

*In geographic education, just like with any subject, there is always the question of how to assess student learning. Formal and informal summative and formative checks help give the teacher a better idea of how students are doing with the materials. It is recommended to use a variety of different assessment types to try to address as many learning domains as possible. An effective assessment can give a teacher an idea of the areas that are strengths for students, and which areas possibly need to be covered more.*

*The information sheet below dealing with ways to effectively put together assessments for geographic education was put together by the Minnesota Alliance of Geographic Education.*



Monitoring student progress and growth is an essential part of teaching and learning. Based on the key geographical concepts, understandings and skills in geography, the following assessments, aligned with the core areas of human geography, are intended to be used for the following purposes:

- Pre-assessing students' knowledge/concepts, understandings, skills
- Establishing essential unit learning goals (standards/benchmarks)
- Providing a framework for instruction (backwards from assessment to instruction)
- Creating a "baseline" of expectations and proficiencies that comprise a comprehensive education in geography
- Documenting geographic literacy with performance/assessment data

## **Pre-assessments**

Using pre-test data to plan, develop, and differentiate curriculum is one of the most important ways teachers can customize teaching content and methods in response to the instructional needs of students. In addition, assessing where students are and where they need to be is the basis for monitoring progress toward the learning goals.

## **Learning Goals**

Learning goals articulate what is important for students to know, understand, and do. All instructional plans are based on the learning goals and identify the pathways students can take to achieve the learning goals as evidenced by multi-measures of achievement

## **Framework for Instruction**

Students begin all learning with the end in view. Where am I at now (e.g., current reality) and where do I need to be (e.g., outcomes) at the end of this unit? The assessment defines the outcomes for the units. As such, each teacher can use the set of outcomes as defined by the assessment to create an instructional plan for the unit. Key academic vocabulary, for example, is easily identified by an assessment through the question stems, documents, and answer choices.

## **“Baseline” of Expectations**

Prior to instruction, teachers have very little content-specific data available for each student. Therefore, the most important data available for teachers is the student data they can generate at the classroom level. Assessments can establish the “baseline” for growth and be used in part to measure progress toward the learning goal. As such, the following summative assessments can be used to create a series of formative assessments that provide descriptive feedback to students, support student growth and show progress.

## **Evidence of Learning**

Assessment data provides evidence of learning. In addition, it provides feedback for the teacher seeking improvements in teaching and learning. Continuous improvement models are based on teacher reflection. When teachers inspect student data to transform instruction, they engage in the efficacy of teaching. When teaching improves, so too does learning. We can’t expect students to become literate in geography unless we are willing to examine the multiple measures of data that document student achievement in geography.