Assessment System Inventory

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INTRODUCTION

Educational assessments play a crucial part in understanding and improving student learning. When selected and used intentionally, assessments provide a way to measure student's knowledge and application of key concepts, thus allowing administrators, teachers, families, and students to monitor progress, identify strengths and weaknesses, and set learning goals.

However, when Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and schools lack a clear strategy for implementing assessments intentionally with specific purposes in mind, it often leads to over-testing, gaps in data collection, and implementation of low-quality assessments. It can also lead to a general mistrust of assessments and their resulting data.

Alternatively, having a clear, coherent assessment system in place that's directly aligned with an LEA's or school's strategic goals can result in the use of better and fewer assessments. A strong, coherent assessment system should include the following components:

- **High-quality assessments:** Only high-quality assessments are used, and the data they produce is meaningful, accurate, and aligned to the assessment's intended purpose.
- **Aligned to college- and career-ready standards:** Assessments measure understanding of the Idaho Content Standards and represent the rigor expected by those standards.
- **Awareness of each assessment given at the LEA, school, and classroom level:** LEA leaders know the assessments schools are giving. School leaders know the assessments teachers and instructional teams are using.
- **Clearly defined purposes and uses for the resulting data:** All stakeholders – from LEA and school leaders to teachers, students, and families – understand the purpose of each assessment, trust the resulting data is meaningful, and know how to interpret and use it appropriately.
- **Comprehensive, yet efficient:** The fewest possible assessments and the least possible amount of total testing time provide the best possible information.

This tool is based on the open-source resources: ***The Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts*** *(Achieve, 2014) and* ***Fewer and Better Local Assessments: A Toolkit for Educators*** *(Education First, 2015). These and other resources for implementation can be found in the* *Additional Resources* *and* *References* *sections of this document.*

Why An Assessment System Inventory?

Conducting an inventory helps bring to light what assessment looks like from a student perspective. It allows leaders to gain a clearer understanding of the overall testing burden, analyze whether the time and cost of testing are worth the outcomes, and ensure all assessments given are of high-quality and truly serve their intended purpose. The inventory process also provides an avenue for clearly communicating the purpose of each assessment and providing structures and routines for schools and educators to have meaningful discussions around data.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

This Assessment System Inventory is just the starting point of a larger, ongoing effort to improve assessment practices and support data-informed decisions. “Making strategic decisions about assessments across multiple subject areas, purposes and grade levels is complex work” (Education First, 2015, p.3). It requires time, honest reflection, and meaningful engagement with stakeholders at every level. This tool is designed to guide LEAs and schools through that process in a way that is manageable, meaningful, and worth the investment.

This document is organized into three main sections:

1. **Overview of the Assessment System Inventory Process** *(recommended for all readers)*
2. **Conducting an LEA-level Assessment System Inventory** *(designed for LEA leaders)*
3. **Conducting a School-level Assessment System Inventory** *(designed for school leaders)*

The Overview section introduces the four phases of the inventory process. The LEA- and school-level sections address each phase in depth, providing key considerations and guiding questions. The guiding questions are not meant to be exhaustive or prescriptive. Rather, they are intended to prompt reflection and surface the information most useful for making sound, evidence-informed decisions.

The appendices provide practical tools and templates to support implementation: a Quick Start Guide, an Assessment System Inventory Tool, a Sample Evaluation Rubric, Sample Recommendation Documentation, and a Glossary of Key Terms. LEAs and schools are encouraged to adapt these to better align with their individual needs and contexts.

A few things to keep in mind as you get started:

- **Start where you are.** Not every LEA or school will begin this process under the same conditions. Some may have existing structures and data readily available; others may be starting from scratch. The phases and guiding questions are designed to be useful regardless of starting point. An initial inventory that captures only part of the picture is still a meaningful step and serves as a useful foundation for the next one.
- **Involve the right people.** The quality of the inventory depends on the perspectives brought to it. Teachers, school leaders, and LEA leaders each have a distinct vantage point, and meaningful involvement across roles leads to more accurate information and greater ownership of outcomes.
- **This is not a one-time event.** An Assessment System Inventory should be revisited annually and adjusted as goals, initiatives, and student needs change. Subsequent reviews need not be as involved as the initial inventory.

OVERVIEW OF THE ASSESSMENT INVENTORY PROCESS

An Assessment System Inventory is a structured, collaborative process for examining assessments given to students across an LEA or school. The goal is to build a clearer, more honest picture of whether an LEA's or school's assessment system is coherent, intentional, and worth the investment of time and resources required of students, teachers, and leaders.

The inventory process is organized into 4 phases: Reflect and Plan, Conduct the Inventory, Evaluate and Analyze, and Make Recommendations and Decisions. While these phases are often described linearly for clarity, the work itself is iterative. For example, insights surfaced during analysis may require revisiting earlier priorities. Additionally, decisions made in the final phase often inform how the next inventory cycle will begin. Each phase informs the others, and the process as a whole is ongoing.

Phase 1: Reflect and Plan

Before any data collection begins, LEAs and schools should establish a clear foundation for the work. This includes reflecting on current assessment practices and needs, defining objectives and priorities that will guide decision-making, clarifying roles and responsibilities, allocating necessary resources, and developing a realistic implementation plan. The investment made during this phase directly influences the quality and usefulness of what follows.

Phase 2: Conduct the Inventory

Once a plan is in place, the next step is to systematically collect information about the assessments given to students – from state- and LEA-required assessments to school-selected and classroom-level assessments. The goal is to capture as complete a picture as possible of what assessment looks like from a student perspective. Once collected, an initial sort by purpose, grade level, content area, and time of year helps organize the information and surface early patterns before deeper analysis begins.

Phase 3: Evaluate and Analyze

With the inventory collected and organized, the focus shifts to evaluation and analysis. This phase involves two related activities: reviewing each assessment against a core set of quality criteria and stepping back to examine how assessments function together as a system. Individual quality matters, but so does coherence. A collection of high-quality assessments does not automatically comprise a strong assessment system.

Phase 4: Make Recommendations and Decisions

The final phase translates findings into concrete recommendations and a plan for action. Using the priorities established in Phase 1 and the evidence gathered in Phase 3, recommendations are made for each assessment – to keep, revise, replace, or remove – and then prioritized based on impact, feasibility, and urgency. Final decisions should be clearly documented, transparently communicated, and accompanied by a plan for implementation and ongoing review.

CONDUCTING AN LEA-LEVEL ASSESSMENT SYSTEM INVENTORY

Conducting an LEA-level inventory is most effective when approached as a deliberate, coordinated effort across the LEA. The following sections provide key components, considerations, and guiding questions for each phase.

Phase 1: Reflect and Plan

Reflect on Needs and Goals

As a first step, leaders should reflect on the LEA and school context in which this inventory is taking place. This includes considering the big picture, reflecting on current practices, and reviewing additional factors impacting this work.

Guiding Questions

- What are our priorities? How can assessments help us reach them?
- What are our greatest needs regarding assessments?
- What local factors or concerns are prompting us to conduct an inventory now?
- What assessment-related challenges or opportunities are schools currently experiencing?
- How are teachers and school leaders currently using assessment data?
- What external regulations or policies impact our assessment system?
- Are families or students expressing concerns about our assessments?
- What policies or procedures may need to be revised or clarified to support this effort?

Establish Objectives and Priorities

Clear objectives and priorities should be established early to ensure the inventory is focused and meaningful. These decisions will define the scope of work and provide the basis for analyzing the inventory and making final determinations. While these objectives and priorities will be the driving force behind this project, remember to allow room for other important issues to arise from the data. Keep in mind that not every issue can be addressed during this process, so identify what you believe to be the 2-3 most important needs and start there.

Guiding Questions

- What are the primary goals we hope to achieve through the inventory (e.g., reducing overall testing, streamlining assessments)?
- How will we determine whether the process has been successful?
- What types of information are needed to meet the goals of the inventory?
- How will we use our objectives and priorities to make final recommendations or decisions regarding assessments (e.g., remove, replace, revise, keep)?

Outline Roles and Responsibilities

Because an inventory involves coordination across multiple roles, it is important to clearly define responsibilities and decision-making structures. Doing so will help keep the project on track and moving forward.

Guiding Questions

- Who will be responsible for leading the inventory and for analyzing and evaluating findings?
- Who will collect and compile the assessment information, and how will they access it?
- Will we utilize a review committee? If so, who will be involved and at what phases?
- Who will be responsible for making recommendations? Who will be responsible for final decisions?

- What individuals or teams will support schools during the process?
- How will schools and staff be informed about who is responsible for collecting information and why?
- Will an external consultant or organization be involved? If so, in what capacity?

Allocate Necessary Resources

Remember, it’s important to plan for and allocate necessary resources**, including people, time, and money**, to implement the project well. Planning for resources in advance helps ensure the work is feasible and sustainable.

Guiding Questions

- What funding, if any, will be needed to support this work?
- What staffing or time commitments will be required at the LEA and school levels?
- What tools, templates, or systems will be used to document assessments?
- What professional learning or guidance will schools need to participate effectively?
- What professional learning or guidance will teachers and administrators need after the inventory in order to implement the action plan?
- When and how will support be provided?

Make an Implementation Plan

Once priorities, roles, and resources have been identified, develop a clear plan for how the inventory will be carried out. This includes setting a realistic timeline, determining how schools will participate, and establishing communication and feedback systems that keep staff and stakeholders informed and engaged. A strong implementation plan supports consistency across schools while allowing flexibility to meet local needs. Because implementation is where even well-laid plans often break down, the guiding questions in this section are organized by category to help LEAs think through each dimension of the plan deliberately and proactively.

Guiding Questions

- Timeline and Milestones
    - What is our target date for completing the inventory and reviewing results?
    - What are the major milestones that must be met (e.g., kickoff, school data submission, verification, analysis, review meeting)?
    - What deadlines will schools be expected to meet?
    - What “buffer time” is needed for follow-up and accountability?
    - How will we account for other initiatives or busy periods (e.g., testing windows, grading periods, school improvement deadlines)?
    - Participation and Process

    - Who will be asked to complete which parts of the inventory (district-level, school-level, or shared)?
    - Will all schools participate or will we start with a subset?
    - What guidance will we provide to ensure consistent interpretation of terms (e.g., purpose, administration time, use of results)?
    - How will additional support be provided to schools that need it?
- Stakeholder Engagement
    - Which stakeholder groups should be involved in planning, completing, reviewing, and acting on the inventory (e.g., teachers, principals, instructional coaches, families)?
    - At what points will stakeholders provide input (e.g., planning, review, decision-making)?
    - How will stakeholder input be gathered (e.g., surveys, focus groups, existing committees, leadership teams)?
    - How will stakeholder input be acknowledged, and how will stakeholders be informed of how their input influenced decisions?
    - Communication and Feedback Systems
    - What key messages do we want to communicate about the purpose and value of the inventory?
    - How will the inventory be introduced to school leaders and staff before the formal process begins?
    - How and when will we communicate expectations, timelines, and supports to schools?
    - What mechanisms will be used for questions and ongoing feedback?
    - How will we address common concerns proactively (e.g., workload, fear of “losing” assessments, how results may be used)?
- Data Collection Logistics
    - What information will schools be required to provide?
    - What tool or format will schools use to submit inventory information (e.g., paper-based, electronic form)?
    - What documentation will schools need to reference when completing the inventory?
    - Who will collect, organize, and maintain the submitted data?
    - What checks will be used to confirm accuracy and completeness?
    - How will we handle incomplete or inconsistent submissions from schools?
    - Review, Decision-Making, and Next Steps

- Who will review the results and interpret findings?
- How will the objectives and priorities we've established be applied consistently when reviewing findings and making decisions?
- How will findings be reviewed with staff and other stakeholders?
- How will results be translated into concrete actions (e.g., policy updates, assessment changes, professional learning)?

Phase 2: Conduct the Inventory

We strongly recommend using the tool provided in Appendix B as the basis of your inventory. Adapted from Achieve's *Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts*, the tool has been used by LEAs and states across the country since its release in 2014 and is grounded in research. LEAs and schools are encouraged to modify it when needed to better align with their individual needs and context.

Distribute the Inventory to Capture "All" Assessments Given to Students

Education First provides a helpful basis for determining which assessments to include in your inventory. Their recommendation is to "identify every assessment used in your district *by more than one classroom/more than one teacher, measuring at least a week's worth of instruction"* (Education First, 2015, p.10). We recognize this rule of thumb may not work as well for smaller LEAs where there may only be one teacher or classroom in certain areas. However, we hope it still gives an idea of where to start. Additionally, while it might seem daunting to inventory all the way to the individual classroom level, doing so will provide a more accurate picture of what assessment looks like from a student's perspective.

To help reduce the burden on any one individual, we recommend the following structure.

1. Have a designated LEA leader or leadership team complete the inventory for all required state- and LEA-level assessments. While some of the fields may still need to be completed by individuals at the school level (e.g., testing time), it will be helpful for them to have something to start with.
2. Distribute the inventory to school leaders (e.g., principals, instructional coaches, leadership teams) to add any school-selected assessments.
3. Distribute the inventory to teachers or instructional teams (e.g., MTSS teams, grade-level teams) to add all assessments given by more than one teacher/classroom and measuring at least a week's worth of learning.

Remember: *Focus on capturing assessments that will help LEA and school leadership teams meaningfully evaluate what students are asked to complete – particularly those most likely to reveal patterns, redundancies, or gaps in your assessment system. As you work through the inventory, consider whether you've captured assessments that may only apply to certain students or groups (e.g., intervention, English Learners, AP/college entrance exams). Overlooking these types of assessments could result in an incomplete picture of what assessment actually looks like for all students.*

Do an Initial Sort to Prepare for Analysis

Organizing assessments into broad categories first allows you to quickly spot obvious patterns before investing time in a deeper review.

We suggest sorting by the following four dimensions:

- **Purpose**: The primary reason the assessment is given and how the resulting data is intended to be used.
- **Grade band:** The grade levels or spans the assessment covers (e.g., K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12).
- **Content area**: The content measured by the assessment such as ELA, math, science, or social studies.
- **Time of year administered**: When the assessment is given across the school year, whether at set points, on an ongoing basis, or tied to specific instructional units.

Use this initial sort as an opportunity to flag assessments that are unclear, incomplete, or raise immediate questions. Look for obvious issues such as duplicate assessments covering the same grade and content area within the same window, or assessments whose stated purpose does not align with how the data is actually used. The goal is to organize, not analyze.

Phase 3: Evaluate and Analyze

This phase involves examining the quality and coherence of your assessment system, including what it tells you about student testing experiences. This phase involves two distinct but related activities:

- Evaluating individual assessments against a set of quality criteria, and
- Analyzing the system as a whole to understand how assessments work together – or don't.

Evaluate Individual Assessments

Reviewing each assessment against the criteria below will build a clearer, evidence-based picture of which assessments support your LEA's instructional vision and which ones warrant a closer look.

- **Alignment to Idaho standards:** The assessment measures understanding of the Idaho Content Standards at the appropriate level of rigor.
- **Technical quality:** There is evidence the assessment is reliable and produces valid, accurate data for its intended purpose.
- **Clarity of purpose:** The purpose of the assessment is clearly defined and understood by those administering and using it.
- **Actionability of data:** The data produced by the assessment is purposefully used to inform decisions by those at the appropriate level.
- **Efficiency:** The time required to administer, score, and analyze the assessment is proportionate to the value of the information it produces.
- **Fairness and accessibility:** All students have a meaningful opportunity to demonstrate what they know through built-in accessibility features, accommodations, or assessment design without aspects of the assessment affecting some student groups differently than others.

Building or adapting an evaluation rubric allows reviewers to apply these criteria consistently across assessments. A shared rubric provides evidence to support recommendations and reduces the influence of individual preferences or familiarity. See Appendix C for a sample evaluation rubric.

Guiding Questions

- Does this assessment measure what it claims to measure at the appropriate level of rigor?
- Is there evidence this assessment is technically sound for its stated purpose?
- Is the purpose of this assessment understood and consistently applied by those who administer and use it?
- Does this assessment produce data that is actually used to inform decisions? If not, is there another reason it's still being administered?
- Are the administration time and associated costs justified by the value of the resulting data?
- Are there fairness or accessibility concerns about this assessment that need to be addressed?

Analyze the System Holistically

In addition to reviewing assessments individually, it's important to step back and view the system collectively. Even a carefully selected set of high-quality assessments can fall short without an intentional system to connect them.

Key areas to examine:

- **Redundancy:** Some grade levels, content areas, or points in the year may have multiple assessments serving the same purpose. Any overlap should be intentional rather than accidental.
- **Gaps:** Some grade levels, content areas, or points in the year may have little to no assessment data being collected, leaving blind spots in your overall picture of student learning.
- **Testing Time:** Consider the total testing burden from a student perspective, including total time spent testing across the year as well as points in the school year with a particularly heavy burden.
- **Coherence:** Assessments at every level should reflect a shared instructional vision for how students learn within each content area and should meaningfully connect to curriculum and instruction.
- **Data Use Infrastructure:** The value of any assessment depends on whether structures and routines exist for teachers and leaders to purposefully use the data it produces.

Guiding Questions

- Across all assessments in each grade or content area, is there unnecessary overlap? Are there clear gaps?
- What does assessment look like from a student perspective in the most heavily tested grade levels? Are there certain times of the year where that burden is heavier than others (e.g., mid-terms, finals, spring)?
- How many hours per year are students in each grade spending on assessments? Does that seem proportionate to the number of instructional hours or to the value of the data?
- Which assessments produce data that is consistently used to make decisions? Which are not?
- How do the pieces of the assessment system work together? Does it feel intentional or like a collection of unrelated tools?
- What themes or patterns appear across schools? Are certain issues widespread or isolated?
- What structures and routines are in place to allow teachers and leaders to discuss and use the data?

Phase 4: Make Recommendations and Decisions

The final phase of the inventory translates findings into concrete recommendations and strategic actions. While it can be the most challenging, this phase has the most direct impact on students and teachers.

Develop Recommendations

Using the priorities established in Phase 1 and the criteria from Phase 3, reviewers should draft a recommendation for each assessment. Recommendations typically fall into four categories:

- **Keep**: The assessment is high-quality, serves a clear and distinct purpose, and its data is used. No changes needed.
- **Revise:** The assessment has value but needs adjustment (e.g., clearer purpose, reduced administration time, better alignment to standards).
- **Replace:** The assessment does not meet its intended purpose and should be substituted with a different high-quality assessment.
- **Remove**: The assessment is duplicative, low-quality, or its data is not being used in ways that justify the testing burden.

To ensure transparency, clearly document each recommendation along with its rationale, especially for decisions to replace or remove an assessment. A clear rationale helps build buy-in and can assist with communication efforts or to address questions that arise. See Appendix D for an example of how to document recommendations and rationales.

Guiding Questions

- Based on the evaluation criteria, which assessments are we confident in keeping? Why?
- Based on the evaluation criteria, which assessments do we feel should be removed? Why?
- Are there assessments that have value but need adjustment? What specifically needs to change?
- Are there assessments that should be replaced rather than removed? What criteria would guide the selection of a replacement?
- Are there any assessments that warrant further discussion before a recommendation is made?
- Which recommendations should be reviewed with teachers or instructional teams before being finalized?

- Are there assessments we are hesitant to remove or revise despite limited evidence of quality or use? What's driving that hesitation?
- Is the rationale for each recommendation specific enough that someone outside this process could understand the reasoning?

Prioritize and Sequence Recommended Changes

Change takes time. Not every recommendation needs to be addressed immediately, nor should it be. Trying to implement many changes at once is overwhelming and can result in less intentional implementation. Before moving to final decisions, it's important to **prioritize recommendations based on impact, feasibility, and urgency**.

Think about implementing recommendations as a sequence of changes over time. For example, begin with clear wins, such as removing assessments that are universally seen as redundant or low-quality, before addressing recommendations that require additional input or a policy change. Still plan for the less straightforward recommendations, just know they may be implemented at a future point in time.

Guiding Questions

- Which changes would have the greatest impact on reducing testing burden or improving data quality?
- Which changes are most feasible to implement in the near term?
- Which changes require policy changes, budget decisions, or board approval?
- Are there changes that should wait until professional learning or support structures are in place?
- How will we sequence changes?
- How will recommendations that cannot be acted on immediately be documented and carried forward to the next review cycle?

Make and Communicate Decisions

Recommendations and prioritizations from reviewers provide the foundation for final decisions, but the authority to act on those decisions may rest with a different individual or group such as a superintendent, board, or senior leadership team. Before decisions are finalized, ensure decision-makers have reviewed the recommendations and rationale and have had the opportunity to ask questions or request additional information.

Regardless of who makes them, final decisions should reflect the priorities and objectives from Phase 1. In instances where a decision may deviate from the recommendations, document the rationale. Again, transparency and clear communication are crucial. Without them, even informed, sound decisions can generate confusion, resistance, or mistrust.

Once decisions are made, establish a clear timeline and designate ownership for each approved change. This will allow implementation to move forward while providing accountability. Additionally, develop a communication plan for sharing decisions with schools and staff. Effective communication should include what is staying, what is changing, and why, and should also acknowledge the input of all who participated in the process.

Guiding Questions

- Have the appropriate decision-makers reviewed the recommendations and supporting rationale?
- Where decisions differ from recommendations, is the reasoning clearly documented?
- How and when will decisions be communicated to schools and staff, including what is staying, what is changing, and why?
- How will we communicate the sequence and timing of changes so schools have adequate time to prepare?
- Who is responsible for communicating decisions to principals, staff, and/or families?
- How will stakeholder input be acknowledged and connected to specific decisions?
- What professional learning or support will be needed to implement approved changes, and who is responsible for ensuring it is in place?
- Who owns each approved change? What is the timeline for implementation?
- What feedback mechanisms will be put in place to identify and address implementation challenges?

Plan for Ongoing Review

Create a structure for revisiting the inventory on a regular basis so the system remains coherent, efficient, and aligned to current goals. An annual review is recommended; however, subsequent inventories needn't be as involved as what may be done initially.

Guiding Questions

- When and how will the inventory be revisited? Who will be responsible?
- How will new assessments be vetted before they are added to the system?
- What structures or routines will ensure assessment data continues to be used meaningfully between inventory cycles?
- How will the impact of changes made during this inventory cycle be evaluated before the next review begins?
- How will future changes to the assessment system be communicated to stakeholders?

CONDUCTING A SCHOOL-LEVEL ASSESSMENT SYSTEM INVENTORY

While a school-level inventory takes place on a smaller scale, it still requires the same intentionality and investment in the process as an LEA-level review. This section is designed to serve two audiences: school leaders participating as part of an LEA-level inventory and those conducting an inventory independently.

Note: *While this section can be used on its own, school leaders are encouraged to explore the LEA-level Assessment System Inventory section for additional detail and guiding questions.*

Phase 1: Reflect and Plan

Before any data collection begins, school leaders need a clear plan for conducting, analyzing, and acting on the inventory. This includes reflecting honestly on current assessment practices, establishing goals and priorities, clarifying who will be involved and in what capacity, and identifying the time and resources needed to do the work well.

Reflect on Needs and Goals

At the school level, reflections should be grounded in what is actually occurring in classrooms including:

- What teachers know and believe about assessment,
- How data is currently being used (or not), and
- Whether existing assessments are supporting instructional decision-making at the school level.

The most successful inventories begin with leaders and teams who are open to discovering what the data actually reveals, even when it challenges current thinking.

Guiding Questions

- What assessment related challenges are teachers and instructional teams in our school experiencing?
- Do teachers and instructional teams understand the purpose of each assessment they are asked to administer?
- Do teachers and instructional teams understand how to use the data from each assessment?
- Are there assessments teachers and instructional teams find particularly burdensome or of limited value?
- Are structures and routines in place for teachers and instructional teams to discuss and act on assessment data?

Establish Objectives and Priorities

Clear objectives will help define the scope of the inventory and provide a basis for evaluating findings and making decisions. Be specific about what success looks like.

Guiding Questions

- What are the primary goals of the assessment inventory (e.g., reducing overall testing, streamlining assessments, identifying gaps in our current system)?
- What information needs to be collected to meet those goals?
- What evidence will indicate the process has been successful?

Outline Roles and Responsibilities

School-level inventories are usually led by an administrator, instructional coach, or school leadership team. Regardless of who leads it, teachers and instructional teams should be meaningfully involved to ensure accuracy and to create shared ownership of the process and its outcomes. Clearly defining who is responsible for what will keep the project moving forward.

Guiding Questions

- Who will lead and oversee the inventory?
- How will teachers and instructional teams be involved in the process?
- Who will compile and organize the assessment information once collected?
- Who will be responsible for analyzing findings and developing recommendations?
- Who will have the authority to make final decisions?

If participating in an LEA-led inventory: *Some roles and responsibilities may already be defined by the LEA. Clarify expectations with LEA leadership and confirm which parts of the inventory schools are responsible for.*

If conducting an independent inventory: *It's likely all Phase 1 decisions will be made locally. Consider whether a small review team or leadership committee would strengthen the process and help distribute the workload.*

Allocate Resources and Make an Implementation Plan

Develop a realistic implementation plan that outlines the timeline, milestones, staffing commitments, and tools or templates needed to carry out the inventory. This plan should also establish how and when staff will be informed of the process and their role in it.

Guiding Questions

- What time and staffing commitments are required?
- What tools or templates will be used to collect and document assessment information?
- What is the timeline and what are the key milestones?

- How and when will the purpose and process be communicated to staff?
- What professional learning or support will teachers and instructional teams need to participate effectively?

If participating in an LEA-led inventory: *While many of the planning details may be determined by your LEA (e.g., timeline, tools and templates, professional learning supports), it's important to still consider how these elements will be implemented at your school. Strong support and communication at the school-level increases the likelihood of a successful LEA-level inventory.*

Phase 2: Conduct the Inventory

Once plans are in place, it's time to collect information about the assessments given to students. The goal is to look at your assessment system from a student's perspective by capturing the full scope of what they are asked to complete. We strongly recommend using the inventory tool provided in Appendix B.

To make data collection more manageable, consider distributing the work across roles. For example:

- School leaders can pre-populate state-, LEA-, and school-required assessments.
- Teachers or instructional teams can add assessments used within or across classrooms (e.g., grade-level specific assessments, end of unit exams, progress monitoring tools).

Once the inventory is collected, do a preliminary sort by purpose, grade level, content area, and time of year before moving into deeper analysis. This initial sort often surfaces the following patterns:

- **High testing loads** (e.g., Six 10^{th} grade assessments administered within the first ten weeks of school),
- **Redundancies** (e.g., Two different tools measuring the same early literacy skills), or
- **Gaps** (e.g., No school-level data is collected for math at any point during the school year).

Remember, transparency matters. Staff who understand why the inventory is being conducted and how the information will be used are more likely to engage honestly and thoroughly. See the LEA-level Phase 2 guidance for additional detail on the distribution structure, the initial sorting process, and guidance on which assessments to include in the inventory.

If participating in an LEA-led inventory: *State and LEA-required assessments may already be pre-populated in the inventory tool. Confirm with LEA leadership what schools are responsible for adding and verify any pre-populated assessments are accurate for your school.*

Phase 3: Evaluate and Analyze

Evaluate Individual Assessments

Using a common set of criteria, such as those found in the rubric in Appendix C, grounds recommendations in evidence rather than individual preference or familiarity. Things to consider include alignment to Idaho standards, technical quality, clarity of purpose, actionability of data, efficiency, and fairness and accessibility. See the LEA-level Phase 3 guidance for descriptions of each criteria.

At the school level, clarity of purpose and actionability of data are particularly important. An assessment's technical quality means little if teachers and instructional teams cannot articulate its purpose or use its results. It's worth noting, however, that this does not automatically point to a problem with the assessment itself. It may instead signal a need for professional learning or support, which is still a valuable finding.

Remember, the goal of this stage is not to make final decisions. Rather it is to build an honest, evidence-informed picture of which assessments support your school's instructional vision and which should be looked at more closely.

Guiding Questions

- Does each assessment serve a clear purpose that teachers and instructional teams understand and find meaningful?
- Are there assessments whose data is rarely or never discussed in team or coaching conversations?
- Are there assessments staff consistently find difficult to administer, score, or interpret?
- Are the administration time and associated cost proportionate to the value of the resulting data?

Analyze the System Holistically

This is the place to look at your system through the lens of your students and instructional teams. Key areas to examine include redundancies, gaps, overall testing time, coherence, and structures for using the data. Refer to the LEA-level Phase 3 for descriptions of these areas.

At the school level, examination of these areas should always include discussions grounded in instructional impact and effects on student experiences. Look for patterns across grade levels and content areas.

Guiding Questions

- What does a typical student's assessment experience look like across a school year, taking special consideration for the most heavily tested grade levels and student populations?
- Are there multiple assessments serving the same purpose for the same students?
- Are there content areas or grade levels where teachers and instructional teams feel over- or under-informed by available assessment data?
- Are there points in the year where the volume or timing of assessments significantly disrupt or reduce instructional time?
- Do all assessments reflect a shared understanding of how students learn within each content area?

***If participating in an LEA-led inventory:** Share school-level findings with LEA leadership as part of the broader analysis. Patterns that appear may reflect a wider issue when viewed across the system.*

Phase 4: Make Recommendations and Decisions

The final phase includes developing recommendations for each assessment, prioritizing and sequencing changes, and making and communicating decisions.

***If participating in an LEA-level inventory:** Before beginning this phase, clarify with LEA leadership which decisions can be made at the school level and which require LEA approval.*

Develop Recommendations

Using priorities established in Phase 1 and the criteria from Phase 3, school leadership or reviewers should develop a recommendation for each assessment. Document the rationale for each recommendation clearly, particularly for any assessment proposed for removal or replacement. Input from teachers and instructional teams should carry meaningful weight in this process. Those closest to the assessments will often have the clearest perspective on what is and isn't working. Recommendations typically fall into four categories:

- **Keep**: The assessment is high-quality, serves a clear and distinct purpose, and its data is used. No changes needed.
- **Revise:** The assessment has value but needs adjustment (e.g., clearer purpose, reduced administration time, better alignment to standards).
- **Replace:** The assessment does not meet the intended purpose and should be substituted with a different high-quality assessment.
- **Remove**: The assessment is duplicative, low-quality, or its data is not being used in ways that justify the testing burden.

Guiding Questions

- Which assessments are worth keeping? Why?
- Are there assessments that consistently generate concern, confusion, or frustration among teachers or students?
- Are there school-selected assessments that could be removed or replaced without creating meaningful gaps in available data?
- Is the rationale for each recommendation clearly documented?

Prioritize and Sequence Recommended Changes

Not every recommendation needs to be – or should be – acted on immediately. Begin with changes that are clear, widely supported, and within the school's authority to make. Plan for more complex recommendations but recognize they may be implemented at a later point. Refer to LEA-level Phase 4 for guiding questions related to prioritizing and sequencing changes.

Make and Communicate Decisions

Once decisions are made, establish a clear plan for communicating them to staff. Address what is staying, what is changing, and why, and acknowledge the contributions of those who participated. Even well-justified decisions can generate confusion or resistance without transparent, timely communication.

Guiding Questions

- Which recommendations can be acted on at the school level, and which need to be elevated to LEA leadership?
- Have the appropriate decision makers reviewed the recommendations and rationales?
- How and when will decisions be communicated to teachers and instructional teams?
- What support will teachers and instructional teams need as assessments change?
- How will we follow up to ensure changes are carried out as intended?

For additional considerations and guiding questions around making and communicating decisions, refer to LEA-level Phase 4 guidance.

Note: *All school leaders – whether participating in an LEA-led inventory or conducting one independently – likely have full authority to act on recommendations involving school-selected assessments. While schools cannot necessarily remove or replace assessments required by the state or LEA, they can and should document recommendations and communicate them to those with the authority to act.*

Plan for Ongoing Review

Building in a regular review process – even a brief annual review – helps ensure a school's assessment system continues to meet the needs of students and staff as they work toward goals and priorities. Use each inventory review as an opportunity to ask whether new assessments have been added without sufficient vetting and whether previous changes are having the intended effect.

A FINAL WORD

Conducting an assessment system inventory is one of the more meaningful investments an LEA or school can make in understanding and improving its own practice. It requires setting aside assumptions, surfacing what isn't working, and making difficult decisions in the interests of students and the educators who serve them.

The goal is not a smaller list of assessments – it's a stronger, more intentional system. One where every assessment has a clear purpose, the data it produces is meaningful, and the people closest to students trust that the information being collected and used actually matters.

If this process surfaces more than expected, it's a sign the process is working. Remember, this is a cycle, not a checklist. Difficult findings are not a failure of the system; they are an invitation to improve it. Each subsequent review builds on what came before, bringing better questions, sharper focus, and more informed decisions. The work is not easy – but it is worth doing.

Additional resources, tools, and templates to support this work can be found in the additional resources section and appendices that follow. For questions or additional guidance, contact the Idaho Department of Education's Assessment and Accountability Team.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Name	Description	Link to Access
Fewer and Better Local Assessments: A Toolkit for Educators Playbook	A toolkit from Education First outlining a five-phase process for reviewing, streamlining, and improving your local assessment strategy, including tools and resources for engaging educators in the process.	Access the Resource Here
Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts	An open-source inventory tool developed by Achieve that supports LEAs in cataloguing and evaluating assessments across grade levels and content areas.	Access the Resource Here
Sample Assessment Inventory Questions and Sample Assessment Survey Questions	A resource from the Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation (CSAI) that provides sample inventory questions and survey items for reviewing assessment systems, organized around key principles including quality, fairness, efficiency, and transparency.	Access the Resource Here
Engaging in an Assessment Inventory to Bring Balance to Your District's Assessment System	A workshop presentation from the Michigan Assessment Consortium that provides a step-by-step overview of the LEA assessment inventory process, from assembling a team and building assessment literacy to determining redundancies and gaps, developing recommendations, and creating an action plan – includes practical guidance on facilitating data-driven dialogue and supporting stakeholder engagement throughout the process.	Access the Resource Here
What Does a High-Quality Assessment Actually Look Like?	A brief from Education First summarizing key criteria for evaluating assessment quality, including alignment to standards, rigor, validity, reliability, fairness, and actionability of data – though originally written for policymakers evaluating state summative assessments, the quality criteria outlined are broadly applicable and can be used to evaluate locally selected assessments.	Access the Resource Here
Assessment System Review Course Modules	A self-paced learning series developed by the Center for Assessment and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) that walks educators and leaders through the process of reviewing and improving their local assessment system.	Access the Resource Here
Implementing Balanced Assessment Systems: A Practical Guidebook for Districts and Schools	A practical guidebook developed by the Center for Assessment and the National Academy of Education (NAEd) that supports LEAs and schools in designing and implementing a coherent, balanced assessment system.	Access the Resource Here

REFERENCES

Achieve. (2014). *Student Assessment Inventory for School Districts.* https://oagc.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Achieve-Student-Assessment-Inventory.pdf

Education First. (2015). *Fewer and Better Local Assessments: A Toolkit for Educators Playbook.* https://www.education-first.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Assessment-Review-Playbook-11-17-15-FINAL.pdf

APPENDIX A – INVENTORY QUICK START GUIDE

This guide provides a condensed overview of the Assessment System Inventory process. It is designed as an at-a-glance reference for leaders who have read the full document and want a quick reminder of key steps, or for those who want a high-level preview before diving into the full guidance. For detailed considerations, guiding questions, and context, refer to the corresponding sections in the main document.

What Is an Assessment System Inventory?
A structured, collaborative process for examining the assessments given to students across an LEA or school. The goal is to build a clear, honest picture of whether your assessment system is coherent, intentional, and worth the investment it requires of students, teachers, and leaders.

The Four Phases at a Glance

Phase 1: Reflect and Plan	Phase 2: Conduct the Inventory
Before collecting any data, establish a clear foundation for the work. • Reflect honestly on current assessment practices, needs, and context. • Define 2–3 clear objectives and priorities to guide the process. • Identify who is responsible for leading, collecting, analyzing, and deciding. • Allocate necessary resources — people, time, and funding. • Develop a realistic implementation plan with a clear timeline, milestones, and a communication strategy for keeping staff and stakeholders informed.	Systematically collect information about every assessment given to students. • Start with state- and LEA-required assessments, then move to school-selected and classroom-level assessments. • Use the inventory tool in Appendix B to document assessments consistently. • Distribute the work across roles to reduce burden on any one individual. • Once collected, do an initial sort by purpose, grade level, content area, and time of year to surface early patterns. • Flag assessments that are unclear, incomplete, or raise immediate questions.

Phase 3: Evaluate and Analyze	Phase 4: Make Recommendations and Decisions
Evaluate individual assessments and examine how they function together as a system. • Review each assessment against a core set of quality criteria: alignment to Idaho standards, technical quality, clarity of purpose, actionability of data, efficiency, and fairness and accessibility. • Use the rubric in Appendix C to apply criteria consistently. • Step back and look at the system holistically — examining redundancies, gaps, overall testing time, coherence, and structures for data use. • The goal at this stage is not to make final decisions. It is to build an honest, evidence-informed picture of what is working and what warrants a closer look.	Translate findings into concrete recommendations and a plan for action. • Develop a recommendation for each assessment — keep, revise, replace, or remove — and document the rationale clearly. • Prioritize changes based on impact, feasibility, and urgency. Begin with clear wins and plan for more complex changes over time. • Communicate decisions transparently to staff, addressing what is staying, what is changing, and why. • Plan for ongoing review. This is a cycle, not a one-time event.

Key Reminders

Involve the right people. Teachers and instructional teams have the clearest view of what assessment looks like in practice. Their input should carry meaningful weight throughout the process.

Document everything. Clear rationales for recommendations, especially for assessments proposed for removal or replacement, support transparency and build buy-in.

Start where you are. The phases and tools are designed to be useful regardless of where your LEA or school is starting from. Feel free to adapt the tools to meet your individual needs and context.

The process is iterative. Insights from later phases may send you back to revisit earlier decisions. That is expected, not a sign something went wrong.

Tools and Templates Available

- Assessment System Inventory Tool
- Sample Evaluation Rubric
- Sample Recommendation Documentation
- Glossary of Key Terms

APPENDIX B – ASSESSMENT SYSTEM INVENTORY TOOL

The Assessment System Inventory Tool is used during Phase 2 (Conduct the Inventory) to systematically collect information about the assessments given to students across an LEA or school. The goal is to build as complete a picture as possible of what assessment looks like from a student perspective.

This tool is available as a working Excel file, which includes a blank inventory template, completed examples, and a how-to guide. The Excel file can be accessed under Assessment System Inventory on the [Assessment and Accountability] page of the Idaho Department of Education website. The field descriptions below explain what each column captures, and a condensed blank table is included for teams who prefer to work in a different format or want a quick visual reference.

Field Descriptions

Field	Description
BASIC INFORMATION	
Assessment Name	The official or commonly used name of the assessment.
Source / Entity Requiring Assessment	The entity that requires or selected the assessment: State, LEA, School, or Teacher-Selected.
Grade Level(s)	The grade level(s) for which the assessment is intended or required.
Content Area(s)	The subject or content area the assessment addresses.
Student Population(s)	Which students are eligible or required to take the assessment.
Type of Assessment	Summative, Interim/Benchmark, Diagnostic, Screener, or Formative.
Years Administered in District	Approximately how long the assessment has been in use.
PURPOSE & USE	
Intended Purpose	What the assessment is designed to measure.
Intended Use(s)	The kinds of decisions the assessment is designed to inform.
Users of Assessment Data	Who receives and is expected to act on the results.
Is Assessment Used for Its Intended Purpose?	Whether the assessment is being used as intended. (Yes / No / Partially) Explain.
Usefulness Rating	How useful users find the results (1 = Not useful → 4 = Very useful). Include a brief explanation.

Field	Description
ADMINISTRATION	
Time of Year Administered	When the assessment is given across the school year.
Testing Frequency	How often the assessment is administered per year.
Total Administration Time	Approximate total time for students to complete the assessment, in minutes.
Administration Format	How the assessment is delivered (e.g., paper, computer-based, oral).
Item Type(s)	The types of items or tasks included in the assessment.
Accommodations Available	Accommodations or accessibility features available for eligible students.
Time from Administration to Results	How long it typically takes for results to reach users.
QUALITY & ALIGNMENT	
Alignment to Idaho Content Standards	Whether the assessment measures Idaho Content Standards at appropriate rigor. Note the source of verification. (Yes / No / Partially)
Technical Quality	Evidence the assessment is reliable and produces valid, accurate data for its intended purpose.
Clarity of Purpose	Whether the purpose is clearly defined and understood by those who administer and use it.
Actionability of Data	Whether the data is meaningfully used to inform decisions, and by whom.
Efficiency	Whether time required is proportionate to the value of information produced.
Fairness & Accessibility	Whether all students have a meaningful opportunity to demonstrate what they know.
COST & LOGISTICS	
Vendor / Developer	The organization or vendor that developed or publishes the assessment.
Contract / Expiration Date	The expiration date of any vendor contract, if applicable.
Annual Cost	Total annual cost and per-student cost, if known.
Funding Source(s)	Source(s) of funding used to support the assessment.
OTHER	
Notes / Flags	Questions, concerns, or issues that arise during data collection and warrant follow-up during Phase 3.

Assessment Inventory Tool – Condensed Version

Assessment Name	Source/Entity Requiring Assessment	Grade(s)	Content Area	Purpose	Intended Use(s)	Usefulness Rating	Notes/ Flags

Note: *The condensed table above captures the most essential fields. The full inventory – including all fields across the Basic Information, Purpose & Use, Administration, Quality and Alignment, Cost & Logistics, and Other sections – is available in the Excel version.*

APPENDIX C – SAMPLE EVALUATION RUBRIC

The Evaluation Rubric is used during Phase 3 (Evaluate and Analyze) to review individual assessments against the six quality criteria described in the main guidance document. The goal is to ground recommendations in evidence rather than individual preference or familiarity with a particular assessment. Applying a shared rubric consistently across assessments ensures the review process is transparent, defensible, and useful.

This sample rubric is available as a working Excel file, which includes the blank rubric, a completed example, and a how-to guide. The Excel file can be accessed under Assessment System Inventory on the Assessment and Accountability page of the Idaho Department of Education website. The rating scale and blank rubric below provide an overview of what the tool captures and provides an alternate format for teams that may prefer it or want a quick visual reference.

Rating Scale

Rating	What It Means
1 – Insufficient	Little to no evidence the criterion is met. Significant concerns that are unlikely to be addressed through minor changes.
2 – Limited	Some evidence the criterion is met, but significant gaps exist. Concerns are substantial and would require meaningful changes to address.
3 – Adequate	Solid evidence the criterion is met, with minor gaps. Concerns are addressable through targeted revisions or supports.
4 – Strong	Clear, compelling evidence the criterion is met. The assessment demonstrates strength in this area with no significant concerns.

Note: *The rubric on the following page is intentionally content-neutral and can be applied to any assessment regardless of subject area. For teams conducting a more in-depth evaluation of ELA or mathematics assessments — particularly around alignment to reading standards, text quality and complexity, or the major work of the grade — the Local Assessment Screening Educator Rubrics (LASER), developed by Education First and the Achievement Network (ANet), provide more granular, content-specific criteria. The LASER rubrics can be found as part of the Teacher Engagement Toolkit on the Education First website.*

Assessment Evaluation Rubric

Quality Criterion	What to Look For	Rating (1-4)	Evidence
Alignment to Idaho Content Standards	The assessment measures understanding of the Idaho Content Standards at the appropriate level of rigor. Alignment has been verified through an independent review, vendor documentation, or internal analysis.		
Technical Quality	There is evidence the assessment is reliable (produces consistent results) and valid (measures what it claims to measure) for its intended purpose. Evidence may include technical manuals, independent reviews, or field test data.		
Clarity of Purpose	The purpose of the assessment is clearly defined and consistently understood by those who administer and use it. Teachers and leaders can articulate what the assessment measures and why it is given.		
Actionability s of Data	The data produced by the assessment is meaningfully used to inform decisions. Results reach users in time to act on them, users understand how to interpret them, and structures or routines exist to support data use.		
Efficiency	The time required to administer, score, and analyze the assessment is proportionate to the value of the information it produces. The assessment does not create unnecessary burden for students, teachers, or staff.		
Fairness & Accessibility	All students have a meaningful opportunity to demonstrate what they know. The assessment includes built-in accessibility features, appropriate accommodations are available, and design does not introduce fairness concerns or create unnecessary barriers for any student group.		
Total Score (6-24 possible)			

ATTRIBUTION: CRITERIA INFORMED BY *WHAT DOES A HIGH-QUALITY ASSESSMENT ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE?* (EDUCATION FIRST, 2015) AND THE LOCAL ASSESSMENT SCREENING EDUCATOR RUBRICS (LASER) DEVELOPED BY EDUCATION FIRST AND THE ACHIEVEMENT NETWORK (ANET).

APPENDIX D – SAMPLE RECOMMENDATION DOCUMENTATION

The Recommendation Documentation tool is used during Phase 4 (Make Recommendations and Decisions) to document the recommendations for each assessment in the inventory. It provides a structured format for capturing not only what is recommended, but the evidence behind it, who has authority to act, and what steps are needed to implement the recommendation. Clear documentation supports transparency, builds buy-in, and helps ensure decisions are carried out as intended.

This tool is available as a working Excel file, which includes a blank template for documenting recommendations, completed examples illustrating all four recommendation categories, and a how-to guide for completing the tool. The Excel file can be accessed under Assessment System Inventory on the Assessment and Accountability page of the Idaho Department of Education website. For teams who prefer to work in a different format or want a quick visual reference, a blank documentation table and column descriptors are provided below.

Recommendation Documentation Tool

Assessment Name	Action	Recommendation	Rationale	Authority	Timing	Action Steps

Column Descriptors

Column	Description	Additional Considerations
Assessment Name	The name of the assessment as it appears in the inventory tool	*N/A*
Action	The recommended action: Keep, Revise, Replace, Remove	*N/A*
Recommendation	The specific description of what is recommended	For revise, note what changes are needed. For replace, note what type of assessment should be sought.
Rationale	The evidence-based justification for the recommendation	Reference specific findings from the evaluation rubric, inventory data, or stakeholder input. This column is especially important for the replace and remove recommendations.
Decision-Making Authority (Authority)	The individual or group with authority to approve and act on this recommendation	This may vary by recommendation or the level of assessment. (e.g., school level vs LEA or school board)
Target Timing (Timing)	When the recommendation is expected to be acted on	Sequence recommendations to begin with clear wins before addressing more complex changes.
Action Steps	The specific steps required to implement the recommendation	Assign ownership for each step where possible.

APPENDIX E – GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

The terms below are used throughout the Assessment System Inventory guidance document and accompanying tools. Definitions reflect how each term is used in the context of conducting an inventory in an Idaho LEA or school.

Term	Definition
Accessibility Features	A term for the full range of supports available to students during an assessment. Accessibility features are designed to reduce barriers to demonstrating knowledge without altering what the assessment measures. For Idaho's statewide assessments these often include universal tools, designated supports/administrative considerations, and accommodations.
Accommodations	Changes to the conditions under which an assessment is administered that allow a student with an identified need documented in an Individual Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan to demonstrate their knowledge and skills without altering what the assessment measures. Accommodations should be used consistently across both instruction and assessment to support valid results.
Actionability of Data	The degree to which assessment results are meaningfully used to inform decisions. An assessment produces actionable data when results are timely, clearly reported, and supported by structures and routines that enable meaningful action.
Alignment	The degree to which an assessment measures the knowledge, skills, and levels of cognitive demand specified in a set of content standards. In Idaho, alignment should be measured to the Idaho Content Standards.
Assessment	Assessment refers both to tools – such as tests, quizzes, and performance tasks – and to the ongoing process of gathering and interpreting evidence of student thinking. In the context of this inventory, assessment refers primarily to the formal, administered tools given to students beyond day-to-day classroom instruction. An assessment inventory evaluates those tools that can be systematically identified, evaluated, and acted upon at the LEA or school level.

Term	Definition
Assessment System Inventory (Assessment Inventory)	A structured process for systematically collecting, organizing, and analyzing information about every assessment given to students in an LEA or school, with the goal of building a clear, honest picture of the assessment system from a student perspective.
Assessment System	The full collection of assessments used across an LEA or school, considered as a whole. A strong assessment system is coherent, comprehensive, and efficient — with each assessment serving a clear and distinct purpose.
Cognitive Complexity	The type(s) of mental processing (i.e., thinking skills) required by an item or set of items. This may refer to Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK), Bloom's Taxonomy, or other definitions of thinking skills.
Coherence	The degree to which the assessments in a system work together intentionally — sharing a common understanding of how students learn, connecting to curriculum and instruction, and collectively serving the full range of assessment purposes without unnecessary redundancy or gaps.
Depth of Knowledge (DOK)	A framework developed by Norman Webb that describes the level of cognitive complexity required to complete a task or demonstrate understanding of a standard. DOK levels range from 1-4 **Level 1 – Recall and Reproduction:** students must retrieve facts or apply a simple procedure **Level 2 – Skills and Concepts:** students must make decisions about how to approach a problem or use concepts to solve it **Level 3 – Strategic Thinking:** students must reason, plan, and use evidence to support conclusions **Level 4 – Extended Thinking:** students must use complex reasoning, synthesis, and application across multiple contexts for an extended period DOK is commonly used when evaluating whether an assessment's items and tasks reflect the full cognitive demand of the standards they are intended to measure.

Term	Definition
Diagnostic	An assessment designed to provide detailed information about a student's specific strengths and areas of need within a content area. Diagnostic assessments go deeper than screeners and are used to plan targeted instruction or intervention.
Fairness	The degree to which an assessment provides all students with an equitable opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do. An assessment lacks fairness when its design, content, or administration conditions disadvantage certain student groups – such as English Learners, students with disabilities, or students from particular backgrounds – for reasons unrelated to the knowledge or skills being measured.
Formative Assessment (Formative Assessment Practices)	A planned, ongoing process used by teachers and students during instruction to gather and use evidence of learning to adjust teaching and support student progress. Formative assessment is a process embedded in daily instruction, not a specific tool or testing event.
Gap	An area within an assessment system where little or no data is being collected, leaving blind spots in the overall picture of student learning. Gaps may occur by grade level, content area, or point in the school year.
High-Quality Assessment	An assessment that is aligned to content standards at the appropriate level of rigor, technically sound, clearly purposeful, and produces data that is meaningful and actionable for its intended use.
Interim/Benchmark Assessment	An assessment administered periodically throughout the school year to evaluate student knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic goals. Interim assessments can inform instructional decisions at the classroom, school, and district level and may also be used for program monitoring.
Local Education Agency (LEA)	A public school district, charter school, or other public-school authority responsible for the local administration and operation of publicly funded schools. In Idaho, LEAs include school districts and most public charter schools.

Term	Definition
Progress Monitoring	Repeated assessment of a student's performance over time to determine whether they are responding to instruction or intervention and making adequate progress toward learning goals. Used most frequently with students receiving targeted or intensive supports.
Redundancy	A condition in which multiple assessments serve the same purpose for the same students. Accidental or unexamined redundancy contributes to testing burden without additional informational value.
Reliability	The consistency of an assessment — the degree to which it produces stable, repeatable results under consistent conditions and across scorers.
Rigor	The level of cognitive demand required of students to demonstrate mastery of a standard or skill. A rigorous assessment requires students to do more than recall facts or apply routine procedures – it asks them to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, or apply knowledge in new contexts in ways that reflect the full expectations of the standard being measured.
Screener (Universal Screener)	A relatively short test administered to all students to quickly identify those who may be at risk and in need of additional support. Screeners are brief and efficient by design; results typically prompt follow-up with a more detailed diagnostic assessment.
Summative Assessment	An assessment administered at the end of an instructional period to evaluate student achievement or program effectiveness relative to a defined set of content standards. Summative assessments are typically used for evaluative and reporting purposes.
Technical Quality	The degree to which an assessment meets established standards for reliability and validity for its intended purpose. Evidence of technical quality may include technical manuals, field test data, and independent reviews.
Testing Burden	The cumulative time and resources required of students, teachers, and staff to administer, complete, score, and analyze assessments. Excessive burden reduces instructional time without a proportionate return in useful data.

Term	Definition
Testing Window	The designated period during which an assessment must be administered. Overlapping testing windows can concentrate assessment demands at specific points in the school year.
Validity	The degree to which an assessment measures what it claims to measure, and its results support appropriate inferences for a specific purpose. Validity is not a fixed property of an assessment — results that are valid for one use may not be valid for another.