

Title of Session: Classroom Assessment

Moderator: Maryann Durland

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Room: Classroom Assessment Group

MaryannDu: hello everyone!

BJB2: Maryann, would you like to start with introductions so you know who's here?

MaryannDu: ok

MaryannDu: I am Maryann Durland, an independent educational evaluator with a strong interest in assessment

MaryannDu: I'm interested in engaging pre service and service teachers in conversations about assessment

BJB2: I'm on Tapped In helpdesk and am located in Pennsylvania

CrystalLS: I am Crystal, a substitute teacher in pursuit of a full time, I am very interested in learning about different types of assessments.

MaryannDu: I'm mostly in West Virginia and some in Chicago

JeffC: I'm on Tapped In Helpdesk and am not located in Pennsylvania.

BJB2 waits for everyone to tell everyone Maryann where they are located and what they teach

VeronicaB: I'm an elementary teacher in California currently not teaching.

MaryannDu: I am heading to San Diego on Saturday

ChristinG: I am an elementary PE teacher (would like to be a classroom teacher) in Carlsbad, CA (San Diego)

CrystalLS: I am in Ohio.

VeronicaB: Pack an umbrella Maryann.

SuzanMV: I'm a special day teacher mild/moderate in California

MaryannDu: oh no

MaryannDu: lol

MaryannDu: at least most of my time will be at a conference

ChristinG: Sunday will be nice...Saturday not so much

MaryannDu: great

MaryannDu: so when you think assessment what comes to mind?

BJB2 . o O (this is a shy group!?))

MaryannDu: yes!

MaryannDu: lol

ChristinG: Comparing what a student knew when they began to what they learned after or throughout a unit...

CrystalLS: Mainly I think of report cards

VeronicaB: So many things, observation charts on clipboards. pretests, quizzes, exams. And GRADING

SuzanMV: ok

MaryannDu: ok

MaryannDu: right

BJB2 breathes a sigh of relief...they speak! Good job!

BJB2 sits on her hands and lets Maryann do what she does best

MaryannDu: interesting combination of what we have -- growth,

MaryannDu: no

MaryannDu: I like the interaction

MaryannDu: so we have growth, then ways to assess, and the grading.

MaryannDu: grading and reporting are really supposed to be an accounting system, a tracking system, a way to demonstrate both instruction and learning

MaryannDu: but in a sense, we have made the accounting, the record keeping often the main focus.

CrystalLS: oh ok

SuzanMV: The data I found helps me refine my lesson planning

MaryannDu: a good tracking system should illustrate that what was taught was taught in the way that would lead to learning.

MaryannDu: yes

CrystalLS: In my classes that I sub for they do a lot of research reports. I really like the way that this helps students learn.

SuzanMV: I want to try to make my lessons engaging and exciting and as hands on as possible

MaryannDu: what standards or learning goals are the research reports tied to?

VeronicaB: The most valuable part of assessment for me is at the beginning of the year. That's when I find where my students are, set my goal of where I want them to be at mid year, and get to work on how to get them there.

CrystalLS: Me too but how do you assess hands on activities more then just observing?

MaryannDu: good questions

VeronicaB: The standards are the goals. The research reports are the vehicles.

SuzanMV: all our tests reflect the California standards, these are benchmark assessments that wre developed within a committee

MaryannDu: the beginning of the year is a time for finding out one type of information;

MaryannDu: assessment is all about information for decision making

MaryannDu: like the standards for the research reports

CrystalLS: I believe that it met the writing standards and they were doing them on historical figures so social studies.

MaryannDu: right, but state standards are not maximum standards

VeronicaB: Right.

MaryannDu: they are usually minimum standards

SuzanMV: we do a lot of role playing in social studies, for example: Athens and Sparta and than they seem to be able to understand the questions of the test better

MaryannDu: interesting

VeronicaB: True. But they provide structure across grade levels. A starting place so to speak

MaryannDu: how do you know how to develop an instructional practice or activity from a standard?

MaryannDu: yes.

MaryannDu: I can remember when I first taught, and I went into a seventh grade science class

MaryannDu: no book,

MaryannDu: no curriculum

MaryannDu: no standards

MaryannDu: nothing

VeronicaB: I remember these days, too.

MaryannDu: sort of a game plan other teachers might tell you about

SuzanMV: Like Veronica said, you have to have a baseline of your students in the beginning of the year

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: that is very critical

SuzanMV: I also try to teach as thematic as possible, that also seems to work better

MaryannDu: so how do you link assessments to the standards, via the vehicle of instructional practices

ChristinG: how did you know what was supposed to be taught/learned for that grade level for that class?

CrystalLS: But then you were able to help them grow how you saw fit and make them

stretch instead of working mainly to standards and tests that must have been nice.

MaryannDu: asked around

SuzanMV: My students also like to reflect on the acting roles if I video tape them

MaryannDu: found stuff

MaryannDu: no computers then

MaryannDu: wow

MaryannDu: hard to believe

MaryannDu: created my own curriculum with standards

ChristinG: super-wow

MaryannDu: yes. it was very very nice

VeronicaB: Linking assessments to standards: I work backwards.

MaryannDu: I have had some very unusual great experiences

MaryannDu: how?

MaryannDu: do you have a process you use?

SuzanMV: I do the same as Veronica, I teach to the test and try to bring [the subject] alive

VeronicaB: I find the standard, then develop the lesson, (after figuring out what they know of this standard), and then

MaryannDu: ok

SuzanMV: After each benchmark testing, which we have one every 3 weeks, the 6th grade team and myself review the test data

MaryannDu: what I find very interesting is how teachers use the standards to develop their lessons

MaryannDu: to then meet a test

SuzanMV: We have to teach to the standards today

MaryannDu: I think that the instructional part is the most crucial part

VeronicaB: I try to develop lessons that reach as many learning modalities as possible

MaryannDu: right

SuzanMV: Multi-sensory

VeronicaB: Then, check for understanding and follow up with more mini lessons over time.

SuzanMV: more holistic rather than notes, paper and pen

CrystalLS: Me too. In college I tried to write lessons that met many benchmarks to cover as much as possible.

VeronicaB: From there, you can group students

MaryannDu: but when you say, "teach to the standard" what does that mean exactly... like if the standard says add two digit numbers without caring, do you teach exactly that?

SuzanMV: I will make up an informal test or have discussion questions so that the students can show me that they know what is being taught

MaryannDu: right about covering many benchmark as possible in one time. That is what I was wondering about

VeronicaB: With math, so much of arithmetic is preceded by conceptual understanding.

MaryannDu: yes

VeronicaB: They need to manipulate things and discover limits, patterns, solutions, themselves

MaryannDu: do the standards that you teach to, allow that?

VeronicaB: Time is the enemy.

SuzanMV: We run on a pacing guide that was developed at the district level

VeronicaB: The more I know in advance, the better organized I am to allow time for manipulation

MaryannDu: in some sense the standards are in many cases an idea of the kind of assessment that should follow the learning

CrystalLS: You have to think of way to make sure that students can use manipulative. In some of the classes I teach we use smart board which helps to keep the classes interactive.

SuzanMV: When anyone comes into the 6th grade classroom, they will see each one of us teaching to the same standards and using the same support resources

MaryannDu: I hate seeing that

VeronicaB: I know what you mean

MaryannDu: keeping to a good pace is one thing, but it is so hard to really teach when you are on a schedule

SuzanMV: Time is the enemy, and I try to do my best as I said to bring in fun and engagement instead of dry lecture

VeronicaB: I want creative license to apply something I think will help my students at a given moment

MaryannDu: no one in the research fields supports or agrees with what districts are doing

MaryannDu: yes

CrystalLS: The students understanding should create the schedule but it is hard to do that

VeronicaB: What districts are doing- meaning making us all stay on the same page

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: and other things

SuzanMV: At our school we have no choice, since I am multi-subject I am on a Science, Social Studies, Math and Language Arts pacing guide and also trying to meet the IEP goals of the students

MaryannDu: but that for sure

MaryannDu: right

MaryannDu: all of the research supports teachers teaching

VeronicaB: Most schools with ELLs have the district headlights on them, too

MaryannDu: and the strict schedule undermines that

MaryannDu: yes

CrystalLS: Of course the research supports us but the government is so worried we are falling behind they took away our freedom in the classroom.

MaryannDu: one of the things that I have been thinking about this week is how badly children are being served in this new focus

SuzanMV: We all have to be ready with our students to take the benchmark test every 3 weeks. There are the benchmark assessment monitoring police and they question us of why our test have not been scanned and where are you and why couldn't you make the date? Not easy, lots of pressure

MaryannDu: actually the gov didn't

CrystalLS: who did?

MaryannDu: your districts have done this not the gov

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: it is awful

MaryannDu: one of the things we have been talking about, I am living in a district very rural that the state came in on

MaryannDu: bad district! and they really do need to improve. a lot has gone on here that is not good

MaryannDu: but,

SuzanMV: we are a school improvement and constantly our data is being monitored

MaryannDu: we have been thinking about the ethics of education. and how if we are here to serve children, how are we doing that with the ways that districts have set up policies and procedures that force teachers to undermine good teaching

SuzanMV: we have to have daily standards written on the board, students are to be able to explain to any visitor what they are learning in kid friendly terms and if our standards are not posted we here about it and get dinged for it

MaryannDu: we think that the fact that we have forgotten children in this process and what learning and teaching really is.

VeronicaB: I agree, that is totally pathetic. An utter waste of time.

SuzanMV: this is at the legislators level

VeronicaB: But do we agree that having standards has been a good thing

MaryannDu: we are thinking of finding some money and doing some research with teachers about how they see this, and really focusing on defining what is ethically right in teaching

MaryannDu: yes, standards are great

MaryannDu: assessment is great

MaryannDu: punitive measures and unthinking rigid teaching is not

VeronicaB: Here here

BJB2 cheers for Maryann!

MaryannDu: I really feel for teachers and students

MaryannDu: that is where we have to focus and we aren't

CrystalLS: Just because we have standards does not mean that we need to teach rigidly, we just have to work harder at making it fun

MaryannDu: It is like good tools have been put to bad practices

MaryannDu: right

MaryannDu: and standards are minimal and not everything

VeronicaB: agreed

SuzanMV: not according to No Child Left Behind

MaryannDu: tests like large achievement tests and assessments were designed to sample a construct

CrystalLS: right many students in my classes are ahead of their grade standards in some areas but behind in others

CrystalLS: I feel bad for students that don't take test well, there are so many now.

MaryannDu: I think there are problems with NCLB, but I also feel that very very few districts - districts and schools - stepped up to the plate and said we agree and will be a

partner in this. instead districts fought and did very punitive things to show how they were forced

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: and no set of standards has been determined to be the one that is the best sequence

MaryannDu: though most are very similar

VeronicaB: Are California's similar to most?

MaryannDu: very few state tests have even been thought to be passing test standards!!

CrystalLS: who makes the standards for the tests?

MaryannDu: I haven't compared them specifically, but if you look across standards for any grade, they generally are very similar. Maybe a few are in different order, or sequence etc

SuzanMV: I don't know

MaryannDu: or phrased and written differently

MaryannDu: in most states, the state department if there is one, or a commission

MaryannDu: come together to research either grade level and or subject level curriculums

MaryannDu: and developed standards

CrystalLS: That seems really unfair

MaryannDu: these were reviewed in many different ways, sometimes by a different committee at different times, refined etc

MaryannDu: well, yes and no

MaryannDu: in generally the people were usually well credentialed - professors, teachers, etc

MaryannDu: so they had significant knowledge

MaryannDu: so the standards in themselves are not so bad. they were developed to be the minimum that a state would want its students to pass

MaryannDu: it is in the implementation of the standards that we see the issues

CrystalLS: but students learning and habits seem to change so much even year to year, so how can we box them in to say what they should be learning?

MaryannDu: say the standards had been given to a group of teachers in a school and each school developed how to test them, etc

MaryannDu: that would be good, but no comparison could be made

MaryannDu: the standards should not impact any learning behavior of habits in any way. they should be broad enough to be the basic requirements.

MaryannDu: and most of them are.

MaryannDu: it is not the standards, it is the implementation of the standards

CrystalLS: Ok I understand better

MaryannDu: standards say a student should know this about here, but not how or what comes before, like pre-requisites and concepts

MaryannDu: a standard should only be a guide

MaryannDu: a teacher would be normally teaching 1000 points of information, or skills, and the standards would be about 100 of them

MaryannDu: maybe 200-500 in a lower grade in reading say

VeronicaB: Exactly

MaryannDu: so in a sense the implementation of standards has prevented teachers from very vibrant, packed leaning environments

VeronicaB: These skills being the building blocks to higher order thinking and problem solving, say for example, in reading comprehension, or writing

CrystalLS: So we are actually teaching less because of the standards?

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: I think so

MaryannDu: I think it has limited creativity, rich learning environments, excitement, engagement

VeronicaB: I'm happy to hear this

MaryannDu: teachers are desperate to do those things and trying to but you get your hands slapped when you do

VeronicaB: Only because when I'm bogged down, trying to teach too much, I'm probably on the right track

SuzanMV: I have to sign out, thank you for everyone

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: thank you for visiting!

BJB2 waves bye to Suzan

MaryannDu: yes, you probably are

MaryannDu: on the right track I mean

VeronicaB: thank you!

JenniferNi: I fully agree with you- I feel cuffed in the classroom now- but it's still important to make sure we're all teaching the same basic concepts in a course, so what do you propose?

MaryannDu: are you able to do any independent work or group work? It seems as if that is really stifled also

SuzanMV left the room.

MaryannDu: well, I believe in really creating an individualized environment

MaryannDu: so lots of grouping and teaching kids to really push themselves

MaryannDu: and then that leaves time to work with students who need more help

JenniferNi: which is what the kids need and technology can help us attain

MaryannDu: I think that there is so much focus on all kids, and doing everything for everyone - same page, same day, etc

MaryannDu: that we have lost sight of how much kids can do

CrystalLS: That is what I want to do when I get my own room, lots of different types of work in groups individual,

MaryannDu: I always created packets of work for my students

MaryannDu: individual

MaryannDu: maybe three alike or 5 or so.

MaryannDu: especially in reading and math

VeronicaB: I did this, too.

MaryannDu: very detailed packets

MaryannDu: right

MaryannDu: and does it work?

VeronicaB: Yes!

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: !!!!

VeronicaB: My class was very successful

CrystalLS: What age groups do you teach because I am elementary and they don't like us using so much paper work

MaryannDu: it is so wonderful to see kids doing their own thing, working all day

VeronicaB: 2nd

MaryannDu: not paper work only

MaryannDu: I did with 3rd on up

VeronicaB: And not all day packets of course

MaryannDu: but you could do it on the computer now

VeronicaB: They were done during in class rotations

VeronicaB: Reading group or math group times

MaryannDu: I generally did most of the day, with some group time

MaryannDu: and usually soc and sci were different kinds of packets

VeronicaB: So, they liked them. There were puzzles in them that were fun

MaryannDu: but for math,

MaryannDu: I would put what had to be learned, what work to do in the math text book, what problems to do, questions to answer, now I would do things on the web, or find other activities,

MaryannDu: it was like an individual lesson plan for a group

MaryannDu: read to a partner, tape a story in this unit,

MaryannDu: etc. aligned to goals

MaryannDu: at the time I used the goals in the text book

MaryannDu: but it could be done with the standards also.

MaryannDu: with the standards as a starting point

CrystalLS: That seems really cool. I am sure that your students liked that!

MaryannDu: I think so. it was always a good class

MaryannDu: they worked hard

MaryannDu: and helped each other

MaryannDu: I hope some of the focus changes soon

BJB2 looks at the clock on the wall...five minutes left, Maryann

MaryannDu: thank you.

MaryannDu: any final thoughts. how are we going to change this???

BJB2: a reminder that the next Classroom Assessment discussion is May 14

VeronicaB: I'm going to have to sign off. Thanks for the opportunity to discuss, Maryann. Bye all!

ChristinG: Good discussion - hard to apply it all since I am in PE right now...but good to keep in mind

ChristinG waves bye!

MaryannDu: bye, thanks.

BJB2: and a suggestion that you join this group so that you can post to the discussion board and continue the dialogue between the monthly real time discussions

MaryannDu: yes

CrystalLS: I think that we need to change it from the inside like you are trying to do.

MaryannDu: thank you BJ

MaryannDu: yes. I think that is the way.

MaryannDu: teacher power

CrystalLS: Thanks!

BJB2: Thanks for leading the discussion, Maryann...that got pretty lively there!

MaryannDu: yes. a very good discussion. these were some very knowledgeable teachers

BJB2 . o O (passionate educators)

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: LOL

MaryannDu: the best

BJB2 nods...only kind there are in TI :-)

MaryannDu: lol

MaryannDu: right!!!