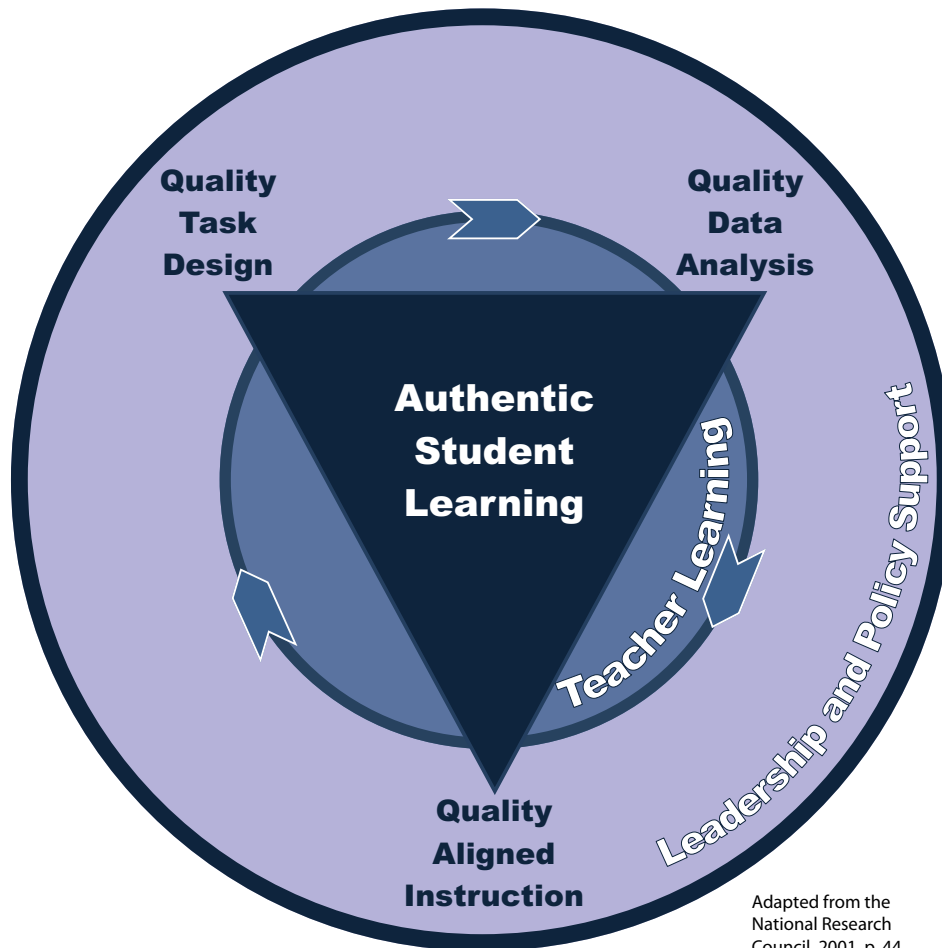


THE QUALITY PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (QPA) FRAMEWORK

QPA Framework



The purpose of the Quality Performance Assessment (QPA) Framework is to provide guidance to teachers and administrators on how to design a performance assessment system.

QPA has developed the following definition of performance assessment:

Quality Performance Assessments are multi-step assignments with clear criteria, expectations and processes that measure how well a student transfers knowledge and applies complex skills to create or refine an original product.

QPA Framework Elements

The following elements guide the work of creating quality performance assessments:

TECHNICAL QUALITY

- **Aligned instruction**—To gain knowledge and skills, all students need instruction, based on college and career ready standards, that is accessible to their learning strengths and needs.
- **Task design**—Valid assessment tasks include determining appropriate levels of content and cognitive complexity, setting clear criteria for success, and ensuring accessibility for all students.
- **Data Analysis**—By examining student work and score data, practitioners interpret important information for planning future instruction and assessments.¹²

AUTHENTIC STUDENT LEARNING

Authentic student learning is the goal of this iterative cycle. QPA defines authentic learning as learning that is meaningful to students in which complex skills and content are embedded and transferable to new situations. Such learning can be assessed in multiple modes. Authentic learning engages students and provides opportunities for ownership and decision-making in real world situations. Because practitioner-developed performance assessments¹³ are created by those closest to the learner, they effectively guide and assess authentic learning.

TEACHER LEARNING IN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Teacher learning occurs when teachers engage with the three elements of quality assessment at the vertices of the triangle—aligning instruction, designing assessments, and analyzing performance data. To implement performance assessments effectively, teachers must collaborate with colleagues to understand how students best learn content and skills aligned to the standards, how to design assessments to elicit evidence of student competency, and how to interpret the student work. Engaging in professional dialogue about aligned instruction, task design and analysis of student work creates a synergy and ensures the level of quality required for authentic learning through performance assessment.

LEADERSHIP AND POLICY SUPPORT

Leadership at the school and district levels is essential to student and teacher learning. Leaders must create and document policies that support performance assessment such

as including authentic learning as a measure in promotion and graduation requirements. For these policies to be implemented with technical quality, leaders must devote professional development time to building teachers' capacity to align, design and analyze performance assessments. Furthermore, engaging families and the community in discussions of the value of practitioner-developed performance assessments builds political support for assessment policies that include authentic learning.

Evaluating the Technical Quality of a Local Performance Assessment System

The QPA Framework describes processes that may be implemented over time to design a local performance assessment system with technical quality. Many aspects of the QPA Framework may also be integrated into an existing local assessment system, or used as an entry point without a comprehensive assessment overhaul. For example, a first step in improving the technical quality of a performance assessment could be to collect and analyze student work samples at each performance level.

The more detailed descriptions of the QPA Framework elements guide practitioners in designing and evaluating a local assessment system. Each element includes a list of questions for evaluating the level of technical quality. If, upon review, the answer to all questions is “Yes,” the system likely has strong technical quality. If the answer to any question is “No,” QPA provides tools, professional development modules, and coaching to support schools in achieving technical quality.

QUALITY ALIGNED INSTRUCTION

Teaching and assessment practices are interwoven. Instruction and performance assessments are aligned and based on essential learnings¹⁴ and appropriate national, state, district, and school standards. In addition, all students need instruction based on college and career ready standards. Once students have the opportunity to master these standards, assessments allow them to demonstrate what they know and are able to do. Answers to the following questions are used to evaluate the system's level of technical quality.

¹² The criteria are aligned with the three vertices of the National Research Council Assessment Triangle: Cognition, Observation, and Interpretation (National Research Council, 2001).

¹³ The QPA framework focuses on performance assessment, although other types of assessments would also be included in a local assessment system.

¹⁴ Essential learnings are the critical skills, knowledge, and dispositions that are prioritized as being essential for every student to master (Dufour et al., 2006).

- a. Are promotion and graduation requirements aligned to essential learnings and appropriate agreed upon standards?
- b. Do standards include 21st century skills, such as collaboration and communication through multiple modalities?
- c. Are teaching and assessment practices for each course or classroom aligned to essential learnings and standards?
- d. Do all students have adequate time prior to the assessment to build upon prior learning, and to both practice and master the essential learnings and standards being assessed?
- e. Are students in different levels of the same course assessed with common performance assessments?

QUALITY TASK DESIGN

Effective assessment development begins with clarity about what students at each grade level should know and be able to do. A common understanding among faculty about content and cognitive complexity in the grades they teach and adjacent grades guides the design of prompts and scoring tools. Documentation of the assessment design and a validation process build awareness of expectations, allowing appropriate performance levels to be set at each grade level. Answers to the questions listed below are used to evaluate the quality of task design.

- a. Do the assessments measure complex skills in multiple modes, transfer to new situations, and provide opportunities for student ownership and decision making in real world situations?
- b. Are the content and cognitive complexity for each assessment aligned with established content and skills sequences and/or grade-level standards?
- c. Are there clear criteria and descriptions of performance at each level and aligned rubrics to assess mastery of the standard(s)?
- d. Are all assessment documents clear and understandable for all students? Do they address all aspects of universal design for learning¹⁵, e.g., clear student directions, use of white space and font size, unambiguous graphics? Are there appropriate and alternative response formats to allow for reasonable and fair accommodations?
- e. Are benchmark samples of student work that clearly define and illustrate work at each performance level available to all stakeholders?

QUALITY ASSESSMENT DATA ANALYSIS

Quality assessment data analysis involves examining student work and score data for *technical quality*. This means assessments must be valid, reliable and provide sufficient evidence of learning. *Valid* means the assessment measures what it was intended to measure (both content and intended level of rigor). *Reliable* means a group of teachers (or scorers) agree on what a rating means and can score it the same way. Reliability is essential because assessment data leads to high and low-stakes actions and decisions. To ensure that all students are demonstrating mastery, sub-group performance should be examined for bias in score results. *Sufficient* means students have been given a complete opportunity to demonstrate mastery resulting in enough evidence of learning being collected. Without technical quality there will be no guarantee that an assessment system has evaluated student learning fairly and completely. Conclusions from the data analysis provide information to practitioners for planning future instruction and assessment. Answers to the questions listed below are used to evaluate quality data analysis.

- a. Is there professional development for scorers that uses scoring guidelines and benchmark student work samples?
- b. Is there a process for collecting scoring data and auditing the scoring process to ensure scores are consistent across administrations and raters?
- c. Is there a systematic process for analyzing scoring data for student subgroups?
- d. Does the assessment provide the information about mastery of standards/content for which it was designed?
- e. Do teachers and other faculty use performance assessment data to inform curriculum planning, instruction and (re-)design of assessments?

¹⁵ Universal design for learning requires that assessments are accessible in language and format for the broadest possible range of students (Rose & Gravel, 2010).