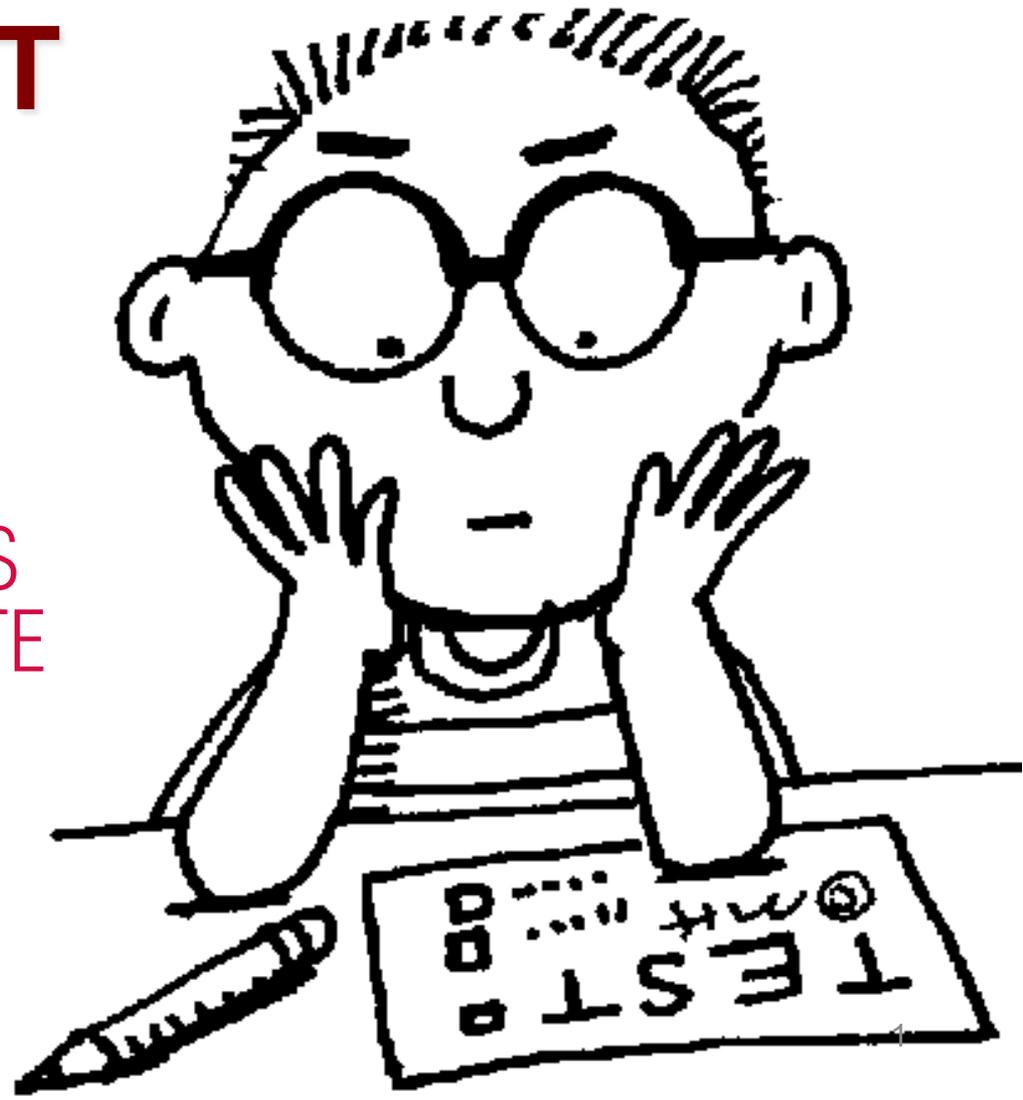




EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT “FAQs”

Jim Pellegrino

UIC LEARNING SCIENCES
RESEARCH INSTITUTE



What is educational assessment?

Why do we need it?

- Assessment is a process of gathering information for the purpose of making judgments about a current state of affairs.
- In educational assessment, the information collected is designed to help teachers, administrators, policy makers, and the public infer what students know and how well they know it, presumably for the purpose of enhancing future outcomes.
- Some of these outcomes are more immediate such as the use of assessment in the classroom to improve student learning and others are more delayed such as the use of assessment for program evaluation.

What functions and purposes is assessment supposed to serve?

- Educational assessment typically occurs in multiple contexts:
 - Small scale: individual classrooms
 - Intermediate-scale: districts
 - Large-scale: states, nations, international
- Within and across contexts it can be used to accomplish differing purposes:
 - Assist learning (formative)
 - Measure individual achievement (summative)
 - Evaluate programs (accountability)

Why do we seem to assess so much? Can we get the job done with just one test?

The reason we have so many different forms and types of assessment is that “***One size does not fit all***”

- Educators at different levels of the system need different information at different time scales
- They have differing priorities, they operate under different constraints, & there are tradeoffs in terms of time, money, and type of information needed

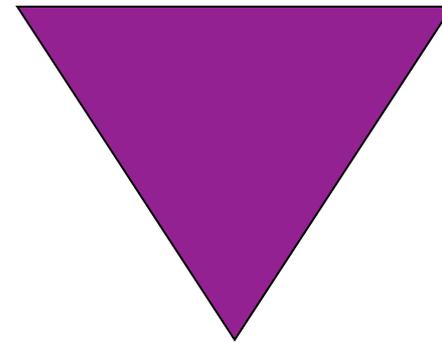
Why does assessment of student learning seem to be such a major challenge?

You Can Never Really Know What a Student Knows: Assessment is a Process of Reasoning from Evidence

- **cognition**
 - Theories, models & data about how students represent knowledge & develop competence in the domain
- **observations**
 - tasks or situations that allow one to observe students' performance
- **interpretation**
 - method for making sense of the data

observation

interpretation



cognition

Must be coordinated!

What evidence do we need to judge if an assessment is any good?

There are two general criteria we use to judge the quality of an assessment

- Does it provide **reliable** information?
 - Scores are consistent -- minimal error
 - Scores are comparable -- on same scale
- Does it provide **valid** information?
 - Measures what it is supposed to measure
 - Designed to meet the intended purpose
 - There is empirical evidence it gets the job done
 - diagnosis, prediction, classification etc.

Why do we need to keep changing the tests and spending so much money?

- In a high-stakes world with accountability we don't want teachers **“teaching the test”**
- We want teachers focused on teaching to the standards
 - The test content should reflect the standards
 - Need new items -- answers to repeated items can be “memorized”
- Need to develop comparable tests from year to year and multiple forms
 - This is a costly, complex process with multiple components: item writing, field testing, form assembly, statistical equating, scoring etc.

What else is needed to make assessment useful in promoting student achievement?

Assessment Should not be the
“Tail that Wags the Educational Dog”

