least one negative human impact on the earth. You will use the design thinking process to examine in-depth one human environmental impact, assess the kinds of solutions that are feasible, and design and evaluate solutions that could reduce that impact. Examples of human impacts can include water usage (such as the withdrawal of water from streams and aquifers or the construction of dams and levees), land usage (such as urban development, agriculture, or the removal of wetlands), pollution (such as of the air, water, or land), food sources (such as corporate farming), among others. Once you have designed a solution, you will create a stop motion video that informs the community about the impact as well as presents a call to action. Your call to action will explain your solution in minimizing the human impact including ideas for how community members can play an active role in the solution.

[High School Exemplar](#): Grades 11-12 English Language Arts

IMAGES OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

- Oral/Written Communications
- Digital Literacy
- Professionalism/Work Ethic

You currently work as a freelance feature writer who has been asked to create a photo essay that presents what the American Dream means to families around the United States. The families you are interviewing for the photo essay will come from the texts we have read throughout the unit. You will use evidence from the selected fiction and nonfiction texts to craft your photo essay in which you present, compare, and connect select characters' or people's perspectives of the American Dream. You will use the central ideas developed in the nonfiction texts to make connections to the characters' experiences of the American Dream. Careful selection of images and the text will be key to accurately presenting the array of perspectives of the American Dream. To introduce your photo essay, you will create and present a digital pitch and answer questions from an audience of the magazine's editors to convince the editors to select your photo essay for feature publication in the magazine.

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT IDEAS BY COMPETENCY

Competency	Assessment Type or Example
Knowledge of Core Subjects	These are the “broth competencies” that other standards and competencies swim in - I.E. they can be demonstrated and assessed in all performance assessments, however, they will not typically be the sole focus of every performance assessment.
Professionalism/Work Ethic	<p>Regarding Professionalism/Work Ethic: This competency will be assessed through student metacognition or reflection throughout the performance assessment formative process as well as at the end of the assessment. These skills will be threaded through most of the performance assessments as they are the soft skills necessary for mastery on any rigorous performance-based assessment.</p> <p>Example Assessment Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Social Studies: Students engage in a Westward Expansion “Talk Show,” taking on different historical roles and perspectives to discuss major conflicts, events, and people of this time period. Students create their own questions, research their own historical figures, and lead their own discussion.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Environmental Science: Students write treaties to argue for the protection of threatened biomes with researched evidence. The treaties are then presented to members of the “United Nations” with a question/answer session to follow the formal presentation.
<p>Critical Thinking/ Creative Problem Solving</p> <p>Oral/Written Communications</p>	<p>Similar to the previous competencies, these competencies also play a major role in many assessments across the content areas. These competencies align closely to key transferable skills within many content standards.</p> <p>Example Assessment Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Math: Through the study of probability, students explore how likely people are to get various genetic diseases and present their findings using a mathematical model. ● Science - Students design a roller coaster prototype to demonstrate their understanding of forces and various types of motion. Students present their roller coasters through an exhibition with peer and adult feedback. ● English Language Arts: Students choose different social issues from their community that they feel need to be addressed urgently. Students create argument-based photo essays as a call to action to their respective communities.
<p>Teamwork/ Collaboration</p>	<p>This competency will be demonstrated when teamwork and collaboration are interwoven into a performance assessment. Performance assessments focusing on collaboration like Socratic Seminars and debates would be examples here. Additionally, performance assessments that are group projects wherein each group member’s individual contributions collaboratively move the work forward would be another example.</p> <p>Example Assessment Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interdisciplinary: Students put together a live farmer’s market by figuring out the food and other sundry items they want to sell, pricing the food and materials, planning how they will interact with their patrons, etc. ● Engineering: Students work together to create a compound machine from four or more simple machines. The compound machine must raise a flag at least 10 inches and each student has a particular role they must fulfill on the engineering team as well as working through the engineering design process together.
<p>Digital Literacy</p>	<p>This competency will play a vital role in performance assessments that utilize technology to demonstrate learning. For example, when students are expected to create multimedia presentations and/or they are researching within a</p>

	<p>performance assessment, they will be demonstrating this competency.</p> <p>Example Assessment Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ELA: Students create oral stories using The Moth as inspiration. Students tell their stories using audio technology while creating iMovies that visually illustrate their oral stories. ● Digital Media: Students create a piece of art using Adobe Photoshop that describes their identity or who they are through various representations of data. Students use Photoshop tools and apply the fundamentals of design when creating their artwork. ● Social Studies + ELA: Students create a podcast about a community-based non-profit that has roots or connections to the historical Progressive Movement. The connection does not have to be direct (i.e. the non-profit does not need to have originated in the Progressive Movement) but should have been influenced by some of the events or social issues of the Progressive Era.
<p>Leadership</p>	<p>Similar to the Teamwork/Collaboration competency, this competency will be interwoven or integrated into performance assessments that incorporate teamwork or collaboration. Potentially, leadership assessments would be taken on independently in a personalized pathway rather than taught for a whole class.</p> <p>Example Assessment Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Computer Science: For the final DIY capstone project, students create their own team plan for the creation of their game that will be coded for a final presentation at Google with feedback from professional computer engineers. ● Interdisciplinary: Working in small groups, students research community-based non-profits that need monetary support. Students create a marketing plan to fundraise for the non-profit while also trying to promote more volunteerism at that particular non-profit among the community members. Students track their fundraising progress as well as volunteering numbers and write a synthesis of their findings. Students also reflect on individual contributions and their leadership in the project.
<p>Citizenship/Civic Responsibility</p>	<p>This competency could be integrated into a variety of performance assessments across multiple content disciplines since the focus can be on school, local, or global communities.</p> <p>Example Assessment Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ELA + Social Studies: Students write speeches about what citizenship means to them to read at a school assembly. Students use Google

	<p>Slides to support their oral speeches with visual images.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● (Same as the idea above.) Interdisciplinary: Working in small groups, students research community-based non-profits that need monetary support. Students create a marketing plan to fundraise for the non-profit while also trying to promote more volunteerism at that particular non-profit among the community members. Students track their fundraising progress as well as volunteering numbers and write a synthesis of their findings. Students also reflect on individual contributions and their leadership in the project.
<p>Career Exploration and Development</p>	<p>This particular competency can have roots in elementary-level performance assessments but will be more developed and demonstrated in middle/high school-level performance assessments.</p> <p>Example Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Elementary ELA + Social Studies: Students explore and research different jobs in their respective communities to create a community job book that will be shared with parents and other teachers in a cafe style informal presentation. ● High School (Interdisciplinary): Students create a website portfolio of select performance assessments that exhibit mastery performance on several competencies. Students write reflections for each performance assessment to explain how the assessment demonstrates their skill development. Additionally, they write a final reflection explaining their post graduate plans, including possible college and/or career plans and how the performance assessments have impacted their thinking about those plans.
<p>Financial Literacy</p>	<p>This competency focuses on personal budgeting and financial decision-making and can be demonstrated through a variety of content discipline assessments.</p> <p>Example Assessment Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Math: Students research annual salary and hourly wages to understand how their paychecks might look for certain jobs. Students graph the results for a variety of jobs and present the math they completed through a mathematical model. ● Math: Students explore different savings accounts and retirement accounts to find ones that offer the best returns. Students graph the results and present their findings. ● Social Studies/Economics: Students research and write about economic policies in developing countries that engage women in work.