

Marianne DeMarco

MST II

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Assessment vs. Grading

Today's report card isn't what it used to be. In fact, letter grades don't mean the same today either. There is a new form of assessment in town. Schools today are pushing for teachers to use non-traditional forms of assessment in their everyday classrooms. No...multiple choice tests are not yet obsolete. However, as Grant Wiggins states in his article on assessment, "testing is small part of assessment." It is just a small portion of a student's portfolio of work. The article defines a student portfolio as "a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-reflection." This new method of assessment not only shows student progress, it is also a way for students to perform a self-evaluation.

In the article, "[The Mismatch Between Assessment and Grading](#)," Seely states that "Classrooms are moving from a *testing culture* -- where teachers are the sole authority, students work alone, and learning is done for the test -- to an *assessment culture* -- where teachers and learners collaborate

about learning, assessment takes many forms for multiple audiences, and distinctions between learning and assessment are blurred (Kleinsasser et al. 1992). But, where should teachers start when they want to change from *Grading to Assessment*. Good assessment should be considered when creating your original unit and lesson objectives. When first creating a unit, a teacher must base this unit upon the State Standards. When creating a lesson, a teacher must base the lesson upon how to meet the State Standards. This is where Backwards Design comes into play. At this point, assessment should be considered a way that teachers will determine if the lesson objectives were met.

Because of the creative nature of teachers, all too often the process becomes the focus of the lesson, rather than a means to an end. Backward Design envisions the final goal of the lesson and how to measure such goals. This measurement is called Assessment. This assessment must be aligned with the lesson objectives. When the standards, objective and assessment are aligned only then can you can start designing your lesson.

And as Grant states, “Good assessment is about expanding the assessment repertoire because no single form of is sufficient.” This expanded repertoire should include “performance-based” assessment. Rubrics are a common form of grading assessment. Rubrics also help students assess their progress themselves. But what do these forms of assessment mean in terms of “grades.” Seeley’s article states that, “To be meaning, however, grades

must be interpreted by all members of a school community in the same way.” This is most important. All teachers must be on the same page in order for the letter grades to be meaningful.

Most schools are not going to move away from the traditional “letter grade.” And, Wiggins states that “many schools report performance on a novice-expert continuum.” But that is not what this new form of assessment is asking you, as a teacher, to do. Portfolio assessment is “a matter of expanding your pile of evidence, not necessarily changing the grading system (Wiggins.)” These new forms of assessment are one way to do this. These new forms of *assessments* give teachers more “evidence” to base your *grade* upon.

Works Cited

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