

Introduction

For assessments to become an integral part of the instructional process, teachers need to change their approach in three important ways: They must (1) use assessments as sources of information for both students and teachers, (2) follow assessments with high-quality corrective instruction, and (3) give students second chances to demonstrate success. What makes these changes in approach so difficult, however, is that each change compels teachers to depart significantly from the practices they experienced as students. In other words, teachers must think about and use assessments differently than their teachers did. (Guskey, 2007, pp. 16–17)

For years, the area of assessment was relegated to a secondary role in the educational process. Many educators feel assessment was ignored, misused and totally misunderstood by administrators, teachers, parents and students. In the last decade, however, assessment has emerged as one of the major components in the restructured school. One cannot open an educational journal, attend a teaching workshop, or listen to media reports without hearing about standards-based reform, high-stakes standardised tests and international testing results.

The emergence of authentic assessment coincides with the ever-increased emphasis on standardised testing. Almost everyone is aware of the controversy surrounding standardised tests. Charges that high-stakes standardised tests do not always measure significant learner achievement, do not focus on thinking skills, and do not accurately reflect students' understanding of important concepts have increased as the variety and number of required tests have increased.

STANDARDISED TESTS AND CLASSROOM ASSESSMENTS

Standardised Tests

Despite criticisms that standardised tests do not always assess what students are learning, and that their emphasis is on mostly factual knowledge rather than higher-order thinking and application, they are still the yardstick that the public and policymakers use to measure educational progress. Standardised tests are viewed by many people as being valid and reliable and, for the most part, the most effective method to compare students, schools, states and countries.

Student assessment should follow the same guidelines. No one assessment tool by itself is capable of producing the quality information needed to make an accurate judgment of a student's knowledge, skills understanding of curriculum, motivation, social skills, processing skills and lifelong-learning skills. Each single measurement by itself is insufficient to provide a true portrait of the student or learner. If educators combine standardised and teacher-made tests measuring knowledge and content with portfolios measuring process and growth, and performances measuring application, they will provide a more accurate portrait of the individual learner. Fogarty and Stoehr (2007) discuss the balanced assessment model (see Figure 0.3) used to address traditional assessments, portfolio assessments, and performance assessments and subsequently meet the needs of all students.

AND NOW . . . THE TOOLS!

Performance assessments provide teachers with a repertoire – a vast array of tools to measure student growth. The following chapters focus on specific tools teachers need to create a vivid, colourful and true portrait of students as they develop and grow over the course of a year. In the past, progress was chronicled by a superficial “snapshot” of the student. The snapshot usually consisted of a few pictures of standardised test scores, final marks and other one-dimensional scores that lay lifeless in the permanent record file. The marks on the report cards do not adequately describe the skills the students had when they entered a class, as compared to the skills they had when they left the class. Nothing more than a static glimpse of a student can be gleaned from the traditional, cumulative record system that has dominated our school systems for the past two centuries. Teachers who create a repertoire of assessment tools allow students to show what they know and what they can do in multiple formats. Each tool represents a different way to challenge students to succeed and to measure their progress along the way.

Each chapter in this book will introduce an assessment tool to record a student's growth and achievement. The chapters include a description of *what* is the tool, *why* we should use the tool, and *how* we could use the tool. Examples of many of the assessments are provided, and teachers will have a chance to create original tools at the end of each chapter in the “On Your Own” section, as well as self-evaluate their work on the “Reflection Page”. The fifth edition of *How to Assess Authentic Learning* presents only a few of the many options available for teachers to add to their repertoire of assessment strategies. As educators review the strategies in this book, they should take some time to reflect on how the tools provide a variety of strategies to help all students meet and exceed the standards.

Standards as Guideposts

When used by administrators, teachers and parents effectively, standards target nine important goals:

1. Synthesise Educational Goals

Educators need to focus on attaining important goals that will benefit all students. Establishing a few clear and specific goals focuses a faculty on developing action plans and unifying efforts to achieve the goals. Teachers working in professional learning communities (PLCs) target specific learning goals and work as a team to create meaningful instruction and assessments for all students. (See Figure 1.3.)

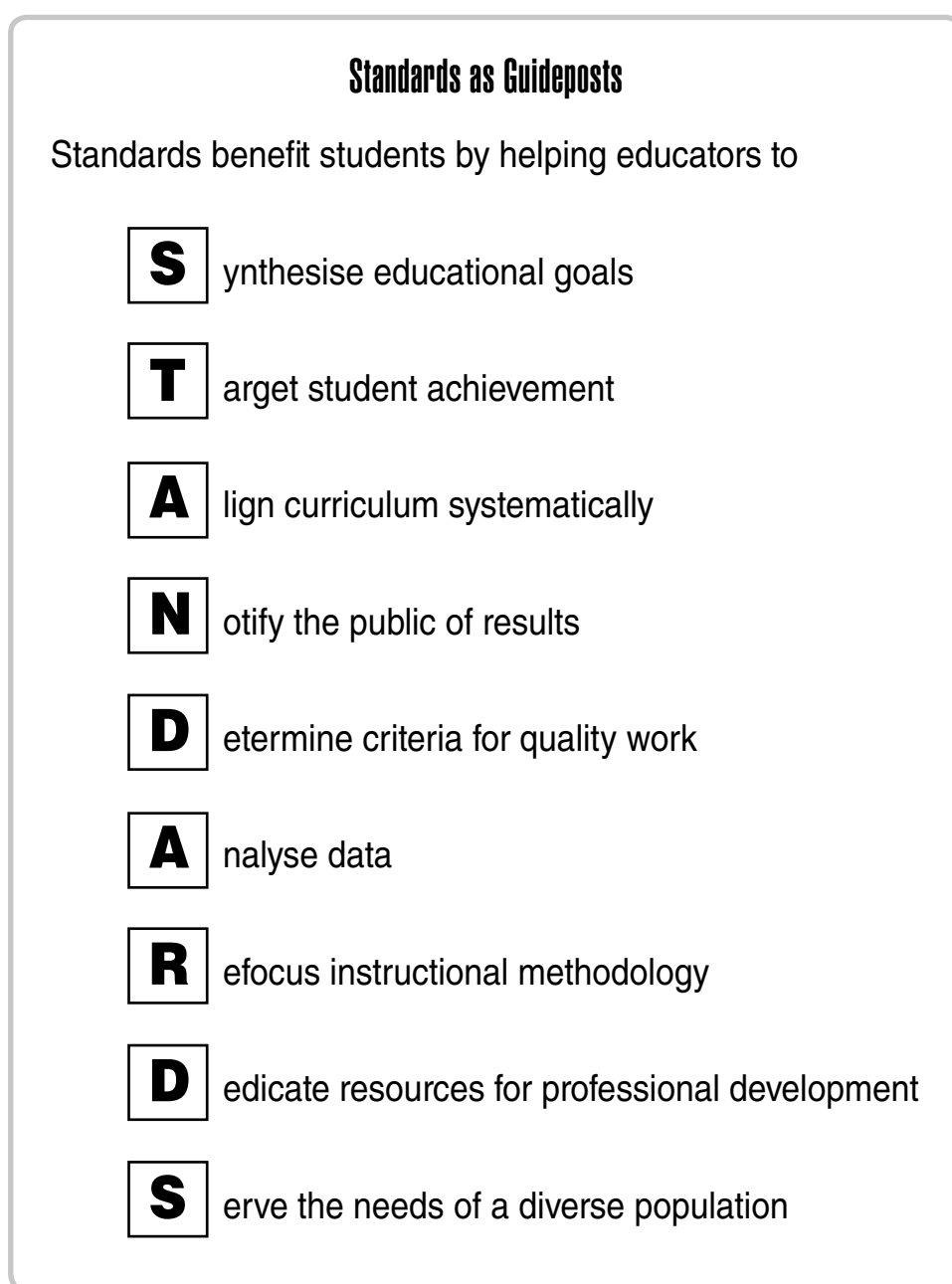


Figure 1.3

Reflective Stems for Portfolio Entries



1. This piece shows I've met standard #__ because . . .
2. This piece shows I really understand the content because . . .
3. This piece showcases my _____ intelligence because . . .
4. If I could show this piece to anyone – living or dead – I would show it to _____ because . . .
5. People who knew me last year would never believe this piece because . . .
6. This piece was my greatest challenge because . . .
7. My (parents, friend, teacher) liked this piece because . . .
8. One thing I have learned about myself is . . .
9. This piece demonstrates I can answer the essential questions of the unit because . . .
10. I understand the big idea of this unit because . . .

Figure 3.6

Pete and Fogarty (2003) say goals “provide the inspiration to begin the journey and the motivation to keep going” (p. 73). Students set both short- and long-term goals in their portfolios. Some goals might be easy to achieve, but others should be “stretch” goals to extend students’ thinking and challenge them to exceed expectations. During each portfolio conference, the students reflect on their progress and set new goals. Since the standards movement dictates the outcomes, students should set rigorous goals and try to meet and exceed them.

Mirror Page

Another method to help students gain insight on their work is to ask them to organise their portfolio so that they place the item or piece of evidence on one page and write a description of the piece, followed by a reflection or reaction to it, on the facing page (see Figure 3.7). The proximity of the reflection to the piece of evidence helps the portfolio creator as well as the reader focus on examining the piece more carefully alongside references to the elements being described.

The description requires the students to explain the piece of work and share their understanding of its importance. Also, the description provides the teacher with a more in-depth analysis of student learning. The description could be elaborated upon during the conference, but the written description helps to clarify whether or not the student understands the basic concept of the

ON YOUR OWN**Criteria for Checklists****Writing****Grammar and Usage**

Sentence structure
 Subject–verb agreement
 Comma splices
 Plurals of nouns
 Pronouns/agreement
 Verb tenses
 Use of adjectives
 Use of adverbs
 Fragments
 Run-on sentences

Mechanics

Capitalisation
 Commas
 Semicolons
 Colons
 Question marks
 Apostrophes
 Spelling

Organisation

Outline
 Introduction
 Topic sentences
 Support sentences
 Transitions
 Conclusion

Research Skills

Selection of topic
 Review of literature
 Working bibliography
 Thesis statement
 Outline
 Paraphrasing
 Documentation
 Final bibliography
 Proofreading

Speaking and Reading**Speaking Skills**

Eye contact
 Facial expression
 Voice inflection
 Enthusiasm
 Organisation
 Use of facts
 Visual aids
 Movement
 Persuasiveness
 Body language
 Gestures

Oral Reading

Pronunciation
 Enunciation
 Expression
 Fluency

Study Skills

Pre-reading
 Webs
 Venn diagrams
 KWL
 Surveys
 Q3K
 Idea wrapping
 Think-pair-share

Reading Readiness

Chooses to read during
 free time
 Visits school library
 Begins reading quickly
 Talks about books

Social Skills**Formation of Groups**

Forms groups quietly
 Sits face to face
 Makes eye contact
 Uses first names
 Shares materials
 Follows role assignments

Support

Checks for understanding
 Offers help
 Asks the group for help
 Encourages others
 Energises the group
 Disagrees with the
 idea – not the person

Communication

Uses a low voice
 Takes turns
 Makes sure everyone speaks
 Waits until speaker is finished
 before speaking

Conflict Resolution

Disagrees with the idea – not
 the person
 Respects the opinion of
 others
 Thinks for self
 Explores different points of
 view
 Negotiates and/or compro-
 mises
 Reaches consensus

Problem Solving**Critical Thinking**

Analysing bias
 Attributing cause and
 effect
 Classifying
 Comparing
 Contrasting
 Decision making
 Drawing conclusions
 Evaluating
 Inferring
 Prioritising
 Sequencing
 Solving analogies

Creative Thinking

Brainstorming
 Generalising
 Hypothesising
 Inventing
 Making analogies
 Recognising
 paradoxes
 Personifying
 Predicting
 Problem solving

Intelligent Behaviours

Persistence
 Listening
 Flexibility in thinking

Metacognition
 Checking for accuracy
 Precision

Figure 5.4