

Title of Session: Classroom Assessment - Survey Tools

Moderator: Maryann Durland

Title of File: 20061012classroomassess

Date: October 12, 2006

Room: Classroom Assessment Group

BJB2: shall we start with introductions?

BJB2: please tell us where you are located and what brings you to the discussion.

BJB2: I'm a communications teacher in Pennsylvania

DavidWe: I'm David Weksler and I'm currently in Bucks County, PA, north of Philadelphia. I'm one of the Tapped In HelpDesk volunteers

BarbaraLK: Hi, I'm from Keansburg, NJ. We are concentrating on assessment in our school now. I'd like more info on it.

GaryML: I'm a history teacher in San Antonio, and I'm currently pursuing a masters degree in info tech

NormaSp: Hi I am a Business Computer Information Systems teacher in La Joya, Texas. I am currently taking classes towards my doctoral cognate area in TX A M Kingsville.

MaryannDu joined the room.

MaryannDu: how is everyone tonight?

DawnN: I am a first year teacher. I teach first grade and am currently finishing my masters

MaryannDu: wonderful

MaryannDu: well, this is all about classroom assessment.

MaryannDu: one of the things that I am interested in, is what do teachers have questions about regarding classroom assessment

MaryannDu: what other grades do we have represented?

GaryML: 7th grade

NormaSp: My concern with assessment for there to be variety.

BarbaraLK: What kinds of electronic assessments are there?

NormaSp: I teach 9-12 at an alternative center for education

DavidWe mostly works with teachers and helps THEM learn more about educational technology (K-12)

BarbaraLK: I'm in the high school.

MaryannDu: ok

MaryannDu: lots of variety

BarbaraLK: I work with the teachers too. I don't have a class of my own.

MaryannDu: well, first of all I always start with the test... what is the end result

MaryannDu: what is it that students have to do, to know what I am teaching

MaryannDu: to get it

GaryML: usually achieve a certain score

NormaSp: Student Success...Hopefully students have learned something and we see it in the test results

MaryannDu: and then I work back. so that the test, and how I want a student to perform on the test, guides the activities and learning

MaryannDu: yes

NormaSp: to go on further that the student in my class for example is able to apply what he or she learned..

MaryannDu: I see the end result as the key.

MaryannDu: yes

NormaSp: in my case I test them on terminology but also have them create an actual document using what they learned

MaryannDu: if for example, we want students to learn vocabulary, like terminology, then the test is applied, because the document is an application. but it is also probably more

MaryannDu: like analysis

MaryannDu: and synthesis

DawnN: I don't really give tests except for language arts and there are only 5 of those a year

MaryannDu: right, so tests is not the right word, but more assessments and evaluations of progress

DawnN: exactly

DawnN: A lot of mine are from observation as well

MaryannDu: but the process is still the same. what is the end result, and how do I get there,

MaryannDu: right

MaryannDu: you are looking at all the pieces that you need to get to the end.

MaryannDu: I believe that the end should direct the curriculum or your activities.

DawnN: yes

MaryannDu: if you want application, then the teaching activities have to be move to the application level.

MaryannDu: move to that level, not just comprehension

DavidWe: Can you say something about where NCLB and THOSE assessments fit into the picture, Maryann?

MaryannDu: lol

DavidWe smiles

MaryannDu: good or bad things?!!!!

DavidWe: Your choice

MaryannDu: lol

MaryannDu: ok

DavidWe: I just figure that a lot of people have to DEAL with NCLB and the high-stakes tests

DavidWe doesn't mean to derail the discussion

MaryannDu: I believe two things about NCLB, is that I like the focus on every child, learning and all schools being accountable for every child

GaryML: Personally I think it's wrong to center an entire year's worth of lessons around a 40 question test

DawnN: I am so glad I do not have to deal with the tests

MaryannDu: I also believe that the development of the specifics for measurements and the tests was not well thought out

MaryannDu: Dawn, that is very interesting. Actually a very good test person, who know the content, etc. could probably do it in one or two!!!

MaryannDu: but not the kind we are seeing now!

MaryannDu: I see several things with the state high stakes tests. one is that they are sometimes not written well, and mostly not implemented well, over time, tested. etc

NormaSp: I agree Gary...teaching to the test is not worth it..

DavidWe: But isn't it being done a great deal these days?

MaryannDu: so that the test is not good

MaryannDu: yes

NormaSp: because we are no longer worried about the students learning but memorizing

DavidWe: People are being asked to do it - in order to raise test scores

MaryannDu: and states are hiring companies that really do not know what they are doing

MaryannDu: yes

NormaSp: yes. Maryann

MaryannDu: and that is the biggest problem of all

MaryannDu: I truly believe that if there is excellent teaching, and classroom assessment, then the students are going to do well on the test, and if they don't it is because of the test.

MaryannDu: but you have to have good teaching, excellent teaching,

MaryannDu: but fear has invaded everyone

MaryannDu: I feel the more teachers know about good tests, and creating them, then the better they will see how their instructional practices work

MaryannDu: for example. take technology for tests and differentiation.

MaryannDu: some text book companies have created wonderful tools for teachers, with assessment books, benchmark tests, and test generators aligned to standards.

MaryannDu: these are easy for teachers to use, and can be used to spend time on teaching and working with individual students, instead of creating tests.

MaryannDu: do any of you have anything like that available?

GaryML: yes, but I don't like using the test generator

MaryannDu: is it with a specific book

GaryML: I like to test the kids in the style and vocabulary that I use when I teach the material

MaryannDu: ok

MaryannDu: can you edit the test generator?

MaryannDu: what is your subject again?

GaryML: history

MaryannDu: ok

MaryannDu: yes,

MaryannDu: more difficult

GaryML: I've only attempted to use the generator once and didn't like it

GaryML: so I may or may not be able to edit the content

MaryannDu: but also it is good to remember that kids need multiple styles and vocabulary, not that you have to change things up, but, test items written by others, help to eliminate the biases that may be in your items because of your style and voc.

MaryannDu: without even knowing it.

GaryML: But, again, I don't like to teach just to a year end assessment, so I throw in personal stories, or facts from history that I know the kids find interesting that aren't in the text book

GaryML: true

MaryannDu: yes

NormaSp: I have a test generator for my BCIS class and I like it. It covers assesses different lessons at a time and provided the with different types of questions Multiple Choice, fill in the blank and short answer--I decide..

MaryannDu: and this is an important point you bring up - standards are generally minimum standards----

NormaSp: That is what makes learning fun..Gary.. and that is how you engage students--Great Work!

GaryML: thank you

MaryannDu: and you can use multiple kinds of tests for different purposes

NormaSp: Yes.. Maryann.

MaryannDu: why do you throw in personal stories or facts? it is not just because it is interesting.... it is part of the content. you are helping kids make a connection to something

MaryannDu: it is a different kind of content. but it is content

GaryML: well, here's an example...we are studying European explorers and the colonization of Texas

MaryannDu: so something to think about is how is this content used to help kids understand the boring stuff

GaryML: Our book shows that France at one point claimed over half the land in the US

GaryML: but doesn't say a thing about how they lost

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: exactly

MaryannDu: so you fill in the blanks

GaryML: doesn't even mention the Louisiana purchase!

MaryannDu: don't get me on text books!!!

MaryannDu: lololol

MaryannDu: do you also use the internet as a source of information

GaryML: so I had to add stuff in about the Seven Years war/LP/Lewis and Clark...stuff I find important

MaryannDu: yes, and that these kids will be tested on later, in high school, on sat tests, etc.

DawnN: I get all of my lesson plans from the internet instead of the textbooks

MaryannDu: interesting

GaryML: correct...but I couldn't just sit there and not go over it...I would have felt like I was cheating them

DawnN: I really dislike the textbooks we have

MaryannDu: also, if you are integrating the standards, it means you see if any fit what you are doing, and make sure that you are paying attention to it.

MaryannDu: so you are doing what I call minimum testing - maximum learning

MaryannDu: but not limiting to just proficiency on standards

MaryannDu: Dawn, how do you decide what lesson plans to pick

DawnN: My mentor told me I was teaching the kids too much

MaryannDu: how could that be?

GaryML: I guess you could say that...in my brief time as a teacher I have definitely given them more info than I've tested on

MaryannDu: why not test on it

MaryannDu: why not ask them to think about the big picture, to see if they really did get what you gave.

MaryannDu: did their concept of something change?

DawnN: I look at the curriculum map and what I need to teach and decide how long the lesson will take and whether it is appropriate to first grade. I also prefer hands on lesson plans

MaryannDu: yes, I do too.

MaryannDu: how do you know the kids are ready for the concepts you are teaching?

MaryannDu: or any student?

DawnN: Georgia has great lesson plans for math and social studies

DawnN: I have been teaching addition all week and my kids have been breezing through it

MaryannDu: learning occurs when the learner makes a connection to previous conceptual frameworks

NormaSp: Wow Gary I admire that you go the extra mile..

MaryannDu: so you are not giving them too much

DawnN: by the end of the year I will teach them double digit addition even though it is not a requirement

GaryML: Well I'm 26 and have only been teaching two years...hopefully I can keep it up

GaryML: I love history, so I think I'll always want them to know as much as I can teach them

MaryannDu: I think that as teachers we owe it to our students to be continually learning, and to be passionate about what we teach, so that means giving more than expected.

DawnN: I am lucky in that I have a very high achieving class

MaryannDu: yes

DawnN: all of my kids can read already and some on the 3rd grade level

NormaSp: Yes, Dawn and Gary, if we all did our fair share almost all students would be above what is required...cuz you will always have a few which stay behind for so many reasons

MaryannDu: but that is also a challenge, as they need to think more, write more, read more. they can do more

DawnN: exactly

DawnN: I do not want them bored and not interested in school

MaryannDu: right. do you do grouping etc?

DawnN: Yes I have several reading groups and am getting ready to do math groups

NormaSp: I think technology can make learning fun if we make use of assessments in fun ways like creating games for tests so they see the assessment as a challenge and are engaged just like with any other game.

MaryannDu: high achievers are great for doing and teaching management, and working on things independently and moving themselves forward

DawnN: I just got to spend 2 weeks using a SMART Board and the kids loved it. I could go on website for Force and Motion and really show them how things work and also they learned money and shapes using piggy banks and puzzles

MaryannDu: yes, but only if the assessment matches why you taught the content or skill in the first place. you would be surprised at how much fun detracts. for example, in vocabulary the purpose is to know the work, and able to use it

MaryannDu: so if the kids do a word search, are they really learning the word? for some, at a basic level of recognition, yes, but not beyond that

MaryannDu: and say it is a crossword puzzle. can be great, or the activity of completing the crossword may take over the purpose of knowing the voc and definitions.

NormaSp: no.. so you don't do word search but maybe a game where they find the correct word to fill in the blank in a sentence. If they make a mistake they could be losing pts or coins or any other type of reward on the screen.

MaryannDu: I love technology, because there is so much out there and so many tools to work with and kids today know how to multitask

MaryannDu: that sounds like so much fun with the smart board

DawnN: The SMART Board is like a giant white board hooked up to a computer in case you didn't know

MaryannDu: right, I use them when I can. But they aren't everywhere yet!!!

DawnN: Yeah the kids came up and had to fill the piggy bank with whatever amount I put on it

DawnN: WE have 2 and they are thinking of purchasing 1 per grade level

NormaSp: they are great... I used to work for a college that had them.. and they actually would save the work for the instructor so that he could save the notes and pass out later to the students..

MaryannDu: did they find the amount from money they had?

DawnN: I had money on the board that just kept making more so they would just keep dragging the coins up to the bank

NormaSp: I think I have seen that game Dawn.. You put an amount on top of the piggy and then you put the coins on the side and they have to slide enough coins to match the amount to be put in the piggy

DawnN: I had pennies nickels dimes and quarters

DawnN: yes

MaryannDu: I love them because I am very visual and conceptual and I draw everything out in order to understand relationships, etc. and that is great like you said for saving.

MaryannDu: ok

MaryannDu: cool

NormaSp: there is so much out there...I sometimes find it hard to incorporate because of time...

DawnN: I like to do hands on lessons, a movie a book and a computer game to get my concepts across through the week

NormaSp: to actually sit down and create these technology oriented assessments is what has been hard for me.

MaryannDu: I have been thinking about questions teachers have about assessment and what would help. and was thinking of doing an online survey. what do think?

NormaSp: Dawn I wish I could be your student.. that sounds like so much fun'

NormaSp: That is a great idea Maryann ...by asking you could find out about the obstacles that impede teachers the use of more technology for assessments and maybe we can have experts in technology help give us ideas on a later chat.

MaryannDu: I think some of the tools are great and other are awful.. we created two math tests today for a study, and it was great, we got alignment to the standards, to each section of the textbook that we wanted to include in the study, we could edit, etc. and it looked good. and it was easy. user friendly. but I have used others and wow way to hard

MaryannDu: yes, that would be a good idea.

MaryannDu: I use an online survey site for many of my college courses

MaryannDu: sometimes I use blackboard, etc too

MaryannDu: but I have to create the test and deliver it online

MaryannDu: so what else might be good to ask in a survey about assessment?

MaryannDu: anyone have any thing they would love to have addressed! and to talk about?

NormaSp: what types of courses could benefit from the use of technology for assessment

NormaSp: what courses are harder to assess through the use of technology

MaryannDu: I think that any course could be assessed with technology. and that none are really harder than others. of course math is great, if you have a super test item bank. but I believe in being creative

MaryannDu: and there are many kinds of technology

MaryannDu: for example, how many students know how to evaluate the websites they use, for writing term papers and to check to see if the primary source is really the same place?

NormaSp: so do I --i just think that sometimes the instructors are not technology inclined and therefore see their subject as one that is hard to use technology with

MaryannDu: oh that is so true

NormaSp: guys I have to leave... great chat..

MaryannDu: thanks for joining

NormaSp: thank you Maryann. Will there be a follow up..

MaryannDu: yes, I will work on a survey, and post and then again next month! Right here and of course email me with any ideas.

BJB2 waves bye and heads for the WriteTalk group room

NormaSp: thx again...bye

BJB2: thanks, Maryann

MaryannDu: bye

GaryML: Thanks for the chat!

MaryannDu: thanks everyone. I love the chat.