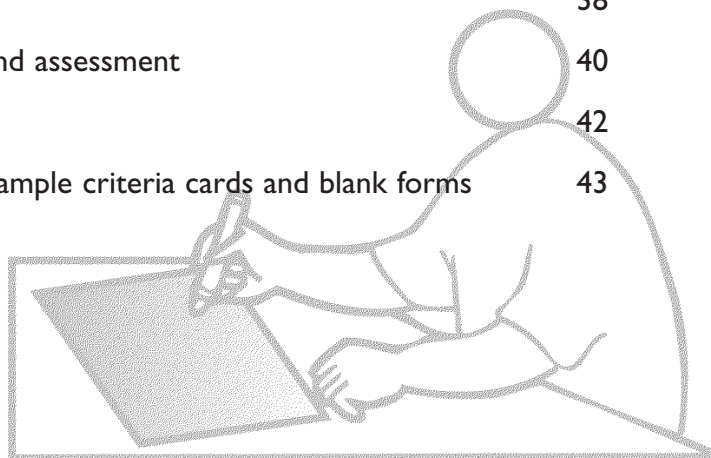


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Foreword

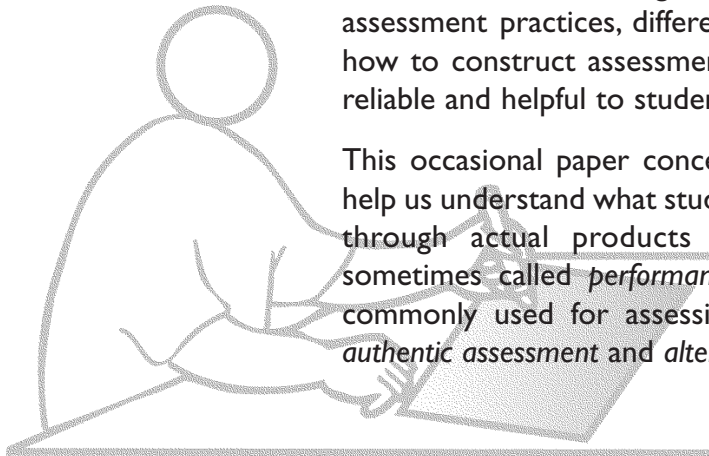
This is the third in a series of occasional papers written by Carolyn Coil and published by Hawker Brownlow Education.

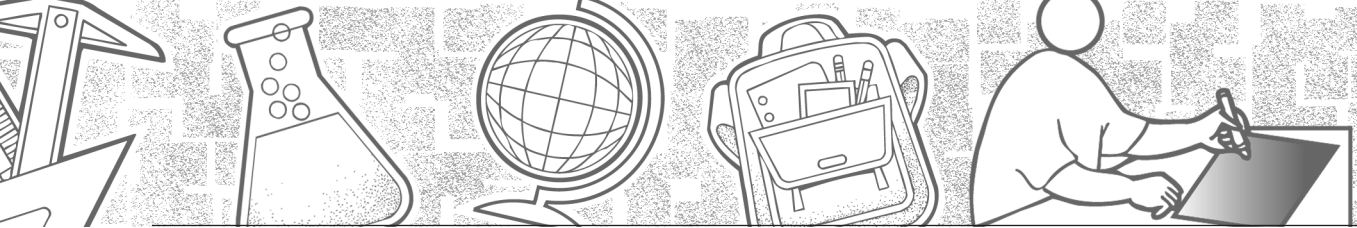
These occasional papers give teachers, principals and other educators a quick way to be brought up-to-date on current research, teaching and learning, best teaching practices and practical strategies for dealing with the challenges and concerns facing twenty-first century educators.

Written on the assumption that most busy teachers do not have the time or energy to read lengthy academic texts, yet would like to know and understand the latest thinking in their profession, these occasional papers are short, readable and cover one issue at a time.

This occasional paper focuses on both why and how we assess students. In it, we will explore some of the vocabulary used when we discuss assessment, the reasons for assessment, advantages and disadvantages of various assessment practices, different types of assessments, and how to construct assessment instruments that are valid, reliable and helpful to students.

This occasional paper concentrates on assessments that help us understand what students know and are able to do through actual products and performances. This is sometimes called *performance assessment*. Other names commonly used for assessing students in this way are *authentic assessment* and *alternative assessment*.



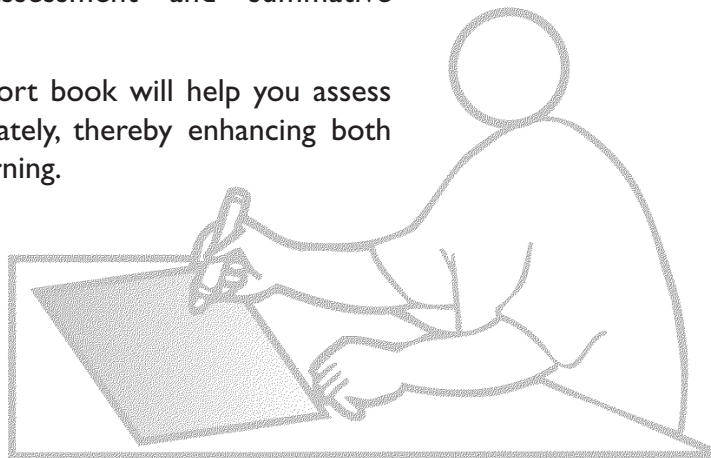


Many educators are deeply concerned about the issue of assessment. Some feel lost or confused due to competing priorities and demands from schools, parents and students. All want to assess student work fairly and accurately, yet may not know exactly how to approach this task.

Assessment and instruction are often seen separately but actually go hand-in-hand as parts of the whole which we call *learning*. Good instruction should lead to rich assessments. Rich assessments should provide us with the data and information we need to determine the next step in the learning process. Students, teachers and sometimes parents should be involved in the instruction–assessment–learning cycle.

In this occasional paper, you will learn practical assessment strategies. You will discover how to develop criteria for student products and performances, how to construct rubrics, checklists and descriptors, and how and when to use product or process criteria cards. In addition, you will find out about the function and importance of pre-assessment, formative assessment and summative assessment.

I hope that reading this short book will help you assess your students more accurately, thereby enhancing both your teaching and their learning.





Assessment words

In the space below, write the first ten words that come to your mind when you hear the word 'assessment'.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

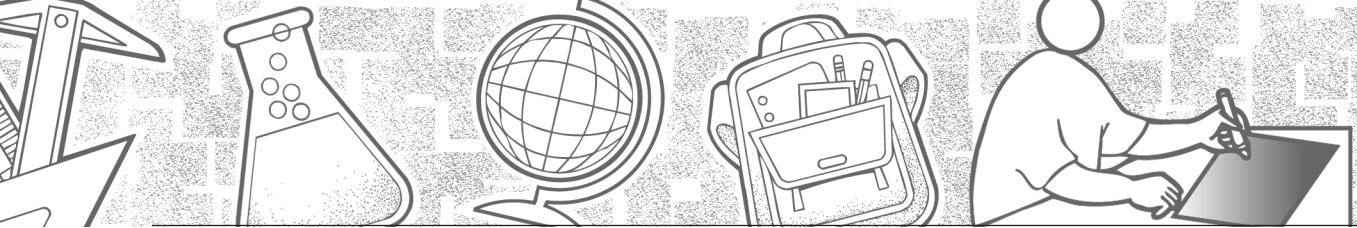
6.

7.

8.

9.

10.



Next, classify your words in the space below. Which are positive, which are negative and which are neutral? Do some belong in more than one category?

Positive words

Neutral words

Negative words

If possible, share your words and your thoughts about them with one or more colleagues. You may be surprised at the different interpretations you have of the same words! Use this activity as a way to begin a discussion about your thoughts on assessment and assessment practices.

Over the past several years, I have done this activity in many different workshops. The first reaction from workshop participants is that they are not sure exactly what answers I want. When they share their words with one another, they discover that many times the words they have thought of are very different! And often even the same words are categorised differently by various teachers.

The point of the activity is to show us that different people perceive assessment in quite different ways. Some of us may feel negatively about an aspect of assessment, while others will view the same thing as positive. This is one of the reasons assessment is a difficult and sometimes emotional topic to discuss.

By beginning this book with this particular exercise, I hope you have seen the variations of viewpoints and opinions on assessment itself.