

Introduction

“Assessment is authentic when we anchor testing in the kind of work real people do, rather than merely eliciting easy-to-score responses to simple questions. Authentic assessment is true assessment of performance because we thereby learn whether students can intelligently use what they have learned in situations that increasingly approximate adult situations, and whether they can innovate new situations.”

—WIGGINS, 1998, p. 21



**Authentic assessment
is the true assessment
of performance.**

For many years, assessment has been relegated to a secondary role in the educational process. Many educators feel it has been ignored, misused, and totally misunderstood by administrators, teachers, parents and students. In the last decade, assessment has emerged as one of the major components in the restructured school. One cannot open an educational journal, attend a workshop or watch the news without reading and hearing about standards-based reform and high-stakes standardised tests.

The emergence of authentic assessment coincides with an increase in the significance of 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, growth and development, and do not accurately reflect what students can and cannot do, have been made over and over again. Yet, despite the research and the criticism of standardised tests, policymakers, parents and the general public base much of their perception of the educational system on the publication of standardised test scores and the comparisons of the scores in schools and states.

Standardised Tests and Classroom Assessments

Standardised Tests

Despite criticisms that standardised tests do not always assess what students are learning and that they emphasise factual knowledge rather than performance or 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 nations.



Student Learning Standards

What Are Student Learning Standards?

“The use of the term *standards* instead of the traditional educator’s term *objectives* foreshadowed a strengthening of government’s determination and role in school administration. Both terms essentially entail a process of coming to consensus and explicit statements of the elements of culture worthy of transmission. In this respect, the standards parallel traditional goals and objectives as well as outcomes. The term *standard*, however, has an implication of high levels of expectations and monitoring that were not commonly connected to the widely used educational objectives suggested by Tyler (1949) as clarified statements of school curriculum” (Solomon, 2002, p. 22).



Standards clarify expectations and consensus about what constitutes quality products and practice.

Darling-Hammond (1997), in her book *The Right to Learn*, agrees that standards of practice are used to license professionals and guide the work of architects in constructing sound buildings, accountants in managing finances, engineers in assembling space shuttles, and doctors in treating patients. She adds, however, “These standards are not prescriptions; instead they reflect shared norms and knowledge about underlying principles of practice, the effects of various techniques, and decision-making processes” (p. 213). Standards, therefore, clarify expectations and consensus about what constitutes quality products and practice.

Wiggins (1998) believes that a true standard describes a specific and desirable level of exemplary performance. He says it should be “a worthwhile target irrespective of whether most people can meet it at the moment” (p. 105). In addition, students should be able to internalise their own standards of quality work. Brooks (2002) believes that “the most influential parents, teachers, and supervisors are the ones who know how to help those who seek guidance *set their own standards*, or, at least, adopt, agree with, or see the merit in a published set of standards” (p. 3).

National Standards

Different states in Australia have their own sets of standards, although there is now a push for an Australia-wide, standardised curriculum and associated standards. In 2006, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), the Australian Education Systems Official Committee (AESOC) and Curriculum Corporation developed and published the *Standards of Learning*, in order to define common curriculum content and move towards common, shared standards (MCEETYA, 2006).



Standardised Tests

ON YOUR OWN

Thinking at Right Angles

Directions: In section A, list all the facts you know about standardised testing. In section B, list your feelings and associations. In section C, write a summary statement about standardised testing.

TOPIC: *Standardised Testing*

FACTS

A

FEELINGS AND ASSOCIATIONS

B

C Summary Statement



Multiple Intelligences

EXAMPLES

Oceanography Unit









Subject Area: *Integrated Unit—Primary* **Timeline:** *3–4 weeks*

Major Goals of Unit: 1. Knows the major differences between fresh and ocean waters.

2. Knows that an organism's patterns of behaviour are related to the nature of that organism's environment.

3. Knows that the transfer of energy (e.g. through the consumption of food) is essential to all living organisms.

List at least three learning experiences or assessments under each intelligence.

<p>Verbal/Linguistic</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Chadwick the Crab. • Read Curious Clownfish. • Organise characters from Curious Clownfish in chronological order. • Read Leroy the Lobster. • Research the effects of oil slicks in the ocean and on marine life. 	<p>Logical/Mathematical</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure with string the length of the blue whale. • Research sizes of whales. • Measure and draw sizes of whales in chalk on the asphalt. • Estimate the number of shells in container. • Classify the types of shells. 	<p>Visual/Spatial</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create whale models to hang around the room. • Create a noticeboard about the ocean. • Create a mural of the ocean. • Make food chain mobiles. • Make a model of your favourite ocean creature. • Draw a web that shows attributes of sea creatures. 	<p>Bodily/Kinesthetic</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play crab soccer. • Listen to ocean music and create a clay model of what you feel. • Imitate the movements of an octopus, crab, fish or sea anemone.
<p>Musical/Rhythmic</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play ocean mood music (such as Free Willy music). • Listen to sounds of the ocean (whales, dolphins). • Design instruments to mimic water sounds. 	<p>Interpersonal</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose an ocean animal to research and give an oral presentation with a partner. • In small groups, discuss products we receive from the ocean. • Interview students who have been to the ocean. • Do a KWL chart before you begin the unit. 	<p>Intrapersonal</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pretend you are an ocean animal. • Write a story about your life (or a day) as an animal that lives in the ocean. • Reflect on how pollution affects you. • Write a reflective journal on the sounds of the ocean. 	<p>Naturalist</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit the aquarium. • Explore ocean-related careers. • Adopt an ocean animal. • Make predictions about ocean life. • Graph tides or water temperature.

1. Whole-class learning experiences:

Research report on an ocean animal

Oral presentation of report

Model of an ocean creature

Portfolio that contains 7 items



2. Whole-class assessments for learning experiences:

Checklist (point system)

Videotape for self-assessment

Criteria checklist

Rubric

3. Culminating event for unit:

Excursion to the local aquarium.

(Adapted from participants attending the Train the Trainers Authentic Assessment workshop, summer of 1996, Chicago, Illinois.)

**EXAMPLES****LOWER PRIMARY****ENGLISH PORTFOLIO****Integrated Unit on Spiders****Table of Contents**

1. Letter to parents about what students have learned
2. Book review of *Charlotte's Web*
3. Web of characteristics of spiders
4. Watercolour picture of spiders
5. Tape of student reading story about spiders
6. Original short story (first and final drafts) about a spider
7. Science report on arachnids
8. Spider rap song
9. Pictures of group project on spiders
10. Self-assessment using a criteria checklist

UPPER PRIMARY**GEOMETRY PORTFOLIO****Table of Contents**

1. My Maths Photos Journal
2. Two geometry tests – corrections included
3. Glossary of geometry terms
4. Drawings of geometric shapes
5. Three problem-solving logs
6. String geometric design
7. Video of group project on angles
8. Essay on video, *Why Maths?*
9. Research on maths-related careers
10. Self-evaluation of portfolio using rubrics
11. Goal setting for next quarter

LOWER SECONDARY**BIOLOGY PORTFOLIO****Table of Contents**

1. Reports on careers related to the field of biology
2. One lab report
3. One problem-solving log
4. Pamphlet on diabetes (group project)
5. Video of group presentation on the circulatory system
6. Essay on germ warfare
7. Research paper on HIV/AIDS
8. Tape-recorded interview with biology professor about HIV/AIDS
9. Self-evaluation of portfolio using rubric
10. Goal-setting web

UPPER SECONDARY**EARLY SETTLERS PORTFOLIO****Table of Contents**

1. Annotated bibliographies of five books written about Australia's early settlers
2. Reading list of 20 books and articles related to early exploration
3. One abstract of a research article
4. Recording of interview with local historian
5. Journal entries of trip to Cooper Creek
6. Map of the travels of Burke and Wills
7. Video of oral presentation on Gravett's Leap
8. Venn Diagram comparing Bass and Flinders with Burke and Wills
9. Critique of the film, *Burke & Wills*
10. Peer evaluation of portfolio using rubric