Authentic Assessment:
Active, Engaging Product and Performance Measures

Sandra Schurr
Contents

About the Author v
Preface vii

Part I Starting Points
1. FAQs about Authentic Assessment 1
2. Ideas for Students to Consider When Deciding What to Do 12
3. Research Checklist for Students 14
4. Locating Information from Common and Not-So-Common Sources 15
5. Planning Outline for a Product or Performance Project 17
6. Types and Descriptions of Performance Tasks 18
7. Types of Product Formats 20
8. How to Evaluate a Web Resource 22

Part II Fifty Authentic Assessment Strategies 23
1. Storyboard 25
2. Create a Country or Culture 27
3. Brochure 29
4. One-Person Show 31
5. Cartoon 33
6. Sketch Journal 35
7. Wall Chart 36
8. “No-Sew” Quilt 37
9. Critique 39
10. Host a Radio or TV Talk Show 41
11. Lead a Virtual Excursion 43
12. Journal or Blog 45
13. Lead a Group Discussion 47
14. Photo Journal 49
15. Audience Participation Report 51
16. Survey, Questionnaire or Opinion Poll  
17. Almanac  
18. Create a Test  
19. Role-Play Debate  
20. Time Capsule  
21. Challenge Box  
23. Problem-Solving Party  
24. Photography Excursion  
25. Twenty-Five More Ways for Students to Share Information

Part III Additional Resources
1. Ten Other Ways to Measure What Students Know  
2. Using Williams’ Taxonomy for Research-Based Tasks  
3. Using Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy for Research-Based Tasks  
4. Using the Multiple Intelligences for Research-Based Tasks  
5. Criteria and Questions to Consider When Designing Rubrics  
6. Sample Rubric for Product Assessment  
7. Sample Rubric for Performance Assessment  
8. Sample Rubric for Portfolio Assessment

Part IV Teacher Study Materials
Literature reading #1: Authentic Assessment of 21st Century Literacies  
Literature reading #2: Formative and Summative Authentic Assessment  
Glossary of Assessment Terms  
Bibliography
Since 1990 when I first wrote about authentic assessment, thanks to technology, the number of possible products and performances students can use or apply to demonstrate their learning has indeed mushroomed. But the basic reasons for assessing authentically remain the same. It is developmentally appropriate and student-centred, it emphasises life skills and abilities, it has the capacity to challenge students on differing levels of understanding, it engages students in their own progress and achievement, it empowers students, it acknowledges multiple learning styles, intelligences, aptitudes and interests, and ultimately celebrates diversity.

This book, which is based on my 1999 book Authentic Assessment from A to Z: Using Product, Performance, and Portfolio Measures, aims to help middle years educators align assessment measures (portfolio, product, performance options) with standards-based curriculum by providing active learning strategies that can be used formatively or summatively. The book provides nearly everything needed to understand and put into practice more informative and comprehensive assessments than can be delivered by standardised tests alone.

21st Century Skills

As Jill Spencer says in Everyone’s Invited: Interactive Strategies that Engage Young Adolescents:

Twenty-first century adults need the capacity to continue learning new information and skills and to be flexible and adaptive thinkers. Creativity and problem solving or what we used to call “Yankee Ingenuity” (at least in my part of the world) will continue to be integral to a vibrant economy and culture. These skills and habits of mind will not burst forth fully formed from an 18-year-old’s brain without incubation throughout their pre-K through 12 education experience. Since our students’ problem-solving and reasoning skills are just emerging, we have an obligation to help them to learn to think critically. We want all of our students to be successful in college-prep and challenging career-prep courses so that they have true choices when they graduate from high school. Taking the time to provide concrete learning experiences that develop thinking patterns must be integral to our curriculum and instruction ... Remember, we are trying to build lifelong learners (p. 34).

Technology

In Differentiating Instruction with Technology in Middle School Classrooms, Grace Smith and Stephanie Throne make the case for technology as a bridge to high academic achievement through its use in relevant, meaningful, personalised learning. And research supports integrating technology into teaching and learning activities to help students achieve
academically (ISTE, 2009). That said, don’t panic. There are all sorts of ways to ease into the use of technology in authentic assessments – and students will lead the way once they are engaged in projects that have real meaning for them. They will find (or already know) the fastest, easiest way to gather information and perform tasks; your job will be to help them think critically about their information sources and to help them focus on the important questions. You probably won’t know all the answers to whatever they decide to explore, but you do have the experience and skill to help them problem solve, look at issues from multiple perspectives and challenge them to do their very best so they can be successful.

**Book Organisation**

Part I, *Starting Points*, through a question-and-answer format, provides an explanation of what authentic assessment is and how it can be implemented. Following is a set of information sheets showing students the huge range of possible products and performances as well as research and internet guidelines.

Part II, *Fifty Assessment Strategies*, sets forth detailed explanations of specific activities that can be used to authentically assess student progress. Both teachers and students need to become familiar with the many possibilities, some of which are fairly complex and involved. In this way, individuals or small groups will be able to decide on an appropriate strategy to direct their work and demonstrate their learning.

Part III, *Additional Resources*, provides a wealth of authentic assessment resources including sample rubrics and criteria to use in designing rubrics. Again, both students and teachers should become aware of this collection in order to recognise the available resources.

Part IV, *Teacher Study Materials*, provides two pieces of literature for teachers or teams to reflect upon, discuss and clarify their thinking about. Guiding questions plus a glossary of assessment terms are also included as well as a bibliography of suggested resources for further study.