Hallmarks of Good Assessment

Alternatives to high-stakes, standardized tests are being implemented across the country. While the alternatives vary in focus and scope, they generally share the following principles:

- **Support improved learning.** The assessment is designed to provide feedback that helps students improve their learning.
- **Help teachers teach better**. Good assessment provides an array of information that teachers can use to improve their teaching practices and help ensure student learning.
- **Are integrated with the curriculum and instruction.** Assessment works best when it flows naturally from, and is part of, student work — i.e., a science experiment that becomes part of the student portfolio.
- **Are classroom based**. Most of the information for the assessment is based on classroom work done by students over a period of time.
- **Use a variety of measures.** Good assessment does not rely on a single yardstick but compiles data based on both individual students' learning plus schoolwide data such as attendance and graduation rates.
- **Involve educators, parents, and the broader community.** Improved success for students relies on a positive collaboration among the various forces necessary for school reform to work.
- **Don't straight-jacket the curriculum.** Good assessment procedures provide for flexibility and don't dominate the curriculum.