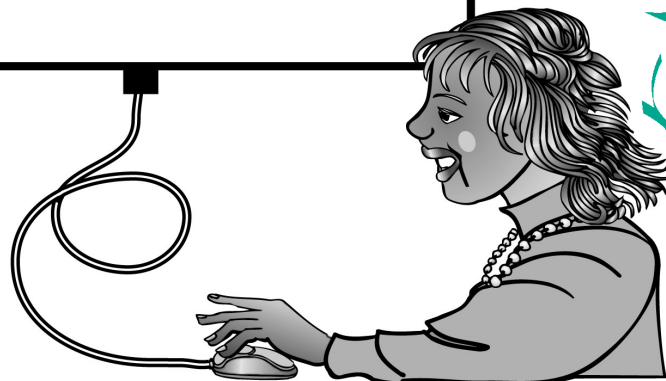


Assessment for the Diverse Classroom



A Handbook — for — Teachers



Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
Florida Department of Education
2004

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This product was developed by the Accommodations and Modifications for Students with Disabilities Project through the Learning Systems Institute, Florida State University, funded by the State of Florida, Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, through federal assistance under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B.

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Assessment for the Diverse Classroom

A Handbook for Teachers

by

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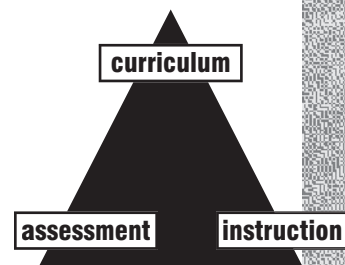
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Chapter 1

What Does “Assessment” Mean?



As a teacher, you make decisions every day about how to present the information you want your students to learn and how to find out if they are learning. The process you use to make these decisions consists of three components—what content you teach (the curriculum), how the content is taught (the instruction), and how you measure what the students actually learn (the assessment). Each of these components plays a critical role, and the process is weakened when one of them is missing or inadequately addressed. This book focuses on the assessments you design to gather data about how well your students are learning. Because the three components are so entwined, frequent references to both curriculum and instruction are an integral part of the discussion.



What Is “Assessment”?

Many people think that assessment is limited to the paper and pencil tests given in class to see if students have learned the content. Assessment is far more than pencil and paper tests. You are using a form of assessment each time you observe your students in the classroom; look at products and performances; or talk with teachers, parents, or students about the progress the students are making. Assessment involves anything you do to gather information to make decisions about your students’ learning and your teaching.

The primary purpose of assessment is to gather information, or data. Data is simply information you use as a basis for decision-making. There are many forms of data, including test scores, anecdotal notes, responses to questionnaires, and ratings. The data from paper and pencil tests can give you information such as how many spelling words a student has learned, whether a student can solve certain kinds of mathematics problems, or if the student knows facts about a specific period in history.

Performance assessments can provide you with data about a student’s ability to synthesize information, present information, and make inferences. Observations can also give you data about a student’s preferred learning style, how well the student works in groups, and how much time a student needs to be given to complete an assignment. The purpose of assessment is to let you and the student know about the quality and depth of learning that is taking place.

DATA is information you use as a basis for decision-making. You gather data through assessment to let you and your students know the quality and depth of learning that is taking place.

Types of Assessment

Assessment is a general term that includes many different ways to collect, analyze, and interpret data. In general, the three types of assessment most commonly used by teachers for the purpose of learning about student progress are standardized tests, commercially prepared assessments, and teacher-made assessments.

ASSESSMENT is a general term used to describe the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information (data) for an intended purpose.

Airasian, 1996

Standardized Tests

A standardized test, according to Popham (1999), an expert in testing and evaluation, is “a test, either norm-referenced or criterion-referenced, that is administered, scored, and interpreted in a standard manner” (p. 264). Norm-referenced means that your students’ performance on the test can be compared to the performance of other similar students who have taken the same test (the “norm” group). The information gained from this type of test is intended to help teachers and parents know how their students are doing in comparison to other similar students.

A NORM-REFERENCED TEST compares a student’s performance on a particular test to the performance of other similar students who have taken the same test.

A criterion-referenced test, on the other hand, looks at a student’s performance in relation to mastery of certain specified content. On this type of test, a decision is made about what constitutes proficiency, or adequate learning of the content. A passing score is established that represents mastery. If a student scores at or above the passing score, it is assumed that he or she is competent or proficient in knowledge of the specified content.

A CRITERION-REFERENCED TEST evaluates a student’s performance in relation to mastery of certain specified content.

Many states, Florida included, have developed standardized tests to measure the achievement of their students. The consequences for individual student failure may be high; the student may not be promoted to the next grade or may not be allowed to graduate with a standard diploma. The stakes for schools are also high, with public rankings and the rewarding or withholding of funds attached to the scores and ranks. The implications for teachers are obvious. These tests guide the curriculum you teach and the way your students are taught and tested. Much controversy surrounds the issue of whether or not teachers should coach their students (“teach to the test”) or if this is considered cheating. The issues box on the next page compares coaching and cheating.

You want your students to do well on all assessments they encounter in school and in life. If learning is the reason students attend school, and if assessment is the way you find out if they are learning, it only makes good sense to give students every ethical opportunity to demonstrate their learning. You have a responsibility to help your students prepare for whatever life has to offer them, and that responsibility includes preparing them to succeed on assessments.

Teaching to the Test: A Comparison of Coaching and Cheating	
Coaching (Ethical)	Cheating (Unethical)
Teaching content and skills covered on the test	Developing a curriculum based solely on test content
Training students in test-taking skills	Preparing and teaching objectives based solely on the test
Checking answer sheets for proper completion	Using actual or unauthorized test items for student worksheets
Increasing student motivation on the test through appeals to parents, students, and teachers	Using artificial score-raising programs
Providing practice in handling a variety of item types (multiple choice, short answer, essay)	Excluding low-achieving students from taking the test

ISSUES

from Ward and Murray-Ward, 1999, p.25

Commercially Prepared Assessments

Many of the textbooks and supplemental materials you use for instruction in your classroom are commercially prepared and include assessments. These assessments may be used in a number of ways, including screening, diagnosing learning problems, monitoring progress, and evaluating learner outcomes related to a specific instructional program. Instructional materials often include assessments designed for units of instruction or lessons. It is important to be sure that these tests truly assess the content you are teaching. You must also make sure there is a match between these assessments and the expectations of the Sunshine State Standards. When this is not the case, you may need to adapt them or develop your own.

Teacher-Made Assessments

When you develop your own classroom assessments, it is important to be sure that the tests are at the right level of difficulty for your students in terms of the content being assessed and the way the content is presented. Commercially prepared materials are designed for a targeted student ability level and may be too easy or too difficult for your particular students. When you develop your own assessments, you can make sure that the content you are expecting your students to learn is exactly what you are assessing. You can also make sure that the assessments are written at the correct reading level for your students. Chapter four guides you through the process of determining which type of assessment item (for example, multiple choice or essay) to choose.

Phases of Assessment

Classroom assessment requires an ongoing process to determine if students have learned the concepts and skills that have been presented in class. In order to get the whole picture of a student's learning, you should include three phases of assessment during the course of a year or semester: pre-assessment, ongoing assessment, and final assessment. In this section we will examine each of these phases of assessment to determine what it is, what it is used for, and what types of assessments are included in each phase.

Phase One: Pre-Assessment


What is pre-assessment?

Pre-assessment is a systematic assessment that occurs at the beginning of a school year or when starting a new unit of instruction to determine your students' level of knowledge or skill about the subject. Pre-assessment activities may include tests or they may simply be conversations with your students. Pre-assessment can even occur before a student begins the school year, such as the preschool screening used with students entering kindergarten.

PRE-ASSESSMENT is a systematic assessment that occurs at the beginning of a school year or when starting a new unit of instruction. It helps you make decisions about what instructional activities are appropriate for your students so that you can begin instruction at a proper place and level.

What is the purpose of pre-assessment?

Pre-assessment can be used in various ways. One way is as a diagnostic tool to help determine at what level a particular student is functioning. You can also use pre-assessment to help you make decisions about what kinds of instructional activities are appropriate for the students you have in a particular class. It is good to determine early in the year what skills and knowledge students have so that you can begin your instruction at an appropriate level. If students have the prerequisite skills and knowledge for the instruction you have planned, a brief review may be all that is needed. However, if prerequisite skills and knowledge are missing or weak, reteaching may be necessary. You can also use pre-assessment to help you determine your instructional goals for a particular unit. Use the pre-assessment checklist to get the information you need.

 Pre-assessment			
CHECKLIST	Do the students have the prerequisite skills and knowledge they need in order to be able to benefit from the instruction I have planned?	Yes	No
	Do I need to reteach or review some of the information or skills?	Yes	No
	Are the instructional goals for the unit appropriate for my students?	Yes	No

What pre-assessment techniques should I use?

There are different techniques you can use to conduct a pre-assessment. You can look at your students' past achievements by talking with teachers who have had them in previous years or by reviewing students' cumulative folders. You can use a pretest on the information you plan to cover in a given unit or have students self-report what they know. Some commercially prepared instructional materials include two forms for each test. One form of the test can be used as a pre-assessment.

Of course, simply observing or conversing with your students can give you important information, particularly in relation to their interests, work habits, and personality characteristics. This information can be valuable in motivating students and making your instruction more meaningful to them.

Phase Two: Ongoing Assessment

Once you have completed a pre-assessment and have a clear idea where your students are in terms of abilities, knowledge, and skills, you can begin instruction. At this point, you will begin to use ongoing assessments to determine how your students are doing.

What is ongoing assessment?

Ongoing assessment is sometimes known as formative assessment or progress monitoring. It is designed to provide information during the teaching and learning process and to help you analyze, based on the data, how you are doing as a teacher and how your students are doing as learners. Guskey (2003) tells us that, “to become an integral part of the instructional process, assessment cannot be a one-shot, do-or-die experience for students. Instead, assessments must be part of an ongoing effort to help students learn. And if teachers follow assessments with helpful corrective instruction, then students should have a second chance to demonstrate their new level of competence and understanding” (p. 10).

ONGOING ASSESSMENT provides information during the teaching-learning process and helps you analyze how your students are doing.

What is the purpose of ongoing assessment?

There are several different uses for ongoing assessment, including

- ◆ to provide feedback to students on their learning
- ◆ to establish whether students have achieved mastery of skills or whether further instruction is necessary
- ◆ to serve as a basis for flexible grouping of students
- ◆ to give you information about how teaching strategies are working with your students so that you can adjust your instruction, if needed.

What types of ongoing assessment should I use?

Ongoing assessment encompasses a wide variety of information-gathering techniques. You are conducting ongoing assessment when you give your students daily or weekly quizzes and when you systematically observe your students' performance on various tasks. In this section you will read more about two specific types of ongoing assessment: self-assessment and

curriculum-based measurement. These two types of assessment are used to provide you and your students with continuous feedback about how well they are learning.

Self-Assessment

There is a tendency to think of teaching as something we do to students. However, you know that students cannot be passive recipients of the information teachers provide. They must play an active role and assume personal responsibility for their learning. Self-assessment is the process of having students evaluate their own work, behavior, or perceived abilities and provide information about how they think they are performing. It is an excellent way to engage students in the learning process.

SELF-ASSESSMENT is the process of having students evaluate their own work, behavior, or perceived abilities and provide information about how they think they are performing. Self-assessment is an excellent way to engage students in the learning process.

One way you can use self-assessment is to have students complete the rating scales or checklists you use to keep track of their learning. If you begin a unit of study by having your students complete a simple yes or no checklist of knowledge of the major topics, you not only get an idea of what your students think they know, but you also provide them with an overview of what is included in the unit. The example below shows a self-assessment checklist for grade one mathematics based on the Sunshine State Standards.

EXAMPLE		
Mathematics Self-Assessment Checklist		
Directions: Circle YES or NO to indicate if you can do what each item says.		
Yes	No	I can count from one to twenty.
Yes	No	I can count from one to fifty.
Yes	No	I can count from one to one hundred.
Yes	No	I can count by 2's.
Yes	No	I can count by 5's.
Yes	No	I can count by 10's.
Yes	No	I can count backward from ten to one.

Self-assessments can be helpful in monitoring how well students are learning to control their own behaviors. Daily or weekly self-reports that ask students to indicate how well they are working with other students, participating in class, paying attention, asking for help, following directions, or completing assignments can help you and the students chart growth in appropriate behaviors. When coupled with instruction, examples, and modeling of the appropriate behaviors, these types of self-assessments become even more valuable. The example below shows a behavioral self-assessment.

EXAMPLE
Behavioral Self-Assessment Checklist
Directions: Put a + sign on the line in front of the item if you did it well. Put an N on the line if you need to work on it.
Followed directions
Raised my hand to ask for help
Took turns using materials
Shared materials
Finished the assignment
Put materials away

adapted from Linn & Gronlund, 2000

You can also use the checklist in the example on the next page to monitor attitudes throughout the year. Asking students what they like best or how they feel about certain activities can help you decide what kinds of activities to use.

Students can use self-assessments to examine the quality of the work they are producing. This type of self-assessment is particularly valuable when you expect your students to produce a product (written or otherwise), demonstrate a process, solve a problem involving several steps, or carry out an activity that demonstrates proficiency with a complex skill. The use of a rubric makes the process of evaluation easier for the student and for you. A rubric is simply a set of criteria that describe what to look for in a student’s performance and how to determine where the student’s performance fits on a predetermined scale.

In a rubric, scores are typically assigned to each behavior described on the scale. You can use the scores to determine student grades on the basis of performance. When students


A RUBRIC is a set of criteria that describes what to look for in a performance or product and how to determine where the student’s performance fits on a predetermined scale.

are involved in the development of the rubric, it helps them know exactly what is expected of them and allows them to focus their attention on important learning outcomes. Examples of rubrics are included in chapter 2.

EXAMPLE
Attitude Self-Assessment Checklist
Directions: Look at the list of things we do in class. Put a check mark by all of the things you like to do in this class. Then draw a circle around the one you like to do the most.
Read at my desk
Have a class discussion
Work with a group of students on a project
Listen to the teacher tell us about something
Draw a picture about something we read
Make a speech about something we have done
Go to the library to work on a report

from Ward & Murray-Ward, 1999, p. 168

The information box offers suggestions on how to help students become better at self-assessment.



Suggestions for Teaching Self-Assessment Skills

1. Involve students in developing criteria for effective work on a product or task. If that is not possible, students should at least see models and understand the criteria before completing a product.

2. Teach the process of self-assessment. Use work samples and teach students to “see” the difference between quality and marginal work. In addition, teach students how to examine their own work for strengths and weaknesses.

3. Allow students to practice self-assessment of their work on a regular basis. Ask them questions about their thinking and provide feedback about the quality of their self-assessments.

4. Help students use their self-assessment against the scoring criteria to set goals for themselves. Let students have copies of the scoring criteria ahead of time so they know what they will be responsible for and can set realistic goals. A useful exercise is to have students evaluate samples of a fictional student’s work and develop a set of learning goals for the student who produced the sample.

INFORMATION

Curriculum-Based Assessment

Curriculum-based assessment involves periodic monitoring of your students' daily performance in relation to what you are teaching. It provides a measure of how your students are progressing through the curriculum and lets you know if they are making adequate progress. Curriculum-based assessment often uses tests that come directly from the curriculum materials from which you are teaching, such as timed tests of reading accuracy and speed in passages from the reading book students use for instruction. In mathematics, curriculum-based assessment may include single skills, such as basic facts, or multiple-skill probes. The measurements are taken periodically (weekly, monthly, or quarterly, for example). You can chart the results of these repeated measures to see student growth. Curriculum-based assessments do not replace other types of classroom assessments since they do not give precise measurements of all of the knowledge and skills being learned. They are, however, useful for seeing if students are generally making progress in the curriculum.

The key components of curriculum-based assessment are presented in the Information Box.

CURRICULUM-BASED ASSESSMENT is used to periodically monitor your students' periodic performance in relation to what you are teaching. It tells you how your students are progressing through the curriculum.

Key Components of Curriculum-Based Assessment




INFORMATION

1. Assessment for educational planning should be based on only the skills listed in the child's curriculum.
2. Assessment should be repeated regularly and frequently throughout the year.
3. These repeated assessments should be used as the basis for educational decision-making for the child.

from Bender, 2002, pp. 117-118

Since the purpose of ongoing assessment is to determine if your students are making adequate progress, you might use the questions in this checklist as you prepare and conduct ongoing assessment.

 CHECKLIST	Ongoing Assessment
	On what learning tasks are the students progressing satisfactorily?
	On what learning tasks do students need help?
	On what learning tasks do students have severe learning problems and need remedial work?

from Gronlund, 1988, p. 2

Phase Three: Final Assessment

After you have taught your unit of study or course, it is important to conduct a final, or “summative,” assessment, even if you have been using ongoing assessment throughout the unit.

What is final assessment?

A final assessment is a test or measure that you give at the end of a unit of study, a semester, or the school year to be certain students have learned the content. It usually covers a broad amount of information and measures a sample of all of the objectives in the unit or course. Most of us are familiar with this type of evaluation—it’s an end-of-chapter test, a unit test, or a midterm or final exam.

A FINAL ASSESSMENT is a test that you give at the end of a unit of study, a semester, or the school year to be certain students have learned the content.

What is the purpose of final assessment?

The primary purpose of final assessment is to find out if your students have met the instructional goals. Final assessments may also be used for

- ◆ assigning final grades
- ◆ certifying student achievement

- ◆ serving as a basis for promotion
- ◆ sharing information about student progress with parents or teachers.

What types of final assessment should I use?

Written tests, including teacher-made exams and the end-of-chapter tests included with your textbooks, are forms of final assessment. You may also conduct final assessment using performance assessments, such as laboratory experiments, oral reports, or performances. Student projects that result in themes, drawings, or research reports can also be used to assess whether your instructional goals have been met.


Your main concern with final assessment is finding out how well your students have mastered the content. Ask yourself the questions in the checklist when conducting a final assessment.

Final Assessment		
Has each student met the instructional goals that were set for him/her?	Yes	No
Can I confidently determine the final grade that should be assigned to each student?	Yes	No
Is each student ready to move to the next level of instruction?	Yes	No



Comparing the Three Phases of Assessment

Each phase of assessment—pre-assessment, ongoing assessment, and final assessment—is useful at specific times and for specific purposes. As a whole, the three phases can tell you three things: what students know about a topic before instruction begins; the progress your students are making during the course or unit of study in terms of understanding the concepts or learning the skills you are presenting; and how much progress the students have made by the end of the course or unit of study. The information box presents a comparison of the three types of assessment.

 Comparison of Pre-, Ongoing, and Final Assessments			
	Pre-assessment	Ongoing Assessment	Final Assessment
INFORMATION	Purpose	Identifies a starting point for instruction Determines if students have prerequisite skills	Provides feedback to guide instruction Provides evaluative information about the outcomes of instruction
	Time Frame	Prior to or at the beginning of instruction	Frequent, continuous, or periodic At the end of a period of instruction
	Types of Assessments	Pretest Diagnostic tests Placement tests	Curriculum-based assessments Teacher-made quizzes Self-assessments

adapted from Ward and Murray-Ward, 1999, p. 61

Benefits of Assessment

Effective assessment of student learning can be a time-consuming part of a teacher's responsibilities. However, used properly, it can provide numerous benefits to you and your students.

Benefits for Teachers

- ◆ Assessment that is appropriately administered and analyzed gives you the information you need to know if the content or pace of instruction is appropriate. Your students' learning will improve when you make needed adjustments to the content and pace of instruction based on what the students are learning.
- ◆ Assessment helps you monitor how much your students are learning throughout the course or year. If you wait until the end to assess student learning, you lose the opportunity to reteach the content they did not understand, and students can be left with gaps in their understanding.
- ◆ If you vary the activities or methods you use, assessment can provide information about whether a particular method was successful. In this way, you can determine which teaching methods are most successful with each group of students.

Benefits for Students

- ◆ Frequent assessment and feedback gives students information about how they are doing throughout the year. If they do not understand certain information, it will be apparent immediately, and misunderstandings can be corrected.
- ◆ Your students' ability to self-assess can be improved through the use of regular assessment. They can learn to use techniques for evaluating their own understanding. They will come to think of assessment as a normal part of the learning process rather than something done only at the end of a course in order to assign a grade.

- ◆ Assessment can help students determine how thoroughly they have mastered individual concepts and skills before moving on to others.
- ◆ When classroom assessment uses formats similar to those students will see on high-stakes standardized tests, students can be more comfortable and prepared for those tests.

Summary

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve both teaching and learning. Even the simplest classroom assessments should help you gain information about how well your students are moving toward mastery of the Sunshine State Standards. By frequently assessing your students' learning, you will be able to adjust the content, pace, and method of delivery of your instruction and assure your students' success.

The chapters that follow will assist you in understanding the different types of assessment items that can be used in your classroom. You will learn when each is appropriate to use, how to effectively design assessments, and how to use the data you collect.

Chapter 2

Types of Classroom Assessments



Classroom assessment gives you information about how well your students are learning. Classroom assessment includes tests, such as end-of-chapter quizzes or Friday spelling tests, and discussions you have with students about their understanding of topics. Assessment also includes the evaluation of group projects, written journals or stories, exhibitions, models, and presentations, such as speeches or the performance of plays.

This chapter provides information about two types of classroom assessment items: selected response and constructed response. The first type, selected response, includes alternate response (better known as true/false), multiple choice, and matching. In selected response items, students select the correct answer from a list of possible responses. This type of assessment item is generally used to measure mastery of content at the lower levels of learning, knowledge, and comprehension.

The level of learning refers to the type of learning students are expected to perform. At the lower levels, students acquire a basic understanding of the information. Assessment at these levels requires students to recognize or recall information they have been taught.

As students move to higher levels of learning, they are able to analyze, synthesize, and apply the information. Students are assessed on these levels of learning through constructed response items. Constructed response questions include short answer or sentence completion, essay, and performance items. When you use constructed response assessments, students must supply the answers and have an opportunity to demonstrate higher levels of learning.

The use of a variety of testing items will help prepare your students for the types of questions they will encounter on standardized tests such as the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

The different types of assessment items discussed in this chapter are included on the FCAT. FCAT questions fall into three categories: multiple choice, gridded response, and performance tasks. Within these three categories, question formats are referred to as multiple choice, gridded response, short response, extended response, and writing prompt.

Multiple choice items on the FCAT require students to choose the best possible answer from four choices. Gridded response items require the students to solve mathematical problems. Performance tasks require students to answer test questions in their own words or to show solutions to mathematical problems. This may involve either a short response or an extended response.

Selected Response Items

Selected response items require students to select an answer from ones given. These items assess whether a student can recognize, rather than recall, certain information. They are generally used when you are trying to evaluate knowledge of a broad range of subject matter. Selected responses are commonly used assessment items and include

- ◆ alternate response
- ◆ multiple choice
- ◆ matching.

This section discusses each of these types of items, with information on what the item is, its advantages and limitations, and how to construct and score the item.

Alternate Response

What is alternate response?

A test item that uses an alternate response format consists of two opposing options, such as true/false, yes/no, example/nonexample, or increase/decrease. When answering an alternate response question, the student must choose between the two options. True/false is the best known type of alternate response. In addition to identifying the false items on a true/false test, students may be required to correct the false items. Let's look at two examples of alternate response items.

EXAMPLE		
Yes/No Alternate Response Item		
Instructions: Complete the chart by checking Yes for instruments that belong to the woodwind family and No for instruments that do not belong to the woodwind family.		
Does the instrument belong to the woodwind family?	Yes	No
Trumpet		
Clarinet		
Saxophone		
French Horn		
Flute		
Bassoon		
Oboe		
Trombone		
Baritone		
Tuba		

from Beech (Vol.2), 1998, p.33

EXAMPLE	
True/False Alternate Response Item	
Instructions: If the statement is true, put a T on the line. If the statement is false, put an F on the line.	
1.	The round-the-back pass is one of the four basic passes in basketball.
2.	Dribbling is when you run down the court kicking the ball.
3.	A lay-up is when you dribble up to the basket, jump, and lay the ball up against the backboard.
4.	A “carry” in basketball is when you move the ball without dribbling.
5.	If you are shorter than 5’9”, you are too short to play basketball.

from Dealing With Differences, 2000, Handout P-10

What are the advantages of alternate response items?

- ◆ They are easy to respond to.
- ◆ You can sample a large amount of content in a short amount of time.
- ◆ You can measure a broad range of verbal knowledge.
- ◆ They are easily constructed, as long as you follow a few guidelines. (See “How do I construct a good alternate response item?” below.)
- ◆ It’s easy to score them objectively.

What are the limitations of alternate response items?


- ◆ Your students can guess, and guesses have an equal chance of being right or wrong.
- ◆ Not all subject matter lends itself to this format. You should only use items that have two clearly opposing options.
- ◆ These items generally do not assess learning outcomes above the knowledge level. Do not use them to try to measure higher order thinking skills.

How do I construct good alternate response items?

- ◆ Make sure the knowledge or skill being assessed can be validly presented in an “either/or” format. Only content that fits clearly with one option or the other can be assessed this way.
- ◆ Use a level of reading that is appropriate for the content of the test.
- ◆ Avoid the use of words such as “not,” “often,” “never,” or “all” in the test items.
- ◆ Make sure the statements present the information clearly.
- ◆ Keep statements short and simple.
- ◆ Include only one idea in each item.
- ◆ Keep the statements about equal in length. There is a tendency for test writers to make true statements longer.
- ◆ Be sure the correct statements are unequivocally correct.
- ◆ Use incorrect statements that are plausible.
- ◆ Avoid including trivial statements that force students to direct their attention to memorizing facts at the expense of more general knowledge and understanding.
- ◆ Make sure the items measure knowledge specified in the learning objectives you are assessing.

How do I score alternate response items?

Scoring alternate response items is easier if you identify the response you expect for each answer and make an answer key. With this tool, scoring should be fast.

 Quality Check for Alternate Response Items Use the following checklist to review your alternate response test items in order to assure they are of the highest quality.		
Is the reading level for the items appropriate?	Yes	No
Are words such as “not,” “often,” “never,” or “all” excluded?	Yes	No
Does each statement present the information clearly and simply?	Yes	No
Does each item contain only one idea?	Yes	No
Are the statements about the same length?	Yes	No
Are the correct statements unequivocally correct?	Yes	No
Are the incorrect statements plausible?	Yes	No
Were trivial statements avoided?	Yes	No
Does each item measure the knowledge specified in the learning objective?	Yes	No

CHECKLIST

Multiple Choice

What is multiple choice?

A multiple choice test item consists of a stem, usually a question or an incomplete sentence, that introduces a problem or incomplete thought. The student selects the appropriate response from a set of three or more options or alternatives. The options may be words, numbers, symbols, or phrases. Normally, one option is correct, and the remaining options are sometimes referred to as “distractors.” Let’s look at an example of each type of multiple choice test item.

EXAMPLE
Multiple Choice Item with a Question Stem
Instructions: Circle the letter in front of the answer that correctly answers the question.
<p>Which performance provides a valid indicator of conceptual knowledge of a geometric shape?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The student defines the geometric shape. B. The student finds three new examples of the geometric shape in common objects. C. The student draws a picture of the geometric shape. D. The student writes a narrative describing an experience with the geometric shape.

from Beech (Vol. 2), 1998, p. 27

EXAMPLE
Multiple Choice Item with an Incomplete Sentence Stem
Instructions: Circle the letter in front of the answer that correctly completes the sentence.
<p>Sight-reading a piece of music for the piano is an example of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. declarative knowledge. B. procedural knowledge. C. a complex skill. D. a motor skill.

from Beech (Vol. 2), 1998, p. 28

What are the advantages of multiple choice items?

- ◆ Multiple choice items can cover a wide range of content and can be used in most subject areas. You can adequately sample the content you have taught.
- ◆ You can structure more concise problems with these items and avoid the ambiguity and vagueness often present in short answer or essay items.
- ◆ You can quickly and objectively score these items, either by hand or electronically, using a scoring key.

What are the limitations of multiple choice items?

- ◆ Your students may be more likely to guess.
- ◆ You may have difficulty constructing good multiple choice items. (See “How do I construct a good multiple choice item?” below.)

How do I construct good multiple choice items?

When constructing the question or stem of a multiple choice item, it is important that you ask the right question and present it clearly. Consider the following when writing the stem:

- ◆ Be sure the item measures knowledge from the learning objective(s) you are assessing.
- ◆ Use a level of reading that is appropriate for the content of the test.
- ◆ Make sure the stem clearly presents the problem or incomplete thought.
- ◆ Write the stem in such a way that it helps the student anticipate the needed response.
- ◆ Include all the words that might be repeated in every option in the stem. For example, if every option begins with the word “to,” take that word out of the options and include it in the stem.

- ◆ Highlight key words in the stem to call the student's attention to the intended problem. For example: "What is the **final** step?"
- ◆ Avoid the word "not" in multiple choice stems.

When constructing the options, consider these ways to eliminate ambiguity and reduce the possibility of student guessing.

- ◆ Include only one correct answer in each list of options.
- ◆ Make sure the grammar in each option is consistent with the stem.
- ◆ Use parallel structure and content.
- ◆ Keep the length of all answers the same so you do not inadvertently provide a clue to the correct answer.
- ◆ Make every option a plausible response.
- ◆ Avoid use of "all of the above" or "none of the above" as options.
- ◆ Vary the location of the correct response; test writers have a tendency to put the correct answer as option C.
- ◆ Use capital letters to designate the options.
- ◆ Separate the options from the stem and begin each option on a new line.
- ◆ Keep the stem and options for the same question on the same page.

How do I score multiple choice items?

You can easily score multiple choice items by identifying the expected response for each answer and creating an answer key, which can be scored by hand or electronically.



Quality Check for Multiple Choice Items

Use the following checklist to review your multiple choice test items in order to assure they are of the highest quality.

CHECKLIST

Do the items measure the knowledge specified in the objectives?	Yes	No
Is the reading level for the items appropriate?	Yes	No
Does the stem present the problem clearly?	Yes	No
Do the options avoid repeated words?	Yes	No
Are all options plausible?	Yes	No
Are options using "all of the above" and "none of the above" excluded?	Yes	No

Matching

What is matching?

A matching test item consists of two parallel columns with words, numbers, or symbols in one column that must be matched to words, numbers, or symbols in the other column. The students must identify the pairs of items that are associated on the basis indicated in the directions for the test. Let's look at an example of a matching test item.

EXAMPLE		
Matching Item		
Instructions: On the line to the left of the list of coins, write the letter of the total value of the coins.		
___ 1.	18 quarters, 6 dimes, 44 nickels	A. 35¢
___ 2.	10 quarters, 4 dimes	B. 45¢
___ 3.	2 dimes, 3 nickels, 10 pennies	C. \$1.25
___ 4.	6 quarters, 5 dimes, 13 nickels	D. \$2.65
___ 5.	1 dime, 15 nickels, 40 pennies	E. \$2.90
		F. \$5.30
		G. \$7.30

adapted from Beech (Vol. 2), 1998, p. 26

What are the advantages of matching items?

- ◆ Matching items let you measure a large amount of related factual information in a short time.
- ◆ Matching items are easy to construct.
- ◆ Matching items are useful for assessing a series of homogeneous things that are related (for example: dates and events, authors and books, words and definitions, etc.).

What are the limitations of matching items?


- ◆ Matching only allows you to assess factual information.
- ◆ Matching may encourage students to memorize information.
- ◆ Matching does not assess students' higher level thinking skills.

How do I construct good matching items?

- ◆ Use only homogeneous material in a single matching exercise, so that the items are parallel in content. In the example, all of the items on the left are lists of coins and all of the items on the right are amounts of money.
- ◆ Use a reading level that is appropriate for the content of the test.
- ◆ Keep the list of items to be matched short, and place the list of responses on the right.
- ◆ Arrange the responses in a logical order. For example, place words in alphabetical order and numbers in sequence (see the example).
- ◆ Make sure the directions clearly describe the basis for matching.
- ◆ Place all of the items for one matching exercise on the same page.

How do I score matching items?

As with other selected response assessment items, the development of a key to correct answers will simplify the scoring process.

CHECKLIST	 Quality Check for Matching Items Use the following checklist to review your matching test items in order to assure they are of the highest possible quality.		
	Is the material in both lists homogeneous?	Yes	No
	Is the reading level appropriate?	Yes	No
	Are the possible responses brief and on the right-hand side?	Yes	No
	Are the responses in logical order, such as alphabetical or numerical?	Yes	No
	Do the directions describe the basis for matching?	Yes	No
	Are all of the items for one matching exercise on one page?	Yes	No

Constructed Response Items

Constructed response assessment items require students to produce answers rather than select them. In the past, selected response items were used on tests to determine if students had learned required content. These types of items are still appropriate, but tests like the FCAT also require students to actually solve problems and write answers in their own words. Because of this, teachers must prepare students for much more than has been required in the past. Using constructed response items prepares students to produce, rather than select, the answers. These test items include

- ◆ short answer or sentence completion
- ◆ essay
- ◆ performance assessment.

Short Answer and Sentence Completion

What are short answer and sentence completion?

Short answer and sentence completion items are test questions that can be answered with a single word, phrase, number, or symbol. The two types of items are basically the same, except for the way the problem is presented to students. If students are asked a direct question that can be answered with one word, a phrase, a short sentence, a number, or a symbol, the item is called short answer. If students have to complete a sentence or fill in a blank, the item is called sentence completion. By rewording the item, most sentence completion items can become short answer items and vice versa. For either type, you may include a set of possible responses (a word bank). But keep in mind that if you do this, it changes the assessment task from constructed response to selected response. If you choose to use the word bank format, include some incorrect, but plausible, answers.

Examples of both short answer and sentence completion items are given on the next page, showing how the same questions can be used for either type of item.



EXAMPLE	
Short Answer Item	
Instructions: Write the answer to each question on the line.	
A.	What is $\frac{1}{3}$ of 12 sandwiches? _____
B.	What is $\frac{1}{2}$ of 3 sandwiches? _____
C.	What is $\frac{4}{3}$ of 9 dollars? _____
D.	Three children were sharing a pizza. They cut the pizza into 12 equal slices. Maria ate 4 slices, Bob ate 2 slices, and Sharon ate 5 slices. Use fractions to answer the questions. Show how you got your answers. 1. What part of the pizza did Maria eat? _____ 2. What part of the pizza did Bob eat? _____ 3. What part of the pizza was left over? _____

from Beech (Vol. 4), 1998, p. 41

EXAMPLE	
Sentence Completion Item	
Instructions: Write the answer to each question in the blank.	
A.	$\frac{1}{3}$ of 12 sandwiches is _____ sandwiches.
B.	$\frac{1}{2}$ of 3 sandwiches is _____ sandwiches.
C.	$\frac{4}{3}$ of 9 dollars is _____ dollars.
D.	Three children were sharing a pizza. They cut the pizza into 12 equal slices. Maria ate 4 slices, Bob ate 2 slices, and Sharon ate 5 slices. Complete the sentences by writing in the blanks. 1. Maria ate _____ of the pizza. 2. Bob ate _____ of the pizza. 3. There was _____ of the pizza left over.

from Beech (Vol. 4), 1998, p. 41

What are the advantages of short answer and sentence completion items?

- ◆ You can easily sample a large amount of content with either of these test items.
- ◆ They are relatively easy to construct.
- ◆ Students have to supply the answers themselves, making the effect of guessing smaller than in selected response formats.

What are the limitations of short answer and sentence completion items?

- ◆ The scoring of short answer and sentence completion items can be subjective and prone to error.
- ◆ They do not assess higher order thinking skills as well as other constructed response items.

How do I construct good short answer or sentence completion items?

For both short answer and sentence completion items

- ◆ Be sure the item measures the knowledge specified in the learning objective.
- ◆ Make sure the level of reading is appropriate for the content of the test.
- ◆ Don't use items directly from the textbook. Sentences taken out of context may be vague or ambiguous and could encourage students to try to memorize the textbook.

For short answer items

- ◆ Keep the responses to short answer questions limited to a short sentence or phrase.


For sentence completion items

- ◆ Construct sentence completion or fill-in-the-blank items so that only a single response (word, phrase, or short sentence) provides a correct answer.

- ◆ When creating sentence completion items, place the blanks at or near the end of the sentence and make the blanks a uniform size so that you do not provide artificial clues as to the length of the answer.
- ◆ Consider changing sentence completion items to questions and placing all the blanks in a column to the right of the questions.

How do I score short answer and sentence completion items?

Scoring short answer and sentence completion items is easier if you identify the response you expect for each answer and make an answer key. The answer key may need to be modified to accommodate alternative correct responses. Alternative responses could occur if students do not use the exact word expected but one that is similar to the expected answer, which can be counted as correct.

CHECKLIST		Quality Check for Short Answer or Sentence Completion	
	Use the following checklist to review your short answer or sentence completion test items in order to assure they are of the highest quality.		
	Does each item measure the knowledge specified in the learning objective?	Yes	No
	Is the reading level for the test appropriate?	Yes	No
	Have questions been reworded so that they are not verbatim from the textbook?	Yes	No
	Are expected answers for short answer brief and specific?	Yes	No
	Will a single response (word, phrase, or short sentence) fully answer the question?	Yes	No
	When sentence completion items are used, does the blank appear at or near the end of the sentence?	Yes	No
If a word bank is included, is the purpose of the assessment recognition rather than recall? If recall is required, eliminate the word bank.	Yes	No	

Essay

What is essay?

An essay item is an open-ended question or prompt that can assess the student's ability to formulate problems; to organize, integrate, and evaluate ideas and information; or to apply knowledge and skills in a written response. Two examples of essay items are shown below. Because the scoring rubric is an essential part of the essay item, sample scoring rubrics are included in the examples.

EXAMPLE
Essay Item #1
<p>Instructions: Read the following paragraph and write answers to the two questions that follow it.</p>
<p>Raising Money <i>(adapted from K-5 Mathematics Program Evaluation, 1992)</i> Your parents have offered to give you 100 feet of fencing so that you can use part of your family's property to grow corn, a fast-growing crop in your area, in order to raise money for a new bike. One area you may use is shaped like a square, another is long and narrow, the third is irregular with each side a different length. Each corn plant must be 1 foot from each neighboring plant and from the fence.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and draw three different garden plans showing the shape of the fence around each area of land and the position of the plants. 2. Write a note to your parents explaining why one of the plans is better than the others. Your note should explain the mathematical reasons for your choices.
<p>Scoring Plan for Raising Money</p> <p>Review each response. Use the following analytic scoring rubric to indicate if the student met all task requirements (i.e., drew three plans and wrote an explanation in the form of a note) and provided evidence of the geometric ideas (i.e., understood the relative size of the areas provided by the specified criteria and was able to determine and explain which would provide the most available planting space).</p>
<p>Scoring Rubric</p> <p>Garden plans</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Has three different garden plans for the areas of land</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plans show evidence of positioning plants and a fence</p> <p>Note to parents</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Explanation provides reasonable justification</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Explanation uses appropriate geometric vocabulary</p> <p>A numerical value or rating could be assigned to each item depending on the goals of instruction.</p>

from Beech (Vol. 2), 1998, pp. 19-20

EXAMPLE	
Essay Item #2	
<p>Instructions: Tell the students you will be reading aloud a story about an interesting character to whom they will be writing a letter. As students listen, they will note three or more traits of the main character that make him or her attractive or unattractive as a friend. After the story is finished, tell the students to write a well-organized letter to the character, telling him or her why, based on at least three traits, the character would or would not make a good friend.</p>	
<p>Scoring Plan The following holistic scoring rubric may be used to evaluate the content of the letters and assign grades. Information not in bold describes in general terms what the student should do. Information in bold provides specific criteria for assigning points. The form of the letter is not scored.</p>	
4 points	The response indicates the student has a thorough understanding of the main character of the story and can explain in detail whether or not the character would make a good personal friend. All three traits are described accurately and are clearly text-based. The reasons that those traits make the character attractive or unattractive as a friend are reasonable and fully elaborated.
3 points	The response indicates the student has an understanding of the main character of the story and can explain whether or not the character would make a good personal friend. Two of the traits are described accurately and are clearly text-based. The reasons that those traits make the character attractive or unattractive as a friend are reasonable but may not be fully elaborated.
2 points	The response indicates the student has a partial understanding of the main character of the story and can only partially explain whether or not the character would make a good personal friend. One of the traits is described accurately and is clearly text-based. The reasons that those traits make the character attractive or unattractive as a friend may be reasonable, but the support and/or detail is general or simplistic. Some of the support and/or examples may be incomplete or omitted.
1 point	The response indicates the student has a very limited understanding of the main character of the story and does not explain whether or not the character would make a good personal friend. The response is incomplete, may exhibit flaws, and may not address all requirements of the task.
0 points	The response is inaccurate, confused, and/or irrelevant, or the student failed to respond to the task.

EXAMPLE (continued)					
Essay Item #2					
Chart for Scoring Essay Item #2					
Points	4	3	2	1	0
Comprehension	Thorough	Satisfactory	Partial	Limited	Confused
Traits	at least 3 accurate text-based	At least 2 accurate text-based	At least 1 accurate text-based	incomplete	inaccurate
Reasons	Reasonable and elaborated	Reasonable but not elaborated	Simplistic	Illogical	Irrelevant

One way to assign a grade is to give a rating for each element (comprehension, traits, and reasons) and total the points. The total score could be matched to a letter grade as follows:

12 - 11	=	A
10 - 8	=	B
7 - 5	=	C
4 - 3	=	D
2 - 0	=	F

from Beech (Vol. 2), 1998, pp. 32-33

What are the advantages of essay items?

- ◆ With an essay, you can assess higher level thinking and complex skills that are difficult to measure in objective tests.
- ◆ Your students will have an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to integrate and apply thinking and problem-solving skills.
- ◆ An essay lets you directly evaluate your students' writing skills.

What are the limitations of essay items?

- ◆ Writing essay questions requires a great deal of skill. If not constructed properly, the question or task may be ambiguous, and it may be difficult for students to know how to respond.
- ◆ Scoring the answers requires careful analysis and can be subjective.
- ◆ Essays may limit sampling of all of the content.

How do I construct good essay items?

- ◆ Make sure the reading level and expected writing level are appropriate.
- ◆ Make sure the essay question you write poses a concise task for students.
- ◆ Present a question that can be answered in a brief period of time (ten minutes, for example) or combine several questions for an extended response. Be sure to score each question separately.
- ◆ Include enough information in the question or provide a scoring rubric so that your students will understand how the response will be scored.
- ◆ Avoid vague questions or tasks, unless the purpose of the assessment is to determine how students approach such tasks.

How do I score essay items?


It is important that you have a scoring plan or rubric when you use essay items. You should develop this at the same time that you write the question. There are two types of scoring plans or rubrics you can use: analytic or holistic.

Analytic scoring plans let you focus on one characteristic of a response at a time. Checklists are often used for this type of rubric. When constructing an analytic scoring plan, you must

- ◆ identify the specific qualities you want to evaluate
- ◆ decide the number of points or type of rating scale you want to use
- ◆ identify a scheme for weighing each variable.

When you need to measure the overall quality or impact of a response, holistic scoring is preferred. In holistic scoring, you will need to

- ◆ describe the general characteristics of a good response
- ◆ describe expected levels of response
- ◆ use model papers to which actual student responses can be compared.

Quality Check for Essay Use the following checklist to review your essay items in order to assure they are of the highest possible quality.			 CHECKLIST
Is the level of reading and writing appropriate for the task?	Yes	No	
Does the item present a clear, concise task or question to be answered?	Yes	No	
Can the question be answered in the time allotted?	Yes	No	
Will the scoring procedure result in similar scores given to similar types of responses?	Yes	No	
Are examples available for each scoring point, where appropriate?	Yes	No	

Performance Assessment

What is performance assessment?

A performance assessment requires students to produce a product or demonstrate a process, solve a problem involving several steps, or carry out an activity that demonstrates proficiency with a complex skill. An essay test is one type of performance assessment that results in a written response. Performance assessment can also measure skills that written assessment cannot, such as motor skills, oral speech, science lab procedures, and gymnastics.

Many teachers feel that performance assessments should measure the student's performance in authentic situations, not just in the classroom. To be authentic, the task should correspond to how it is actually done outside of the school environment. The tasks should be worthwhile, significant, and meaningful, and should help your students understand what it means to do their work well. Let's look at an example of a performance assessment item.

EXAMPLE
<p>Performance Assessment Item Chess Club T-shirt</p>
<p>Instructions: The Chess Club at your school wants to sell T-shirts to earn money to support their participation in the state tournament. A committee was appointed to develop a plan for the fund-raiser. When they approached the local T-shirt vendors about their plan, they found that the prices and delivery dates varied widely from vendor to vendor. The teacher suggested they contact the local consumer protection organization to get advice about how to proceed.</p> <p>The students in the Chess Club wanted to know more about the consumer protection organization, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What is the purpose of the organization? •What authority does the organization have? •How does the organization work with businesses and consumers? •How can the organization help with the T-shirt problem? •How should the students present their problem? <p>You have been asked to find answers to these questions and share them with the club members. You will also show the students how to present their problem to representatives of the organization in a way that will be taken seriously. Here are suggestions about how you might proceed.</p>

continued on next page

EXAMPLE (continued)

1. *Make a plan.* Determine what you need to know and where you might be able to find the information. Don't limit your search to the library. You can conduct interviews, attend meetings, and ask knowledgeable people.
2. *Make sure you have a thorough understanding of the role and function of the consumer protection organization that will be used by the club members.* Find out how it works with the local government and the businesses it serves. Find out how consumers can use the services of the organization. How will you tell the club members about this?
3. *Think through how the organization can help with the T-shirt problem.* What information will be needed? Determine the best way to explain the problem to the representatives.
4. *Prepare to present your findings to the class.* You will make an oral presentation to the Chess Club about the role and function of the consumer protection organization.

The Scoring Plan

The purpose of this performance assessment is to determine how well the student understands the role of a consumer protection organization in solving the T-shirt problem and how the student presents the findings to the Chess Club members.

Scoring Rubric

- Level 4** The presentation provides a logical and realistic solution to the T-shirt problem that reflects a thorough understanding of the role of a consumer protection organization in relation to the laws of the community, the businesses it serves, and the consumers who request its services. Suggestions regarding how to present the problem to the representatives of the organization demonstrate knowledge of the needs of the audience (the representatives), insight into the situational context, and clear understanding of the purpose of the presentation.
- Level 3** The presentation provides a reasonable solution to the T-shirt problem that reflects a general understanding of the role of a consumer protection organization in relation to the laws of the community, the businesses it serves, and the consumers who request its services. Suggestions regarding how to present the problem to the representatives of the organization demonstrate limited knowledge of the needs of the audience (the representatives), awareness of the situational context, and/or understanding of purpose of the presentation.
- Level 2** The presentation provides a partial solution to the T-shirt problem that reflects a general understanding of the role of a consumer protection organization in relation to the laws of the community, the businesses it serves, and the consumers who request its services. Suggestions regarding how to present the problem to the representatives of the organization demonstrate very limited knowledge of the needs of the audience (the representatives), the situational context, and/or purpose of the presentation.
- Level 1** The presentation provides a superficial and sometimes incorrect understanding of the T-shirt problem and incomplete understanding of the role of a consumer protection organization. Suggestions regarding how to present the problem to the representatives of the organization do not address the needs of the audience (the representatives), the situational context, and/or the purpose of the presentation.
- Level 0** The presentation does not address the T-shirt problem or the role of a consumer protection organization.

from Beech (Vol. 2), 1998, pp. 42-44

What are the advantages of performance assessment?

- ◆ Performance assessment can clearly communicate your instructional goals to your students.
- ◆ Performance assessment encourages the development of complex understanding and skills.
- ◆ Performance assessment can be used to measure both process and product. This is particularly helpful when you are conducting the assessment for diagnostic purposes, since it allows you to collect and use detailed information about your students' knowledge and skills.
- ◆ Performance assessment allows students to show what they can do in a real or authentic situation.
- ◆ Performance assessment can measure skills that written assessment cannot, such as motor skills, oral speech, science lab procedures, and gymnastics.

What are the limitations of performance assessment?

- ◆ Performance assessments can be very time-consuming to develop, administer, and score. This type of assessment is frequently administered individually or in very small groups. Scoring usually must occur at the same time as the performance.
- ◆ As with essays, scoring of performance assessment can be subjective.
- ◆ Inconsistencies in a student's performance on a performance assessment may be due to the particular situation and unrelated to the concept or skill being assessed.

How do I construct good performance assessments?

- ◆ Limit the use of a performance assessment to the measurement of complex cognitive skills or student performances that cannot be directly measured with other types of assessment.
- ◆ Identify the skills you want to measure. State the expected behaviors or results of the behaviors in advance and use assessment procedures to judge the appropriateness of the behaviors.
- ◆ Establish clear guidelines for how students should perform the task. Limit the behaviors being assessed and be sure that irrelevant factors are not included in the measurement.
- ◆ If you are using a group process, determine the extent to which the functioning of the group will be included in the evaluation.
- ◆ Determine how students will be expected to perform the tasks. At the same time determine how much help you, other staff, or other students can provide.
- ◆ Select authentic tasks if appropriate. The actual performance outcome should draw on previous learning and, where appropriate, be based on real-world applications of the knowledge or skills. The use of real or simulated conditions will depend on the requirements of the learning objectives and practical considerations.
- ◆ Make sure your students possess the prerequisite knowledge and skills needed to perform the task.
- ◆ Tell students what you expect from them. Students should know in advance what they are expected to do and the criteria that will be used to evaluate their performance.
- ◆ Make sure instructions for the students are concise and complete. Be sure all required equipment, supplies, and resources are readily available and are set up before the assessment begins.

How do I score performance assessments?

It is critical that you develop scoring plans for performance assessment. Many of the problems associated with performance assessment can be reduced when you use a carefully developed procedure for scoring. Scoring plans for performance assessment should address these questions.

1. What is to be measured?

- ◆ Identify the actual behaviors or characteristics of products for each performance assessment.
- ◆ Divide the tasks into subtasks.
- ◆ Make sure the attributes and behaviors to be measured are directly observable.
- ◆ Make sure that all important knowledge and skills are accounted for.
- ◆ Prioritize the attributes and behaviors so that the most important can be assessed.
- ◆ Consider whether measurement should take place at the conclusion of the task or at points during the task.

2. What criteria will be used to interpret the observations?

- ◆ Identify and describe the characteristics of an acceptable performance or product.
- ◆ Describe the range of acceptable responses.
- ◆ Provide a list of acceptable formats for presenting a product.
- ◆ Clearly describe the types of behaviors or level of accomplishment students must demonstrate.
- ◆ Base all criteria on the goals of the instructional program.

3. How will the observations be recorded?

- ◆ Describe the expected attributes as concisely as possible, using examples to clarify ambiguous terms.
- ◆ Develop a coding system, checklist, or chart for recording behaviors and attributes.

Ways of Recording Performance Assessment Observation	
Holistic Rubrics	Holistic rubrics are commonly used for complex descriptions of variables considered in scoring. The nature of the performance is described for each level identified in the rubric.
Checklists	Checklists include more detailed listings of key attributes or characteristics and are used for analytic scoring.
Rating Scales	<p>Rating scales can be used with both holistic rubrics and checklists. Ratings are generally based on an odd number of levels (such as three or five). If using numbers for each point on the scale, begin with zero to represent “no response,” “a response that cannot be interpreted,” or “a completely incorrect response.” Also, be certain that each item being rated measures only one variable being observed.</p> <p>When you develop rubrics for your classroom, consider modeling them on rubrics used in the FCAT in order to promote familiarity with these statewide assessments.</p>



from Beech (Vol. 2), 1998, p. 39



Quality Check for Performance Assessment

Use the following checklist to review your performance assessment in order to assure it is of the highest quality.

CHECKLIST

Can the objective be measured by a simpler assessment? (If yes, design the appropriate assessment item.)	Yes	No
Are the skills you want to measure clearly identified?	Yes	No
Are the directions and guidelines for student performance clear and understandable?	Yes	No
Have you specified how group work will be evaluated, if necessary?	Yes	No
Is the extent of outside help students can use specified?	Yes	No
Is the task authentic, if appropriate?	Yes	No
Do students possess the necessary prerequisite knowledge and skills needed to perform the task(s) required in the assessment?	Yes	No
Do students understand the performance criteria?	Yes	No
Are needed equipment, supplies, and resources available to students?	Yes	No
Are clear, observable performance criteria specified?	Yes	No
Are the scores reported in a way that is consistent with the purpose of the assessment?	Yes	No

Summary

This chapter has presented information on the advantages, limitations, construction, and scoring of various types of selected response and constructed response assessment items. Information was also provided on when it is appropriate to use the items, depending on the level of learning desired and the range of content to be assessed. In the next chapter we will look at how to make accommodations to assessments for students with disabilities.

Chapter 3

Assessment Accommodations




You may be wondering how to assess your students with disabilities in ways that accurately reflect what they are learning. There are numerous ways you can accommodate their needs without making yourself feel overworked and frazzled. Many students with disabilities need only small changes to the way they are instructed and tested to be successful in a regular classroom. In this chapter you will explore what you can do to meet specific individual needs when conducting classroom assessments. You will find ideas for how to help students in five areas: presentation, response, schedule, setting, and assistive technology. But before we get to the specifics, let's look at accommodations in general.

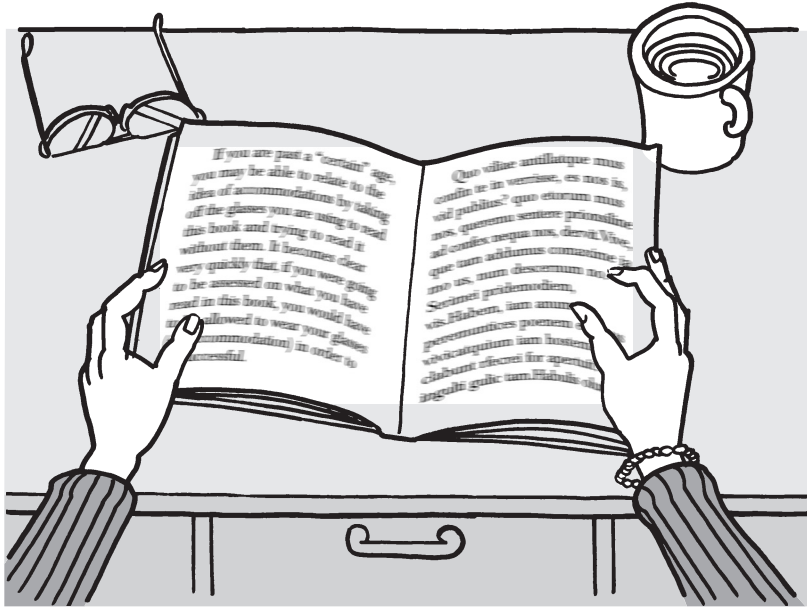
What Are Accommodations?

Accommodations, modifications, adaptations—there are so many terms flying around it’s hard to keep them straight. Often people use them interchangeably, which only makes the situation more confusing. In Florida, the words “accommodation” and “modification” have very specific and distinct meanings. Accommodations are changes that are made to the way students are instructed and how they are tested. In other words, accommodations change how a student receives instruction or responds to assessment, but he or she is still expected to learn the same objectives as other students.

Modifications, on the other hand, are changes that are made to the actual content the students are expected to learn. A modification actually changes what students will learn. Students may be expected to learn only a portion of the content for a particular grade level or course. Because some students with disabilities are not covering the same content as other students, there may be implications for graduation and the type of diploma they will receive. The information box summarizes the differences between accommodations and modifications.

	Accommodations and Modifications	
INFORMATION	Accommodations	Modifications
	Change <i>how</i> students are taught and assessed	Change <i>what</i> students are taught and assessed on
	Students learn the same objectives as nondisabled peers	Students learn different objectives from nondisabled peers
	Students work toward a standard diploma	Students work toward a special diploma

Expectations for student achievement do not have to change when accommodations are made. You are simply allowing the student to show what he or she knows using accommodations to work around any limitations that result from his or her disability.



If you are past a “certain” age, you may be able to relate to the idea of accommodations by taking off the glasses you are using to read this book and trying to read it without them. It becomes clear very quickly that you would have to be allowed to wear your glasses (an accommodation) in order to be successful.

Who Is Eligible to Receive Accommodations?

Students who have been properly evaluated and staffed into programs for students with disabilities are eligible for accommodations. The individual educational plan (IEP) team looks at the student’s present level of performance and educational needs and decides what kinds of accommodations must be used for that student. Usually the IEP team recommends that the student be given the same types of accommodations for both instruction and assessment. For example, if the student needs extended time in the regular classroom to complete assignments and tests, then it is appropriate to use the same type of accommodation for the state or district testing program.

Accommodations must also be provided to students who have physical or mental disabilities but who do not meet eligibility criteria for exceptional student education (ESE) programs. These students are eligible for accommodations under the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and will have 504 accommodation plans that address their needs. Students who are eligible for limited English proficiency programs may also need accommodations.

As you make decisions about using accommodations, keep the following guiding principles in mind:

- ◆ Accommodations must be necessary for the student to be able to learn and ultimately demonstrate mastery of the knowledge or skill.
- ◆ Accommodations must not provide the student with an unfair advantage or interfere with the validity of tests. Any changes to standardized test procedure must be explicitly allowed in the test manual.
- ◆ Accommodations in state- and district-wide tests must be the same, or nearly the same, as adaptations used by the student in completing classroom instruction and assessment activities.

Types of Accommodations

There are five categories of accommodations that can be used with classroom assessment. With some exceptions, these same accommodations can be used by students when taking the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and other types of standardized tests. Since our focus is primarily on classroom assessment, the ideas presented in each of the five categories will deal mainly with classroom testing accommodations. Exceptions for the FCAT will be noted. The five categories are presentation, response, schedule, setting, and assistive technology. Let's look at each of them.

Presentation

When you are deciding whether or not a student needs accommodations in presentation—the way information is presented—ask yourself the question, “*Can the student learn from the same kinds of instruction and materials as his or her classmates?*” If you decide he or she cannot, then think about how the student could successfully acquire the information and skills to be learned. In other words, what could you do to change the way information is presented to the student? Here are some ideas to consider:

EXAMPLE	
Student Difficulty	Presentation Accommodation
Visual Impairment	Provide large print or enlarged copies of the test
	Provide a Braille version of the test
	Let the student use magnification equipment
	Let the student use a pointer, template, blank card, or positioning tools to maintain or enhance visual attention to test materials
	Let the student use blank colored transparencies or overlays to enhance visual perception
Hearing Impairment	Let the student use amplification equipment
	Provide a sign language interpreter to interpret oral directions
Difficulty Following Directions	Use symbols on the test or answer form that help the student follow directions
	Reread or explain the directions during the test
	Have the student paraphrase the direction
	Underline or highlight important words in the directions
Low Reading Ability	Read the test items aloud to the student, unless the assessment is a test of reading skills
	Let the student read the test items aloud to him or herself during the assessment
Easily Distracted	Provide white noise (sound machine) and headphones to reduce auditory distractions
	Give verbal encouragement (keep working, answer every question) without providing clues to correct or incorrect answers

from Beech, 2003

All of the examples provided above are allowed on the FCAT if the student has been using the accommodations for daily instruction and classroom assessments. There are, however, some things that you can use with your classroom assessments that are not allowed on the FCAT. These include

- ◆ grouping questions so that similar kinds of items are together
- ◆ blocking matching questions into small groups of four or five items

- ◆ providing a list of words (word bank) to use for short answer or sentence completion items
- ◆ eliminating one of the choices in multiple choice items.

Response

The question you must ask as you make decisions about how a student will respond is, “*Can the student participate in the lessons and be assessed in the same ways as his or her classmates?*” Again, if the answer to this question is “No,” consider ways that you can arrange things so that the student can successfully participate and be assessed. Think about using accommodations like the ones in the example.

EXAMPLE	
Student Difficulty	Response Accommodations
General Writing	Increase space allowed for test answers
	Let the student use a typewriter or word processor (without spell or grammar check) to write answers to the test items
	Let the student write on the test itself instead of writing on an answer sheet
	Let the student use special paper with raised, shaded, or color-coded lines or a writing guide
	Let the student respond orally, dictate to a test proctor or aide, or tape record answers
	Let the student use speech-to-text technology to record responses
	Let the student use alternative keyboards, pointing devices, and switches to activate electronic devices
	Let the student use special communication devices to generate oral or written responses
	Monitor the student’s answer sheet to determine if the student is recording the responses in the correct place
Mathematics-Related Writing	Let the student use gridded paper to organize computation

from Beech, 2003

Some changes in response mode are allowed for classroom assessment but not on the FCAT. You may use the following response modes in your classroom, but the students cannot use them when taking the FCAT.

- ◆ Provide pre-designed webs, diagrams, or charts and outlines for students to use as they plan and respond to open-ended or essay questions.
- ◆ Let the student provide alternate demonstrations of knowledge or skills using objects and oral explanations, role playing, or interviewing.
- ◆ Allow the use of references such as a regular or spelling dictionary.
- ◆ Let the student use manipulatives or a calculator to recheck or complete computations. Keep in mind that students may only use a calculator for computation in FCAT mathematics in grades 7-10. They may not use a calculator on the FCAT in grades 3-6.

Schedule

“Can the student work as fast as the rest of the class? Does the student need the same amount of feedback and practice?” If the answer to either of these questions is “No,” you need to consider ways to adjust the schedule and practice opportunities for this student. Some suggestions are shown below.

- ◆ Let the student have additional time to complete the test.
- ◆ Break the test into small sections, and let the student take it over several days, if needed.
- ◆ Let the student take the test at a specific time of day that is best for him or her. Think of the medications the child may be taking that could affect alertness.
- ◆ Let the student take breaks during the test period.

Setting

Some students can handle both independent and group work without difficulty. If you have a student who is having problems in either of these areas, is easily distracted, or is uncomfortable in test situations, adjustments need to be made to the setting in which the student is assessed. Some possible adjustments are shown below.

- ◆ Administer the test individually or in small groups, according to which setting best meets the student's needs.
- ◆ Let the student use adaptive or special furniture to take the test.
- ◆ Let the student take the test in an environment with reduced stimuli, such as a study carrel or another classroom where there are no distractions.
- ◆ Allow the student appropriate opportunities for movement. Consider assigning the student two desks and allowing him or her to move back and forth between them as needed.

Assistive Technology

There are many assistive technology devices available that students can use to enhance their learning and assist in test-taking. Depending on the student's disability, you might consider using some of the following:

- ◆ adaptive calculators as authorized in the FCAT manual
- ◆ visual magnification and auditory amplification devices
- ◆ technology such as word processing software, digital voice, or a tape recorder for writing assessments or extended response items
- ◆ assistive devices the student uses for communication.

Evaluating the Effects of Accommodations

As you can see, many of these accommodations require little time or effort on your part, yet can make a big difference for your students. When deciding if an accommodation is appropriate, it is important to consider its effect on both the student and yourself. Often accommodations can be embedded in an instructional activity or assessment procedure with little difficulty. The rubric on the next page may be helpful to you in deciding if an accommodation has made a difference for the student without being an undue burden on you.

Summary

This chapter has presented information about making accommodations for students when conducting classroom assessment. Accommodations change the way students are instructed and tested, without changing the actual content the students are expected to learn. Accommodations may be made for students who have been properly evaluated and staffed into programs for students with disabilities and for students eligible under the provisions of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Accommodations may be made in the categories of presentation, response, schedule, setting, and assistive technology.

ACCOMMODATIONS RUBRIC

A quality accommodation is one that facilitates achievement of desired student outcomes while facilitating maximum participation in all learning activities. It does not stigmatize or isolate the student from other students in the room.

Directions: Check the box in each row that best describes the use of the accommodation.

If most boxes checked are in columns 0 and 1, the accommodation is ineffective.

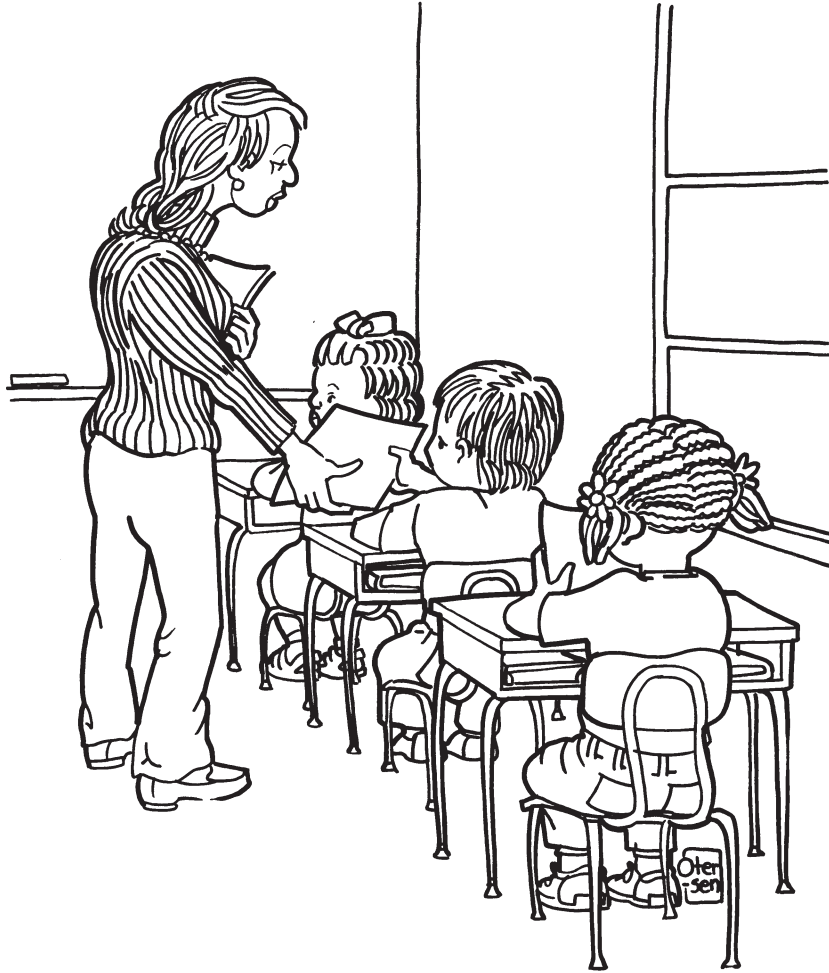
If most boxes checked are in column 2, you may need to rethink the accommodation or use it only in selected situations.

If most boxes checked are in columns 3 and 4, the accommodation is effective.

	0	1	2	3	4
Did the student use it?					
Did its use result in the achievement of desired outcomes?					
Could it be embedded into instructional activities?					
Could it be embedded into the assessment procedures?	<input type="checkbox"/> Student was given entirely different assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Very difficult to embed within most assessment procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat difficult to embed into some of the assessment procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Could be embedded into most assessment procedures without effort	

Chapter 4

Planning for Classroom Assessment



The best time to think about the way you will assess student progress is while you are developing your lesson plans. This chapter will help you learn how to choose the appropriate type of assessment and ensure that you have the information you need to effectively monitor student progress and evaluate your lesson plan.

The use of different types of assessments is necessary to obtain information on how your students are performing at the two levels of learning: knowledge and analysis. You may wish to find out if students are able to use skills at the knowledge level, or you may want to assess their learning of skills that require analysis, synthesis, or evaluation of information. Your knowledge of which kind of test item will measure the level of learning you expect of your students will drive your decision-making for classroom assessment procedures. Let's look at the steps you'll use for determining which type to use.

Selecting Assessments

There are three basic steps that you should follow to select the type of test item that best matches the level of learning you expect from instruction. This section describes each step of the selection procedure and provides a discussion of things to consider, an example, and a checklist to help you complete each step.

Step One—Identify Instructional Goals

Planning for instruction begins with identifying the instructional goals and the standards and benchmarks or grade level expectations from the Sunshine State Standards that will be taught and assessed in the lesson. The purpose of this step is to make sure that you have aligned your lesson with the desired goals and standards from the Sunshine State Standards.


Things to consider

- ◆ Every lesson should have identifiable goals, standards, and skills that are addressed in Florida's Sunshine State Standards. In many schools teachers are required to document when they have taught the standards.
- ◆ When you select your instructional goals, make sure that your students have the knowledge and skills they need to move on to the new lesson.
- ◆ Identify the level of learning you expect for each skill being taught. The levels may be different for some students.

Example

Imagine you are teaching a mathematics lesson for fourth graders. You decide to use M&Ms to help students learn about several different types of graphs. Students will learn how to construct a bar graph, a line graph, and a pictograph.

- ◆ The first step is to identify the standards and benchmarks or grade level expectations to be taught in this lesson. This lesson addresses a fourth grade level expectation for data and statistics, MA.E.3.2.1.4.2: *The student creates an appropriate graph to display data (for example, pictographs, bar graphs, and circle graphs).*
- ◆ To be successful in this lesson, students will need prerequisite skills of sorting, graphing, and number concepts.
- ◆ You will be teaching and assessing the application of their knowledge of graphs.

<p>Step One: Identify the instructional goals and the standards and benchmarks from the Sunshine State Standards to be taught and assessed in the lesson.</p>			
Does the lesson require the learning of skills that are included in the Sunshine State Standards?	Yes	No	
Do the students have sufficient prerequisite skills to learn the new knowledge and skills of this lesson?	Yes	No	
Have you identified the level of learning of the instructional goals for the lesson?	Yes	No	

Step Two—Design the Lesson

When you design a lesson, make sure you include the essential components. Every lesson needs an introduction, activities to present new information or skills, opportunities for practice, and a closing or summary. Assessment is also an essential component of every lesson (Houston & Beech, 2002). The purpose of this step is to make certain that you have a complete lesson plan that lays out the instruction and assessment strategies in a workable format.

Things to consider

- ◆ Plan the instruction, practice, and assessment activities together to create a cohesive educational experience. Remember that everything you include in the lesson does not have to be assessed. For example, you may teach all of the multiplication facts, but you can assess a sample of the facts to find out if students have learned them. Assessment of a range of knowledge and application skills can provide the information you need to determine if students are making progress.
- ◆ Write a description of each activity that will take place and the ongoing assessment strategy(s) that will be used. For example, if students are learning about multiplication facts, activities can include worksheets, problem solving using manipulatives, group work for drill and practice, and a class project that requires using multiplication facts.
- ◆ Match the desired learning level to the type of assessment. For example, if you decide that you want students to understand the concept of multiplication, you could have them describe how groups of objects can be added together (repeated addition). The final assessment could be a constructed-response assessment such as short answer or performance in which students show how they used repeated addition to solve multiplication problems. Other assessment types could be used throughout the lesson to determine if students have prerequisite knowledge such as a basic knowledge of addition facts.
- ◆ Think about each student and his or her special learning needs so that accommodations can be implemented as part of the lesson. Check IEPs or 504 plans for needed accommodations. For example, if the students will be using a microscope in science, it

will be important to recognize that some students with a visual or physical impairment might need to work with a peer. In this case, it would be a good idea to have all students work in small groups.

- ◆ Use the introduction of the lesson to share your plan with the students so they will know what is expected of them. Students will be more comfortable knowing what the expectations are and what assistance they can access during the lesson.
- ◆ Plan to assist students who have difficulty with the lesson. This might include a buddy system with other students, special instruction time with you before or after school, or homework that addresses and reinforces the skills.

Example

Think about the math lesson on graphs using M&Ms. To design this lesson you need to identify the activities for each component.

Introduction

Introducing the content includes telling the students what the lesson will be about, why it is important, and how it relates to what they have already learned. For the M&M lesson, you will tell students they will be learning how to make three different kinds of graphs—a bar graph, a line graph, and a pictograph. You will review what they already know about graphs.

Present the Content

The content of the lesson must include descriptions of the three different types of graphs and instruction in and a demonstration of how to construct each type.

Provide Practice

Practice may include instructions on how to use the M&Ms in their packet to determine how many of each color M&M they have and construct each type of graph. You could have students work alone, in pairs, or in small groups.

Assess Students

You may use observations to assess the practice activities and develop a written test for the final assessment that includes questions requiring students to construct each type of graph using a different set of data.

Summary

Remember to summarize the content included in the lesson (bar graphs, line graphs, and pictographs) so students can reflect on what they have learned.

Accommodations

You may need to provide accommodations for this lesson, such as allowing students to use manipulatives instead of M&Ms, to tell their answers to an aide, or to use a computer rather than paper and pencil to construct the graphs.



CHECKLIST

Step Two: Identify the instructional and assessment strategies and the content of both the lesson and the assessments.

Does the lesson include an introduction?	Yes	No
Have you adequately presented the content?	Yes	No
Did you include an opportunity for students to practice?	Yes	No
Have you matched the assessment with the desired learning level?	Yes	No
Did you include a summary?	Yes	No
Have you determined what accommodations students will need and incorporated them into the lesson?	Yes	No

Step Three—Determine Evidence of Learning

In this step, you will determine what you will accept as evidence that the objectives have been met and the skills have been learned. The purpose of this step is to focus on the results.

Things to consider

- ◆ Describe what you want students to be able to do when they have learned each skill in the lesson. This may vary for individual students depending on their learning capabilities.

- ◆ If you are assigning a grade based on the assessment results, determine ahead of time what you will consider a passing score or passing evidence. Let students know the passing score or passing evidence before you start the lesson.
- ◆ Make sure you will be able to determine whether or not students understand the content of the lesson. Usually this will be apparent from the assessment information you have collected, but sometimes students can guess or get a correct answer and still not understand the skill or concept. You'll need to be alert to student misunderstandings. Having students show how they calculated answers on a math assessment is an example of information that could alert you to misunderstandings.

Example

In the M&M lesson on graphs, the following examples show how each consideration was addressed:


- ◆ The teacher specified what students will learn in a rubric shown below.

RUBRIC FOR M&M LESSON ON GRAPHS	
Points Earned	Description of Student Response
4	Students construct each of the three graphs—bar graph, circle graph, and pictograph—with no errors in the format described below.
3	Students construct the three graphs with minor errors in the format.
2	Students construct the three graphs with major errors in the format.
1	Students construct incomplete graphs.
The format includes clear distinctions between categories, legible printing and labeling, use of colors or textures to provide distinctions, and proper titling of each graph.	

Assessment for the Diverse Classroom

- ◆ A passing score of 3 on the rubric will be considered acceptable. Teacher observation of the activities and grading of the summative assessment will provide clear information to the teacher about student understanding of this lesson.
- ◆ The teacher will observe student performance during the practice activities and during evaluation. The formative and summative assessments will be used to determine the grade for this lesson. The summative assessment will be scored based on the rubric.

Your lesson plan is now set and you can feel confident that your instruction has a good chance of being effective. Even if you have to make changes along the way, you will be ready, knowing that your instructional goal and the anticipated results have been identified and are worthwhile.

CHECKLIST	 Step Three: Determine what you will accept as evidence that the skills have been learned.		
	Have you determined what students will know or be able to do after they have completed the lesson?	Yes	No
	Have you identified the evidence that will be collected?	Yes	No
	Have you determined how you will know if students really understand?	Yes	No
	Have you set a passing score or description of evidence?	Yes	No

Summary

Using a procedure for planning that includes identifying instructional goals, designing the lesson, and determining evidence of learning will assure that your classroom assessments provide the information needed to effectively monitor student progress. By following the steps, you can be sure that you will have a great lesson plan to use and that you have addressed appropriate instruction and assessment strategies.

Chapter 5

Using Classroom Assessment Data



The teaching and learning process consists of three interrelated components—curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Now that you have aligned these three components in your planning, taught the lesson, and collected assessment data, it is time to think about how to use the assessment results.

The information you have collected through classroom assessment becomes more valuable when you use it to improve your students' learning and your teaching. This chapter will help you turn the scores and anecdotal data into information that you can use and share with others.

We have all but ignored day-to-day classroom assessments in our journey to school improvement.

Stiggins, 1999

One use of classroom assessment data is to assist individual students. The data can be used to monitor progress, to diagnose strengths and weaknesses, to help make academic and career decisions, or to provide feedback to students. A second way to use the data is to help you make decisions about the effectiveness of your instruction and give you feedback about how to improve it. A third use of assessment information is to help administrators identify curriculum weaknesses and students needing academic intervention. This chapter includes a discussion of each of these uses for assessment data.

As you think about using assessment results for improving student learning and your own teaching, keep in mind some of the following over-arching principles:

- ◆ All learning goals should be assessed using more than one assessment activity.
- ◆ A variety of assessment strategies should be used.
- ◆ Assessment results will reveal information about student learning and performance which should be analyzed to assist with improvement of teaching and learning.
- ◆ Student performance patterns and changes over time can be recorded and analyzed to provide information about student growth.
- ◆ Some unexpected results or surprises may emerge.
- ◆ The data will raise questions that you can use for your own and your students' growth.
- ◆ Results can be compared to those of other teachers with similar classrooms and units of study to see if school-wide patterns emerge.

Using Assessment Data for Students

The evaluation of student progress is generally considered to be the major purpose for collecting assessment data. There are two primary ways you can use classroom assessment results to improve your students' learning. You can monitor student progress and you can diagnose student strengths and weaknesses by analyzing the assessment results. Here are some techniques to assist you with these two uses of assessment results.

Monitoring Student Progress

As a teacher, your hope is that each of your students will make steady progress throughout the school year. You expect each student to improve as he or she learns the information and skills targeted in various lessons. Classroom assessments are used to find out if students have learned the knowledge and skills presented in the lesson and to see if they are making progress.

A recordkeeping system that uses a grid format can help you monitor the progress of individual students and the whole class at the same time. For assessment of individual students, list the objectives in the top row of the grid (one per column), and the student names in the first column on the left hand side of the grid. The example below shows the results of an assessment for a lesson on writing a paragraph. The assessment included four specific objectives: 1) the use of a topic sentence, 2) inclusion of at least three supporting facts, 3) use of a logical order, and 4) use of a closing sentence. The assessment results for each objective are recorded in the corresponding cell for each student.

EXAMPLE				
Grid for Recording Student Performance				
Assessment: Writing a Paragraph				Date: _____
Student Name	OBJ 1 : Topic sentence	OBJ 2 : 3 facts	OBJ 3 : Logical	OBJ 4 : Closing sentence
Student 1	OK	3 facts	OK	OK
Student 2	No	1 fact	No	Sentence not clear
Student 3	OK	2 facts	OK	None
Student 4	Sentence not clear	3 facts - 1 unrelated	No	Sentence not clear

adapted from Tuckman, 1988, p. 211

Since your tests are designed to measure student learning of specific objectives, this kind of display will allow you to see which students have mastered specific objectives and which students need additional help such as second-chance testing (which simply involves letting a student retake a test after additional instruction), remedial instruction, or accommodations. In the example on the previous page, you can see that Student 1 has performed well in all areas. Students 2 and 4 have not done well in most targeted objectives required in writing a paragraph; however, they were able to include one or two facts. Student 3 needs to work on adding more facts and a closing sentence. You will find it easier to identify specific needs and to discuss them with students or parents when you know exactly what students are able to do.

In addition to knowing how individual students are doing, it is important to be aware of how your class as a whole is progressing. The same grid used for monitoring individual progress can also give you a picture of the entire class. For instance, if it is apparent from your grid that most of the students had difficulty with one or more of the objectives in the lesson (like the closing sentence in the example), you will know that it is necessary to reteach that skill for all students. If your assessment shows that most of the students have mastered the objectives, you will know that you can move on. You will also be able to tell which students need individualized remediation.

Identifying Patterns of Strengths and Weaknesses

An important use of assessment data is to identify specific patterns of strengths or weaknesses and how these evolve over time for your students. For example, when you compare the results of assessments for writing different kinds of paragraphs, you may notice that some students tend to have a specific problem in writing complete sentences, including enough facts or details, or writing for a particular purpose. These weaknesses can be identified and addressed in subsequent lessons. By tracking how students do on specific objectives, you can see which students (and objectives) require additional instruction.

Looking for patterns of strengths and weaknesses goes beyond looking at the results of an individual assessment. You need to determine whether or not the errors or omissions are due to carelessness or whether they reflect insufficient knowledge or skills.

A grid that charts performance for multiple assessments can help you see patterns of strengths and weaknesses. In the example below, student names would be listed down the left hand column. Put objectives across the top and leave space for several assessments for each objective. When an assessment is completed, enter the results for each student. This provides a visual display of how each student has progressed on each objective and allows you to easily spot problems or weaknesses in student achievement. You'll notice that the grid in the example below is almost identical to the one entitled "Grid for R

multiple assessments for each objective, the two grids could be combined, thus simplifying the process and saving time.

EXAMPLE												
Grid for Identifying Student Strengths and Weaknesses												
	OBJ 1: Topic Sentence				OBJ 2: Three Facts				OBJ 3: Logical			
	Date	Date	Date		Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
S1												
S2												
S3												
S4												
S5												

for recording

Providing Feedback

Providing effective feedback to students continuously throughout the learning process will help them improve their skills and give them information they can use to evaluate themselves. Based on an extensive study of the research on effective feedback, Miller (2002) concluded that “high-quality feedback is timely, direct, accurate, substantive, constructive, prescriptive, specific, outcome-focused, encouraging, and positive” (p. 120). There are a number of effective ways, both written and oral, to provide information to students and their parents on how well students are doing on assessments.

Effective feedback is

- ◆ timely
- ◆ direct
- ◆ accurate
- ◆ substantive
- ◆ constructive
- ◆ prescriptive
- ◆ specific
- ◆ outcome-focused
- ◆ encouraging
- ◆ positive.

Written Feedback

Written feedback can be effective if it is given in a manner that clearly helps the student understand and be able to correct errors. When a student has completed an assessment, it is important that he or she receive feedback on it. Comments written directly on the assessment should be specific enough that the student can use the feedback to correct his or her own work. The students should then actually correct the work. If possible, you should meet with the student to discuss what he or she is doing well and how to correct areas that still need improvement.

When a student assessment involves a presentation or hands-on project, written feedback can be given on an evaluation form designed specifically for the assessment, like the one in the science project example below.

EXAMPLE	
Science Project Evaluation Form	
Student Name: _____	Date: _____
Points Earned:	
Thoroughness (25 points possible)	
Creativity (25 points possible)	
Appearance (25 points possible)	
Accuracy (25 points possible)	
Total Points Earned out of 100	
Comments: _____	
Strengths: _____	
Suggestions for Improvement: _____	

from Miller, 2002, p. 224

The evaluation form identifies the specific things you will be looking for in each of the areas on which the student will be assessed (i.e., thoroughness, creativity, etc.), as well as the weight each area will carry. These scoring criteria should be discussed with the student prior to the presentation. Making personalized and detailed comments about the student’s strengths with suggestions for improvement is more beneficial than general comments such as “excellent” or “good work.”

Written feedback can be sent to parents through letters or notes, as in the example below, or through anecdotal comments on report cards. Doing written assessment reports for each student is time-consuming, but can be very effective in explaining grades or scores. The type of information you provide on a written report should include the learning goals (what you expected to be learned); the learning outcomes (how the individual student has progressed); the student’s work habits, strengths, weaknesses, and areas that need improvement; and the next steps. Reports like these allow parents to understand specifically what areas show progress and what needs improvement. Sometimes students can prepare their own written self-evaluation of progress to share with the teacher and parent. This strategy is especially effective for students as they learn to evaluate their own work and prepare to be life-long learners.

EXAMPLE
Written Report to Parents
<p>Dear Mr. and Mrs. Green,</p> <p>The class has just finished a unit on developing four different kinds of charts and graphs. This unit is based on the Sunshine State Standard MA.E.3.2.1.4.2: <i>“The student creates an appropriate graph to display data (for example, pictographs, bar graphs, line graphs, and circle graphs).”</i></p> <p>Ruth has successfully mastered circle graphs (pie charts), line graphs, and pictographs. She worked very hard on this unit and appears to enjoy putting data into a graph format. You can see an example of her work attached. While Ruth could construct three of the four graphs successfully, she had difficulty with the construction of bar graphs and deciding when to use the different graphs. Other classmates also had difficulties, so we will be doing some more work on graphs this next grading period.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Sincerely,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Miss Crabtree 4th Grade Teacher Main Elementary School</p>

Oral Feedback

Oral feedback is another effective way to provide information to a student and his or her parents about how well the student is doing. Oral feedback can generally take the form of a face-to-face conference with an individual student or his or her parents about the student's progress. This type of feedback allows you to provide information about what the student is doing well and what needs improvement. Problems the student is having can be discussed and questions can be answered immediately. Remember to address the learning goals, learning outcomes, student's work habits, strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement during the conference. If face-to-face conferences are not possible, the telephone can be used.

Using Assessment Data for Improving Instruction

While it is important to use classroom assessment results to monitor progress for your students and their parents, it is equally important to use the results to evaluate your own instructional practices so that you can continue to improve your skills. It's a good idea to reflect on the impact of instruction and assessment as you teach a lesson. You can reflect on how well your instruction helped students achieve the goals you set. This feedback helps you make future decisions about changing the way you teach the lesson, changing your assessment strategies, or exploring different accommodations for certain students.


Student assessment results provide the primary information you need to consider when determining whether or not your instructional practices are resulting in your desired level of student learning. You can follow a four-step process to look at assessment data. The steps are as follows:

- 1) review the data from each assessment you conduct
- 2) review the overall results of all the assessment strategies you have used
- 3) consider outside factors that might have affected student learning
- 4) develop an action plan.

Step One: Review Data from Each Assessment

The first step in using assessment data for improving instructional practices is to separately look at each assessment strategy you used and organize student results so that you can tell how many students successfully answered each question correctly (for selected response items) or how many students were successful on your scoring criteria (for constructed response items).

Use the checklist below to guide your review.

Looking at Assessment Data for Each Assessment	
What learning goals does the assessment measure?	
What level of learning (knowledge and comprehension or application) does the assessment require?	
Are these the results I expected? Why or why not?	
What do my notes tell me?	

adapted from Wiggins and McTighe, 1998

Now you will want to look at the results of the entire class on each assessment strategy and conduct an item analysis. This item-by-item analysis will help you determine how many students were successful on each item and how many were not. If you have a test item that was not completed correctly or accurately by at least half of your students, you will want to look carefully at that item.

For selected response items, you can use a table like the one in the example on the next page to help you determine the types of errors your students are making. Enter the number of students who chose each response for each item on the assessment. Once the table is complete, look at the response choices and determine if a particular distractor was chosen more often than the correct response. This will help you see if the assessment item was problematic and needs to be reviewed. If instruction has been unclear, you can change the instructional strategies you have been using.

EXAMPLE				
Item Analysis for Selected Response Items				
Item Number	Response A	Response B	Response C	Response D
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
NOTES:				

You can use the same type of analysis for the scoring criteria you set for constructed response items. To do this you can use a table like the one in the example below. This will give you a visual reference for each criterion. Put the criteria (rubric) you have chosen across the top of this table, one to a box. In each box, put the number of students who scored at this criterion level over the total number of students. For example, if there were 25 students, and 23 of them scored at criterion 1, the number in that box would be 23/25. Look at the numbers to see where students are scoring. If no students received a particular scoring criterion, you may need to adjust it to allow for a more adequate use of each scoring criterion.

EXAMPLE			
Item Analysis for Constructed Response Items			
Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4
NOTES:			

Step Two: Review Overall Results

Step two involves looking at the big picture of all of your assessment data for a lesson. You can see results for the entire group of students and determine the specific effectiveness of instruction for each individual skill taught in the lesson. The grid you used on page 65 entitled “Grid for Recording Student Performance” can be a good starting point for reviewing overall results. You may want to write anecdotal notes about each skill area (objective) based on the results that you see. If you put this information in writing with headings like “assessment strategy,” “date of assessment,” “standards or goals assessed,” “type of assessment strategies used,” and “anecdotal notes,” you can easily look at the results and pinpoint areas of concern. The example below shows how this would look.

EXAMPLE				
Grid for Recording Student Performance				
Assessment: Writing a Paragraph			Date: _____	
Student Name	OBJ 1 : Topic sentence	OBJ 2 : 3 facts	OBJ 3 : Logical	OBJ 4 : Closing sentence
Student 1	OK	3 facts	OK	OK
Student 2	No	1 fact	No	Sentence not clear
Student 3	OK	2 facts	OK	None
Student 4	Sentence not clear	3 facts - 1 unrelated	No	Sentence not clear


adapted from Tuckman, 1988, p. 211

Assessment Strategy : _____

Date of Assessment : _____

Anecdotal Notes: _____

Once you have the results laid out in a readable format, ask yourself the questions in the checklist on the next page.

CHECKLIST		Reviewing Overall Results of Assessment Strategies
		Are all learning goals assessed using more than one assessment activity?
		Were a variety of assessment strategies used?
		What do these results reveal about student learning and performance?
		What patterns or changes do I see over time?
		Are there any surprises? What results are unexpected? What anomalies exist?
		What questions do these data raise?

Step Three: Consider Outside Factors

As you analyze the results of your teaching, it is important to remember that factors beyond your control may be affecting your students' learning. The third step in the process is to consider what, if any, outside factors may be affecting a student's learning. These factors could include the atmosphere in the home, as well as the student's cognitive level, background knowledge, and motivation. Factors beyond your influence may include such things as

- ◆ attention problems
- ◆ behavior problems
- ◆ medical problems
- ◆ physical limitations
- ◆ emotional problems
- ◆ poor attendance.


If you feel that any of the factors above are impeding your instruction and the progress of your students, you should discuss your concerns with school administrators. During your discussion, you should be direct about what you perceive the problem to be and provide evidence of why you feel the way you do. Often, if you are able to suggest a solution to the problem, such as referral for special services, it will help the school administrator to expedite any necessary changes.

Step Four: Develop an Action Plan

Your final step towards improving your instruction by using the information you have gained through classroom assessments is to develop an action plan. As you review your classroom assessment data, you should make written notes about changes you want to make to your instruction and actions to take about individual student concerns. This will be the foundation for developing an action plan. An action plan may be useful for one of several purposes, including reorganizing instruction, readdressing accommodations, reassessing skills, determining needed individual student assistance, or providing corrective instruction.

Start your action plan by putting into words the changes you want to make. Then think about what steps you need to take to make the change happen. Sometimes steps are as simple as deleting undesirable test items from a test you have developed—something you can do yourself. Sometimes the change may require your learning a new way to teach something, in which case you will have to seek sources of training. After you have determined the steps you need to take, make a list of people who can help you make the change or provide information on learning a new strategy. Finally, identify a tentative date for completion of the action plan.

As you review your instruction and the assessment results and then develop your action plan, use the following checklist as a guide to determine changes you would like to make.

Reviewing Instruction and Assessment Results			
Did instruction and assessment result in positive consequences?	Yes	No	CHECKLIST
Did the lessons contain measurable, teachable skills?	Yes	No	
Were any of the instructional or assessment tasks confusing?	Yes	No	
Did any of the instructional or assessment tasks take too long?	Yes	No	
Were the assessments fair measures of knowledge and skills for all students?	Yes	No	
Do any of the test items or rubric components need to be changed?	Yes	No	
Do I need to make changes to the instruction?	Yes	No	

Using Assessment Data with Administrators

Just as you share student assessment results with your students and their parents, you often need to summarize the results for your school and district administrators. Administrators, in turn, use the information in several ways. One way is to help identify overall curriculum weaknesses, either in the school itself or in the system as a whole. Your data also helps to identify students who need academic intervention. In addition, your students' assessment results can be used to show improvement in student performance that is related to your own professional development plan.

Identifying Curriculum Weaknesses

When your school receives information about how the students performed on the FCAT, one of the pieces of information your administrators will look at is weaknesses in the school's curriculum. By disaggregating the data and looking at test results from subgroups of students, more complete information can be obtained. If there is evidence of patterns of student failure, teachers may be asked to provide more specific information about how their students are performing in those particular areas and how they are teaching and assessing these areas of the curriculum. This is where your information on how classroom assessment is being tied to the standards and benchmarks assessed by the FCAT will be particularly helpful. It will help school administrators to know if you and your fellow teachers are using the kinds of instruction and assessment that help students prepare for the FCAT or other standardized tests. By looking at data across the school, curriculum coordinators may spot areas that are consistently troublesome for students or that are not being adequately addressed by teachers. In this way, changes can be made to what is being taught or to how information is being presented and assessed.

Identifying Students Needing Academic Intervention

When you feel that one of your students is not performing to his or her potential or that you are not able to provide the type of learning environment the student needs, your administrators will need to see evidence to back up your feelings. That evidence will consist of the reports you have made throughout the year about the student's learning. Grades on daily work, quizzes, tests, and standardized tests will provide part of the information,

but equally valuable will be the information contained in written interim reports or notes from parent conferences in which the student's weaknesses were discussed. If you are referring a child for evaluation for exceptional student education or if you are involved in the development of an academic improvement plan or individual educational plan, your records will play a vital role in finding the right assistance or support for the student.

Showing Improvement in Student Performance Based on Professional Development

The State of Florida requires that any professional development activities you participate in specify measurable improvement in student performance resulting from the training activity. You must document that the professional development contributed to improved student performance. Your individual student records of progress would be helpful in providing this type of documentation. Records of individual grades on daily work, as well as tests backed with informal notes on student progress, will give school and district administrators the information they need to see that any new techniques or teaching tools you have learned have benefited your students.

Summary

This chapter has provided questions, considerations, and activities that are useful in using classroom assessment data for the benefit of your students, parents, yourself, and your administration. You can use data to make changes to your lesson plans or instructional methods, to determine student progress and placement, or to provide information that assists in curriculum development. Basing decisions and recommendations on sound analyses and making sure that decisions are backed by adequate data, consistency, corroboration, and consideration of consequences will assure that the learning needs of your students are being met.

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