Why Do Teachers Need to Know About Assessment?

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What is Assessment?

- W. James Popham defines assessment as:

  “a formal attempt to determine students’ status with respect to educational variables of interest” (page 8).

- In other words, assessment is used to find out the extent of a student’s knowledge, skills and abilities, and/or attitudes towards school or certain subjects.

- Assessment includes traditional paper and pencil tests, but is much broader than just that.
Why Should Teachers Know About Assessment? (Yesterday’s Answers)

- diagnosing students’ strengths and weaknesses (help teachers avoid superfluous and wasteful instruction, lesson planning)
- monitoring students’ progress (satisfactory or more remedial instruction, regular evals to see how time allotment is progressing and to keep focus)
- to assign grades to students (assemble evidence necessary to give students their grades)
- determining one’s own instructional effectiveness (pre vs. post testing scores)
Formative and Summative Assessment

- Formative assessment is to monitor student learning to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning (draw a concept map in class to represent their understanding of a topic; submit one or two sentences identifying the main point of a lecture; turn in a research proposal for early feedback).

- Summative assessment is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark (a midterm exam; a final project; a paper; a senior recital).
According to W. James Popham, “test results determine public perceptions of education effectiveness, students’ assessment performances are increasingly being included as part of the teacher evaluation process, and as clarifiers of instructional intentions, assessment devices can improve instructional quality” (2014, page 20)
What Do Teachers Really Need To Know About Assessment?

- Constructing your own assessment instruments
- Using assessment instruments constructed by others
- Planning instruction based on instructionally illuminating assessments (2014, page 21)
Creating Classroom Assessment Devices

- W. James Popham writes, “…create classroom assessment approaches to measure students’ achievement (that is, the knowledge and/or skills students acquire) as well as students’ affect (that is, the educationally pertinent attitudes, interests, and values influenced by school).” (2014, page 21)

- In learning and creating these various assessment approaches, “…you will also learn how to judge the quality of the assessment devices you create….you will learn how to judge the quality of assessment devices created by others.” (2014, page 21)

- Assessment Literacy is defined as, “…consists of an individual’s understandings of the fundamental assessment concepts and procedures deemed likely to influence educational decisions.” (2014, page 22)

- Not just for teachers, but also should include educational policymakers, parents, and students
Interpreting Standardized Test Results

- Student Achievement or Aptitude
  Achievement tests deals with, “…knowledge and skills that students have acquired.” (2014, page 23)
  Aptitude Tests, “…to describe a student’s learning potential.” (2014, page 23)

- Intelligence tests falling from favor due to, “…the notion that students possess an inborn potential about which schools can do little to influence...the term aptitude has been increasingly used rather than intelligence in order to convey a notion of student’s academic potential.” (2014, page 23)
Instructional Perspective

- Instructional-planning payoffs
  “...a properly constructed classroom test can truly exemplify what a teacher is trying to achieve, the resulting clarity of intention helps teachers make more astute decisions when they plan their instruction.” (2014, page 24)

- Monitor students’ progress
  “...teachers use students’ assessed levels of achievement to determine whether the current instructional plan is stellar or sickly, then teachers’ adjustments in lessons can, if warranted, be made. Without the evidence yielded by classroom formative assessments, a teacher will often fail to spot instructional inadequacies.” (2014, page 24)
- “...the link between testing and teaching can prove beneficial to our students because your can provide more on-target and effective instruction.” (2014, page 25)

- Judging of test-preparation

  1) Is in students’ best interest from an educational perspective?

  2) In educators’ best interest from an ethical perspective?

- Classroom assessments can have a positive impact on how well you teach. “Tests, if deliberately created with instruction in mind, can boost your personal success as a teacher.” (2014, page 25)

- Helping parents learn about educational assessment. “Parents who are assessment literate will be better able to help you help their children learn more successfully.” (2014, page 25)

- Students should not be forgotten in this process. “...the truly essential assessment understandings needed by students are well within the grasp of those students. Why not splash a bit of assessment literacy on these students?” (2014, page 25.)
Reference