Introducing Inclusive Classroom Testing and Assessment Practices

As part of the districtwide curriculum related to the study of the solar system, Ms. Rodriguez's class worked on a unit about the sun, the moon, and the planets that was aligned to statewide learning standards. Before implementing the unit, Ms. Rodriguez and her teaching team collaborated to plan it and agreed upon the curricular goals that students should achieve. The team members discussed how they would measure their students' learning and decided to use a test and a menu of various performance assessment activities linked to their instructional goals.

The team created a test that included a variety of objective and essay questions related to the solar system, which would be given to students at the end of the instructional unit. To make their test more motivating and readable, they paired visuals such as pictorials of the planets, the moon, and the sun with texts. To help students prepare for the test, Ms. Rodriguez gave them a study guide outlining important information about the content and format of the test. Ms. Rodriguez also conducted a review of key topics and vocabulary from the unit by having students play a game using active responding clickers and an interactive whiteboard. Ms. Rodriguez used the students' responses to identify those students who needed additional instruction to learn important concepts and terminology. On the day of the test, Ms. Rodriguez gave all of her students the option of taking the test on a computer. Some of her students received the testing accommodations outlined in their individualized educational programs (IEPs).

In addition to the test, Ms. Rodriguez used classroom assessments to document her students' learning. She prepared a menu of performance assessment activities that included posting a Web page, giving a PowerPoint or Keynote presentation, writing a blog or a wiki, and creating a podcast or a digital video about the unique characteristics of the sun, the moon, or a planet. Ms. Rodriguez and her students reviewed the menu before all students chose strategies from the list for sharing their learning. Ms. Rodriguez kept a record of students' choices and encouraged them to try new activities throughout the school year.

At the end of the instructional unit, Ms. Rodriguez and her colleagues met to examine students' tests and learning products to identify students who had mastered the unit's instructional goals as well as those who needed additional or modified instruction. They also used this information to reflect on the effectiveness of the instructional strategies they used and the ways they could improve their teaching.

Through the experiences of Ms. Rodriguez and the other teachers you will read about throughout this book, you will examine best practices for implementing inclusive classroom testing and assessments that support your students' learning and inform your teaching. *Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices* involve tailoring your teacher-made tests and assessments to the individual strengths and challenges of your students by examining and varying the following:

- *Content* that will be the focus of your classroom tests and assessments
- *Process* you will use to create and administer your teacher-made tests and to conduct classroom assessments
- *Tests and learning products* your students will complete to demonstrate and display their learning
- *Motivational techniques* you will use to prompt and encourage your students to perform at their optimal level on your classroom tests and assessments
- *Classroom and testing environmental features* that you will use to support and enhance student performance (Price & Nelson, 2007).

ELEMENTS OF INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM TESTING AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

As you read this book, consider the following elements of inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices, which can guide you in implementing the best practices presented in each chapter.

Element: Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices are appropriate for use with all students (Salend, 2008; Tomlinson, 2008). Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices can be used to accommodate not only the varied academic, cognitive, language, social, behavioral, and technological skill levels of your students, but also their cultural, linguistic, and experiential backgrounds. These best practices are designed to help *all* of your students access and succeed on your classroom tests and assessments. Their implementation should support and have minimal or no impact on the curriculum mastery expectations you have for your students, your teaching, and the structure or content of your educational program.

Element: Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices incorporate the principles of universal design for learning (UDL; Kurtts, Matthews, & Smallwood, 2009; Sopko, 2008). Incorporating the principles of UDL into your classroom tests and assessments can foster your development and implementation of flexible testing and assessment materials and strategies that are appropriate and accessible to *all* of your students (Sopko, 2008). These principles, which are presented in Figure 1, offer options that allow you to plan and implement your testing and assessment practices so that they are inclusive of *all* your students by providing the following:

- *Multiple means of representation*, by which you present your testing and assessment materials in varied ways so that *all* students can access and understand them. For instance, Ms. Rodriguez designed text and used graphics, symbols, and highlighting to make her test more motivating and readable so her students could understand her test's directions (see Chapter 1).
- *Multiple means of expression*, by which you offer your students a variety of ways to demonstrate their learning. For instance, just as Ms. Rodriguez did at the beginning of this introduction, you can allow your students to choose a way to showcase their learning from a menu of classroom assessment activities that you have presented to them (see Chapter 5). Also, like Ms. Rodriguez, you can provide your students with the testing accommodations they need to respond to test items (see Chapter 2) and offer them the option of taking tests via technology (see Chapter 3).

- *Multiple means of engagement*, by which you use classroom testing and assessment practices that prompt, motivate, and encourage students to perform at their optimal levels. Like Ms. Rodriguez, you can guide them in making choices about how to demonstrate their learning and help them develop the study and test-taking skills they need to succeed on your tests (see Chapter 4).

Figure 0.1 The Principles of Universal Design for Learning and Inclusive Classroom Testing and Assessment Practices

Universal Design for Learning Principles	Universal Design for Learning Principles and Inclusive Classroom Testing and Assessment Practices	Examples of the Implementation of Universal Design Principles and Inclusive Classroom Testing and Assessment Practices
Principle 1: Equitable use	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments are designed so that they are useful, appealing, and safe for all students to use. They are respectful of individual differences and are used by all students in similar or equivalent ways and in different contexts.	• Create valid and accessible tests (see Chapter 1) • Provide all students with valid and appropriate testing accommodations (see Chapter 2)
Principle 2: Flexible use	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments are designed so that they accommodate the individual preferences and abilities of all students. They are flexible in providing choices in terms of the methods and pace of use.	• Allow students to take technology-based tests (see Chapter 3) • Use a range of classroom-based assessment practices (see Chapter 5)
Principle 3: Simple and intuitive use	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments are designed so that they are easy for all students to use and understand. Their use is not dependent on students' experiences, prior knowledge, language and literacy skills, and other learning preferences and abilities.	• Make sure the test's directions are clearly presented and that test items are formatted appropriately (see Chapter 1) • Administer tests via technology (see Chapter 3)
Principle 4: Perceptible information	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments are designed so that they communicate essential information to all students. They present critical information to all students using multiple formats, backgrounds with sufficient contrasts, legible text guidelines, and compatible teaching, testing and assessment techniques, and assistive technology devices.	• Enhance the readability and legibility of testing materials (see Chapter 1) • Use a variety of classroom-based assessment techniques (see Chapter 5) • Develop and administer tests using technology (see Chapters 1 and 3)

(Continued)

Figure 0.1 (Continued)

Universal Design for Learning Principles	Universal Design for Learning Principles and Inclusive Classroom Testing and Assessment Practices	Examples of the Implementation of Universal Design Principles and Inclusive Classroom Testing and Assessment Practices
Principle 5: Tolerance for error	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments are designed to minimize errors, adverse consequences, and unintentional actions. They provide safeguards and warnings to assist all students in using them safely and efficiently.	• Teach students to use effective study and test-taking skills and strategies (see Chapter 4) • Embed feedback, motivation, and error minimization into tests (see Chapters 1 and 3) • Provide students with valid and appropriate testing accommodations (see Chapter 2) • Use effective guidelines for creating test questions (see Chapter 1)
Principle 6: Low physical effort	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments are designed to be used comfortably and without much physical effort by all students. They allow all students to use them with a range of reasonable physical actions, and do not require repetitive actions or sustained physical effort.	• Provide students with the technology and testing accommodations they need to take tests (see Chapters 2 and 3) • Teach students to use effective study and test-taking skills and strategies (see Chapter 4)
Principle 7: Size and space approach and use	Testing and assessment materials, strategies and environments are designed for use by all students regardless of their body size, posture, and mobility. They allow all students to see, reach, and activate important features and information and offer sufficient space for assistive technology devices and personal assistance.	• Provide students with the technology and testing accommodations they need to take tests (see Chapters 2 and 3) • Format tests appropriately (see Chapter 1)
Principle 8: Community of learners	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments promote socialization and communication for all students.	• Have students work in groups to study for and take tests (see Chapters 2 and 4) • Have students work in collaborative groups to complete a range of classroom assessment practices (see Chapter 5)
Principle 9: Inclusive environment	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments foster acceptance and a sense of belonging for all students.	• Have students work in collaborative groups to take tests and complete a range of classroom assessment practices (see Chapters 2 and 5) • Use inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices with all students (see Chapters 1 through 5)

Source: McGuire, Scott, & Shaw, 2006; Salend, 2008; Sopko, 2008.

Figure 1.7   Reflectlist for Creating and Grading Valid and Accessible Teacher-Made Tests

Reflect on your ability to create and grade valid and accessible teacher-made tests by rating the extent to which you are applying the following keys to best practices.

Keys to Best Practice	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
The content of my tests reflects my curriculum and assesses the most important topics, concepts, and skills I have taught.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The content of my tests is consistent with the instructional strategies I used to help my students learn.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I weight important and difficult topics more heavily on my tests.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I give frequent tests that assess specific content.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I involve students in determining the content of my tests.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I foster the readability of my tests by carefully paying attention to the language and the types and number of words and sentence structures I use.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I use software programs to make sure that the readability of my tests is appropriate for my students.	☐	☐	☐	☐
My tests pair text with visual supports.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I apply the principles of typographic and visual design to create legible and organized tests.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I format my tests to help students stay organized and pay attention.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I provide my students with strategy prompts and reminders.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I provide students with encouragement and motivation prompts and reminders.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I clearly introduce important aspects of my tests.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I carefully phrase and present directions for test items.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I use technology to help my students focus on and pay attention to test directions.	☐	☐	☐	☐