Figure 4.1.
Rules for Assessment and Data Analysis

Rule	Discussion
Assessments should be used for their intended purpose whenever possible.	Every assessment has a specific purpose for which it was designed. The validity of assessment results is predicated on that purpose. When we attempt to use an assessment for a different purpose than intended by its design, any conclusions we draw from data are questionable. Valid uses lead to valid results, which lead to valid conclusions.
The purpose of an assessment oftentimes determines its form.	Whatever you would like to assess can help you determine the kinds of assessments you use in your work. Assessing student knowledge can be done with screeners, diagnostic assessments, and more. Mathematics coaching can be assessed by focus groups, interviews, observations, and also student-level data.
Different users of assessment data require different kinds of assessment.	Different individuals require different assessment data to do their jobs. Teachers oftentimes require much more specific kinds of data than do district-level administrators. Teachers benefit more from diagnostic assessment data than from large-scale standardized assessment data, while the reverse might be true for school administrators and district administrators.
Always triangulate data points.	Multiple data sources always provide a more complete picture of a student or a program than a single data source. Classroom, coaching, and school- and district-level decisions are better made using multiple data sources, particularly from different types of assessments.
Correlation is not the same as causation.	This caution cannot be stressed enough. It is easy to yield to the temptation to interpret data simply, at a surface level. It is vital to pursue conclusions with a healthy dose of skepticism and an attitude of critical inquiry.

Source: Adapted from Michigan Assessment Consortium (2017).

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