

Learner Assessment

What is learner assessment?

Learner assessment is the process of collecting and recording information about student knowledge and skills and then interpreting that information against instructional objectives and standards of quality.

What is the difference between formative and summative assessment?

Formative assessment provides performance information before learning and teaching are complete--when immediate corrections can be made. **Summative** assessment provides performance information after teaching and learning are complete.

Example: Assessing a cast's performance after a rehearsal to help the actor improve is formative. Assessing a cast's performance after the play opens in order to decide whether the play should continue is summative.

How is assessment information used?

Assessment information provides evidence that can be used to:

- Improve the performance of learners and educators
- Evaluate students, curriculum, instruction, and programs
- Answer research questions

What is a strong assessment program?

A strong assessment program is a varied, yet balanced, collection of assessment strategies that are clearly and coherently connected to curricular goals and objectives.

What is performance-based assessment?

Performance-based assessment, also called "authentic " or "alternative " assessment, is presenting students with realistic tasks or problems that require them to apply knowledge, engage in complex thinking processes, and/or demonstrate a combination of skills.

What are the essential components of a performance-based assessment?

A performance-based assessment must include:

1. **Standards, goals, and objectives:** statements of what students should know and be able to do as a result of their learning experience.
2. **Assessment tasks:** a set of questions, problems, or prompts requiring students to demonstrate what they know and can do.
3. **Criteria:** a set of expected behaviors, qualities, or characteristics of performance that will be used to judge the quality of the results a student achieves in performing the assessment task.
4. **Instruction:** the teaching methods and strategies, sequencing, and resources that will result in high quality performance of the assessment tasks.

What is a rubric?

A rubric is a method of expressing assessment criteria. A rubric describes learner performance at various levels of proficiency, communicating what a knowledgeable evaluator would observe in an excellent or advanced performance, as well in performances that are acceptable and unacceptable. **Scoring rubrics** are used for evaluating students' work at the end of a specified period of time and assigning a final score or grade. **Coaching rubrics** are used to guide students as they work on a product or performance.

What are arts assessment portfolios?

Arts assessment portfolios are collections of student work that display and document what has been learned over a specific period of time. An arts assessment portfolio may contain any item that documents a student's learning. For example:

- Student writings and reflections
- Works of art created by the student (e.g., drawings, musical scores, or scripts)
- Video or audio tapes of the student's performances
- Rough drafts, sketches, rehearsal tapes, and idea resources that demonstrate the ability to generate and develop ideas
- Self-assessments and reflections that show the student's growth in the arts

Key Questions in Improving Assessment

The "backward design" approach of Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe begins with desired results. The sequence of the questions below is consistent with backward design:

- What do students need to know and be able to do?
- What aspects of student knowledge and skill are most important?
- How will I know that students have achieved the knowledge and skills they will need?
- How will I help them achieve the knowledge and skills they need?

Resources

Danielson, C. and Abrutyn, L. (1997) *An introduction to using portfolios in the classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

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W.G. Spady, (March 1994). Choosing outcomes of significance. *Educational Leadership*, pp. 18-22.

Wiggins G. and McTighe, J. (1998). *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.