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The Teacher as Assessment Leader

Edited by Thomas R. Guskey

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Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *The Teacher as Assessment Leader*, edited by

Thomas R. Guskey. The eleven contributors to *The Teacher as Assessment Leader* offer teacher

leaders practical ideas on how to make the best and most effective use of a balanced assessment

system, with an emphasis on classroom formative assessments.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers either to work their way through the entire

book or to focus on the specific topics a particular author addresses in his or her chapter. It can

be used by individuals, small groups, or teams to identify key points, raise questions for

consideration, assess their own practices, and further develop their assessment literacy.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your

efforts to become more knowledgeable about and to implement sound assessment practices that

will benefit the learning of all students.

Chapter 1

Developing Our Assessment Literacy

Cassandra Erkens

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1. By relying primarily on summative assessments, how have we limited the function of assessment?

2. What does it mean for a teacher to be *assessment literate*?

3. What does a balanced system of summative and formative assessment enable teachers to do besides monitor student learning?

4. What are the three "critical and personally engaging" questions that should guide students through their learning and that can also be used to guide teachers in their development of assessment literacy?

5. While teachers must be knowledgeable about the research on effective assessment, they must be able to apply that research in ways that are responsive to the needs of individual students. What is the core "formative question" that teachers should ask to guide their decisions about which assessment strategies to use in any given situation?

6. Explain what the author means when she says that "the shift from an industrial age to an information age will demand a change in the purpose and structure of the assessments we must design."

7. What does it mean for an assessment to ask a student to perform "authentic intellectual work"? How does that differ from traditional assessments?

8. What does the author mean by *leveraging mistakes*?

9. The best way for teachers to develop their assessment literacy is to work in collaborative teams. What are some examples of assessment-related activities that teams can engage in? Do you have regular opportunities to participate in this kind of collaborative work?

Chapter 2

Assessment That Makes Sense

Chris Jakicic

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1. Why are summative assessments inadequate for helping teachers determine the remediation students need?

2. How can summative assessments be used to help schools determine their greatest areas of need and to set goals? If the data from summative assessments in different subject areas are broken down by standards, what kinds of decisions can schools make based on these data?

3. What is the purpose of formative assessments, and in what ways do they differ from summative assessments?

4. What are some strategies that teachers can use to provide formative information about what *all* the students in a class are learning when a concept or lesson is being taught?

5. Why does the author advise that formative assessments be planned rather than spontaneous or improvised?

6. What does it mean to create assessments that will gather data that are the right "grain size"?

7. The first step in planning assessments is to deconstruct standards into the individual learning targets that students will need to meet. In order to do that, teachers need to identify the type of standard they will be breaking down. What are the four types of standards, and what does each one ask students to do? What types of learning targets are associated with each type of standard?

8. Once a teacher has identified the specific learning targets to teach, what is the guideline for determining which targets to assess?

9. What are some considerations in choosing an assessment format that is appropriate to the target being assessed?

10. How can a multiple-choice item be designed to reveal specifics about a student's thinking?

11. Give some examples of how data from formative assessments can be used to group students for subsequent teaching.

Chapter 3

Yes, I Can: Responsible Assessment in an Era of Accountability

William M. Ferriter

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1. How does your team make decisions about what to teach? What are the strengths of your current process of instructional decision making? What are its weaknesses?

2. How confident are you with the entire scope of learning detailed by your curriculum? How often do you refer to standards when planning instruction? Can you easily identify the standards that individual lessons are designed to address?

3. Has your team struggled to race through your curriculum? Have you ever considered narrowing your curriculum? Why or why not?

4. What steps can teams take to gain support from parents and principals for efforts to narrow the curriculum and eliminate nonessential standards from instruction?

5. What actions—if any—does your team currently take to engage students in assessment of their own learning? What barriers have you faced in making student assessment of learning practical in your classroom?

6. Has your team made a focused effort to engage parents as partners in the learning process? Why?

7. Describe the current system of reporting student performance used by your learning team. Can teachers identify individual learning targets that students have mastered? Is regrouping for remediation and enrichment easy? Are parents and students aware of differing levels of mastery within domains of study?

8. How effective is your learning team at avoiding "data paralysis"? Do you have specific strategies for finding patterns in data? How can those strategies be improved?

Chapter 4

Matchmaker, Matchmaker, Write Me a Test

Michelle Goodwin

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1. Even if teachers lack a technical background in assessment, what are the two conditions to creating quality assessments that will give them the data they need to modify their instruction to best meet student needs?

2. How does a *learning target* differ from a *standard*?

3. What are the four steps for "ensuring proper alignment of learning target with type of assessment"?

4. What does it mean to "unpack" a standard? Once the teacher unpacks a standard, what is necessary to ensure that students will understand the steps required to master the standard?

5. What are the four types of learning targets? Give an example of each.

6. What are the four types of assessment methods? Give an example of each.

7. In a multiple-choice item, what is a *distractor*? How do well-constructed distractors give teachers insight into students' thinking?

8.   What is meant by *target-method match*? What would be an example of a good match?

What would be an example of a poor match?

Chapter 5

Proficiency: More Than a Grade

Tammy Heflebower

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1. Proficiency level descriptions (PLDs) identify the characteristics of varying levels of student performance on a standard. What are the four proficiency levels that the author recommends a team define when writing PLDs? How might those four general categories be further broken down?

2. How do PLDs relate to the kinds of interventions that teachers might use?

3. When writing assessments, why is it useful to include questions that represent each of the proficiency levels?

4. What is meant by an *independent* item on an assessment?

5. How do PLDs help to determine the difficulty of assessment items?

6. For what purposes is the modified Angoff method used?

7. Beginning on page 125, the author discusses a number of steps that teachers can take to improve their grading practices. Have you adopted any of these practices yourself? Which ones would you feel comfortable trying?

Chapter 6

Using Common Assessments in Uncommon Courses

Adam Young

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1. What are *common formative assessments*?

2. Why is the work surrounding common formative assessments regarded as a powerful form of professional development?

3. What are some ways in which collaborative teams could be made up of teachers who do not teach identical courses?

4. When members of a team teach different subjects, what should be the focus of their common assessments?

5. If the team has agreed to assess particular skills, what would be the most appropriate method of assessment to use?

6. How can teachers from diverse courses work together to develop rubrics?

7. What are *anchors*?

8. What kinds of collaborative work do teachers engage in after the common assessments have been administered?

Chapter 7

Creating Equity in Classroom Assessment for English Language Learners and Students With Special Needs

Ainsley B. Rose

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1. The author makes a distinction between *inclusion* and *integration* of students with special needs. How does he define those two terms?

2. What are four options for grading students with special needs?

3. How do *product*, *process*, and *progress* criteria differ? How can these three areas be used to assess students with special needs?

4. What is the difference between *accommodations* and *modifications*?

5. How is the Primary Language Record used?

6. Does your school or district have clear guidelines for evaluating and reporting on product, process, and progress in different ways for students with special needs in different categories?

Chapter 8

Creating Confident, Capable Learners

Jeffry Overlie

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1. The author mentions that he has often encountered skepticism, disbelief, or opposition when stressing the importance of involving students in the assessment process. Have you encountered these reactions? Why?

2. Rick Stiggins (2005) has called assessment the "great intimidator," putting demands on students to produce greater effort. Why do some students thrive in this environment? Why do some students struggle in it?

3. How can formative assessment motivate all learners, and how does research show that it enhances student achievement and improves standardized test results? What are the research-based benefits of self-assessment?

4. Assessment *for* learning involves students working through three questions (Sadler, 1989). What are these questions?

5. Name some strategies for classroom self-assessment provided in this chapter. Have you used, or would you like to use, any of them?

6. Why is it important that learning targets be written in language students can understand? What are some examples of student-friendly "I Can" learning statements?

7. How can creating a self-rated rubric incorporating unit learning targets aid student reflection? How can this also serve as a summative self-assessment?

8. What are the benefits of shifting a school's way of doing business, as recommended by the author, with formative assessment becoming a primary focus of the school's improvement plan and professional development?

Chapter 9

Inspiring and Requiring Action

Nicole M. Vagle

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1. The author describes a new model of assessing and offering feedback in which students work as hard as teachers. How does this differ from tradition, and how does formative assessment change classroom instruction?

2. What does the author mean by teachers *requiring* and *inspiring* action in students?

3. One way to involve students in assessment is the practice of *descriptive feedback*. List the characteristics, classroom examples, and benefits of this practice.

4. How does descriptive feedback assist students in answering the three questions, Where am I going? Where am I now? How can I close the gap?

5. Another way to involve students in assessment is the practice of *error analysis*. Describe classroom scenarios of this strategy. What are some ways students can capitalize on their errors?

Chapter 10

Engaging the Nintendo Generation

Sharon V. Kramer With Linda DuBose

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1. What forms of student involvement can result in response to answering Sadler's (1989) three questions, Where am I going? Where am I now? How can I close the gap?

2. What are the three categories of classroom assessment? How are they carried out, and what do they provide students?

3. How can teachers present formative assessment to students in more understandable and less intimidating ways?

4. Describe how teachers can help students reach a clear understanding of the learning targets of predetermined standards. How do "I Can" statements make learning targets clear?

5. The authors stress that for students to determine if they have reached a target, they must have a clear understanding of what is considered exemplary work. How can rubrics be used to describe and define quality work?

6. What is the difference between *evaluative* feedback and more time-consuming but more beneficial *descriptive* feedback?

7. What are the benefits of student self-assessment and goal setting, and what are specific ways students can engage in this reflection? What is the most effective way for students to examine the results of an assessment?

8. How can students use a rating scale to self-assess their proficiency levels on unit target skills? How can goals be recorded clearly?

9. How can students help each other reach their learning goals by working collaboratively and by evaluating and editing one another's work?

10. Tracking their learning target by target allows students to be involved in communication and decision making about steps needed to close learning gaps. What are some strategies for helping students track their progress?

11. What happens when a student is able to have meaningful dialogue about his or her learning? How can student-led conferences enhance this communication about learning, and what are the three types of student-led conferences? What are parents' and teachers' responsibilities in three-way conferences?

Chapter 11

Differentiated Pathways to Success

Tom Hierck

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1. The author asserts that if we are to be effective advocates for students, we must have personalized, individualized, and meaningful data. How can teachers use what they learn from data to plan instruction and improve student results?

2. What does the author offer as a solution to the time constraints teachers face in the classroom when working to individualize instruction?

3. How does Hume (2008) define *differentiated instruction*?

4. Guskey (2007) suggests teachers need to change their approach in three critical ways in order for assessment to drive instruction in the classroom. What are the three suggestions?

5. List the five keys and accompanying critical questions presented by Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis, and Chappuis (2004) to help guide the development of quality assessment practices in the classroom.

6. Why is analysis so critical after developing and administering quality assessments, and what forms can it take?

7. What is the next step after the analysis of assessments? Describe the differentiated approach to corrective instruction.

8. Why should we provide students with second chances to demonstrate learning, and how can analyzing their assessments provide powerful insight into mistakes?

9. The author describes two ways of viewing the purpose of a grade. What are they, and what have you encountered in your experience?

10. What is involved in teacher collaboration to examine and discuss assessment results?

11. Why is effective feedback for students so critical, and what are some sources of descriptive feedback other than teacher feedback?

12. List the five general strategies for differentiating instruction presented by Leahy, Lyon, Thompson, and Wiliam (2005).

13. How do teacher perceptions of students contribute to their classroom experiences? Reflect on the author's final question, "If you believe that every student has the capacity to be successful, and if you adhere to the notion that this must happen, are you taking the steps to make it occur?"