

ASSESSMENT MATTERS

Even more than before!

EQUITY IN ASSESSMENT

A New Decade for Assessment: Embedding Equity into Assessment Praxis¹

Entering into a new decade with an even more diversified college student population will not only require more assessment models involving students but also deeper professional development of institutional representatives key to student learning. Reflecting upon the conversations over the last three years around culturally responsive assessment and related equity and assessment discussions, this NILOA occasional paper highlights questions, insights, and future directions for the decade ahead by

- exploring what equitable assessment is and is not;
- the challenges and barriers to equitable assessment work;
- where the decade ahead may lead;
- next steps in the conversation on equity and assessment.

Some of the following are highlights of the paper; please see the reference below to access the entire document.

Culturally Responsive Assessment

1. Be mindful of the student population(s) being served and involve students in the process of assessing learning;
2. Use appropriate student-focused and cultural language in learning outcomes statements to ensure students understand what is expected of them;
3. Develop and/or use assessment tools and multiple sources of evidence that are culturally responsive to current students; and
4. Engage in intentional improvement of student learning through disaggregated data-driven change that examines structures, demonstrations of learning, and supports which may privilege some students' learning while marginalizing others.

Socially Just Assessment

The end goal of socially just assessment is to advance social justice. In other words, assessment should strive to serve as a mechanism that helps close opportunity, persistence, and attainment gaps between different student populations. Socially just assessment should challenge structures of privilege within institutions and society writ large to better serve and support learners.

The goal of assessment is to make data informed decisions on how to improve teaching and learning, so the goals of social justice and assessment are very similar.

It takes a conscious, intentional approach to make socially just assessment happen, alongside potentially hard conversations. Indeed, socially just assessment echoes the same values expressed in culturally responsive assessment but bounds them within an exploration of how power and oppression impact assessment. Assessment should strive to serve as a mechanism that helps close opportunity, persistence, and attainment gaps between different student populations.

Equity-minded assessment ensures that our assessment processes and practices are appropriate for the students we serve so that we do no harm in the process. Equity-minded assessment should¹:

1. Check the biases of those conducting the assessment by asking reflective questions throughout the assessment process to address assumptions and positions of privilege;
2. Use multiple sources of evidence appropriate for the students being assessed and assessment effort;
3. Include student perspectives and take action based on those perspectives;
4. Increase transparency in assessment results and actions;
5. Ensure collected data can be meaningfully disaggregated and interrogated;
6. Make evidence-based changes that directly address inequities.

¹Montenegro, E., & Jankowski, N. A. (2020, January). *A new decade for assessment: Embedding equity into assessment praxis*. (Occasional Paper No. 42). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. Any ideas for upcoming Assessment Matters Newsletters can be sent to: evm@email.arizona.edu