



Introduction

All over the world, there has been a movement toward an ever-increasing emphasis on high-stakes summative evaluations. It seemed like the periodic reform pendulum had swung in the direction of back-to-basics instruction and assessment geared toward measuring the knowledge and skills of millions of students in all year levels and content areas. Professional development workshops focused on helping teachers prepare students for practice benchmark tests, interim assessments, short-cycle assessments and end-of-term tests—all with an eye toward making sure students would be ready to take the high-stakes summative tests at the end of the year. The public and politicians wanted to use standardised tests—assessment *of* learning—as the ultimate measurement of how teachers and school systems were going.

Now we also have the so-called formative assessment benchmark tests that could be given to students throughout the year to find out if they were prepared for the final test. Some educators argue that practice test booklets and benchmark tests should not be labelled “formative assessment”. These critics believe that real formative assessments are created by classroom teachers and used to provide ongoing feedback to their students on a daily basis rather than just to predict the end-of-year test scores.

Soon the backlash began, and another movement was launched. Assessment *for* learning became the new rallying cry and the mantra of “must-attend, must-buy, must-do” workshops, conferences, professional development books and journal articles. Rarely have prepositions like *for* and *of* played such a critical role in the educational future of students. It was almost like a competition between the summative high-stakes testing advocates, who valued only the one big test, and the formative camp, who advocated not marking anything but just providing feedback.

Educators should realise, however, that assessment is not an either/or scenario. Both formative and summative assessments are necessary; moreover, they complement each other. The goal of this book is to show teachers how to integrate both formative and summative assessments seamlessly into their instruction. The research, rationale, strategies and examples provided will help teachers develop their own repertoire of formative and summative assessments to monitor, mark and make inferences about a student’s ability to meet standards and curriculum goals. In addition, the exercises at the end of each chapter will guide teachers in reflecting about the practices discussed and in planning action steps to implement those practices in their own schools.

Chapter 1: “Standards-Based Instruction and Assessment: Begin With the End in Mind” explores the impact of standards on teaching, assessment and learning. Typically, teachers are overwhelmed by the sheer number and complexity of standards. If teams of teachers work together to select the “power standards” and focus on teaching them, they will achieve better results. This chapter shows teachers how they can “repack” the standards by sequencing the steps in the order they should be taught and adding some kid-friendly vocabulary. This process helps students to gradually learn the language of the standards (LOTS), allows them to achieve a deeper understanding of the concepts and helps prepare them for high-stakes state tests.



I

Standards-Based Instruction and Assessment: Begin With the End in Mind

The idea of “beginning with the end in mind” means establishing goals for students to meet and then designing curriculum, instruction and assessment around the desired outcomes. This is not a new idea, and there have been various attempts to put such an approach into practice.

What Are Behavioural Objectives?

In the 1960s, teachers struggled with having their students meet “behavioural objectives”. Behavioural objectives were very specific, and they addressed discrete bits of knowledge and skill that could be measured precisely. Measurement expert Robert Mager’s book *Preparing Instructional Objectives* (1962) stated that an objective must identify the expected behaviour in detail, the conditions in which the behaviour is to be displayed, and the criteria for judging students’ performance. Marzano and Kendall (1996, p. 8) contend that an example of a behavioural objective following Mager’s definition would be: “At the end of a 50-minute period of instruction, students will be able to complete eight out of ten problems in two-column addition within a five-minute period.” Not surprisingly, teachers felt overwhelmed by the sheer number of objectives required to specify educational outcomes, and the movement failed. The focus seemed to be more on accounting than on teaching, and the voluminous paperwork took too much time away from instruction.

What Is the Standards Movement?

Educators and the public in general have been calling for school reform for years. The modern standards movement really began with the release of a damaging report on public education in the USA. In light of its findings and recommendations, there was a growing sentiment that the development of standards held the promise for improving education. Once the report appeared, members of the business community shared their concerns about students not being academically prepared to enter the workforce, and politicians and many educators began to support the standards movement around the world.

	Not Yet 0	Yes 1
3. Do I CLOSE with one of the following? (Circle the strategy used and write your example in box.) —Call to action/recommendation —Memorable image —Brief story —Question —Prediction —Phrase/quote <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 200px; height: 100px; margin-left: 100px;"></div>		
MISCELLANEOUS		
V. Have I incorporated DIRECT QUOTATIONS ?		
1. Did I use THREE direct quotations?		
2. Have I correctly PUNCTUATED the quotations? (quotation marks, commas, end marks)		
3. Have I CITED the quotations correctly?		
W. Does my essay contain an accurately formatted BIBLIOGRAPHY ?		
1. Do I have at least THREE SOURCES ?		
2. Are all sources in my bibliography REFERENCED IN THE ESSAY ?		
3. Have I completed the BIBLIOGRAPHY CHECKLIST to ensure that I follow all rules of format?		
TOTAL POINTS		
Signature of Writer: _____	<p style="text-align: center;">Scale</p> <p>42–47 = Exceeds Standards</p> <p>38–41 = Meets Standards</p> <p>33–37 = In Progress</p> <p>0–32 = Novice</p>	
Comments:		
Signature of Conference Partner: _____		
Comments:		

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What Is a Weighted Rubric?

Most rubrics include a column on the right-hand side for recording a score for the student’s performance on each evaluative criterion. The score is usually the same as the level the student achieves on the criterion. For example, in figure 6.1, a student who has written a level-3 thesis statement will receive a score of 3 on that criterion.

Many times, however, teachers consider some criteria in a rubric to be more instructionally critical than others. In these cases, it is possible to *weight* the criteria to reflect their relative importance. The mechanism for doing so is to designate a multiplier for the score for each criterion. The multiplier is displayed in the “Score” column, so that the teacher writes in the initial score (level achieved), multiplies it and arrives at the weighted score. The score column also indicates the maximum number of points possible on each criterion (shown in parentheses under the equation for the weighted score). Figure 6.4 shows how the criterion from figure 6.1 might be weighted. (See fig. 6.11 for an example of a complete weighted rubric for a persuasive essay.)

Criterion	Extra Homework 1	Teacher’s Aide 2	English Teacher 3	Nobel Prize for Literature 4	Score
The student can write an effective thesis statement.	The student can write a sentence that introduces the topic.	The student can write a thesis statement that introduces <i>one</i> controlling idea that will be addressed in one paragraph in the body of the essay.	The student can write a thesis statement that introduces <i>two</i> controlling ideas that will be addressed in two paragraphs in the body of the essay.	The student can write a thesis statement that introduces <i>three</i> controlling ideas that will be addressed in three paragraphs in the body of the essay.	$\underline{\quad} \times 3$ $= \underline{\quad}$ (12)

Figure 6.4: A weighted criterion.

Teachers might decide to give a criterion more weight for any of the following reasons:

- It relates to one or more critical learning standards.
- It is the focus of the lesson that week.
- It represents an important skill or concept needed for future learning.
- It targets an important objective or learning goal for the unit.
- It targets a key skill that will be assessed on standardised tests.

Criteria that are part of the task but not considered as critical as other criteria can be given less weight. Students writing a science report might have their score on “knowledge of scientific concepts” or “problem-solving skills” weighted five or six times and their score on “mechanics” weighted only two times. Spelling, punctuation and capitalisation count toward the final mark, but the science teacher focuses more on the students’ ability to meet science standards than their ability to use mechanics appropriately.

Table 8.1: The Balanced Assessment Model

Formative Assessment Process Assessment <i>for</i> Learning	Summative Assessment Process Assessment <i>of</i> Learning
Purpose: Provide ongoing feedback to <i>improve</i> learning	Purpose: Evaluate final efforts to <i>prove</i> learning
Timing: During the learning segment	Timing: At the end of the learning segment
Informal teacher questions	Formal oral interview
Conversation with student	Conference with student
Informal observation	Formal observation
Rough drafts of written work	Final copy of written work
Learning log (in progress)	Final learning log entries
Reflective journal (multiple drafts)	Final journal entries
Mathematics problem solving steps	Mathematics final solution
Practice science experiment	Final science experiment
Rehearsal of presentation	Final presentation
Working portfolio	Showcase portfolio
Practice checklist for do-overs	Final checklist
Practice rubrics (analytical)	Final rubrics (analytical or holistic)
Homework, quizzes	Teacher-made tests
Benchmark/interim tests	High-stakes standardised tests

When teacher teams target the standards and create common assessments at the beginning of the learning cycle, they start with the end in mind and then plan backwards to achieve that end. It is not unusual to use a standards-based assessment at the very beginning of the year as a diagnostic tool to determine students' readiness levels. That same assessment could be used as an instructional formative assessment throughout the learning period to help teachers identify students who are struggling. And the same assessment could then be used at the end of the learning cycle as the final summative assessment to determine whether or not the students have met their goals.

Are Benchmark Tests Formative or Summative Assessments?

Many curriculum authorities label benchmark or interim assessments as formative, because they say their purpose is to provide short-cycle feedback to teachers about students' progress toward meeting the standards that will be measured on the high-stakes summative tests. Schools have teachers administer them at specified intervals to find out which students are mastering the standards and which students need more help on targeted areas. Huebner (2009, p. 85) points out that, "unlike summative assessments, . . . interim assessments take place in time for teachers to adjust instruction to address any identified gaps in student mastery".