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Chapter 1 Introduction



What does it all mean and why do we do it anyway?

Ms. Weeks was drowning in a sea of papers to grade. She knew her students would demand to know their grades immediately but she felt overwhelmed. Not only did she have to grade the papers, she also had to come up with numbers to reflect that grade in her grade book and the school's computerized grading program. "We live and die by numbers and points and scores," she thought, "not by what the kids actually learn."

The school principal, Mr. Vasquez, was worried about test scores. The standardized test the district had been using for several years had just been re-normed and the superintendent didn't want to see test scores drop. His school was successfully using many types of alternative assessments, but he didn't know how student progress might be reflected in the re-normed test. He did know that his school and all others in the district would be evaluated based on test scores. "Test scores are everything in this district," he told his teachers.

How, why and what we assess are some of the most pressing issues, questions and concerns in education today. Indeed, if assessment is the tail and curriculum the dog, we certainly often have a case of the tail wagging the dog! Many educators are deeply concerned about this issue yet feel lost or confused in the competing requirements, needs and demands they hear from students, parents, administrators, and the public at large.

This book is written for teachers, administrators and other practitioners who are not assessment experts but who need to know and understand the basics of assessment and what is being required of them. In this book, we take a broad look at assessment and what it means for today's educators. All facets of assessment, from assessment terminology to standardized tests, from portfolios to report cards, from rubrics to standards and benchmarks are considered. We hope it will clarify assessment issues for you and will make them easier to understand and deal with.

As a result of reading this book you will:

- Comprehend basic assessment terminology
- Understand the advantages and disadvantages of standardized tests and alternative assessment measures
- Know the purposes and functions of standards and benchmarks
- Know how to write rubrics and other forms of alternative assessments
- See numerous samples of rubrics written by classroom teachers
- Find out a variety of ways to report student progress

Glass of Water Activity

A glass of water can teach us a great deal about assessment and the terminology we use when discussing it. Get a glass of water and put it in front of you as you do this activity. Consider the glass of water as you discuss each of the following:

How would you:

1. Assess it?
2. Measure it?
3. Test it?
4. Evaluate it?

What are the differences in these four terms?

In educational assessment, what do you do when you measure something?

How can you assess without measuring?



Reproducible for teacher use.

Alphabet Rubric

Name:

Date:

		Not Evident	Working On It	Almost There	Accomplished
C R I T E R I A	Identifies uppercase letters of the alphabet out of sequence	Identifies 0-5 uppercase letters of the alphabet out of sequence	Identifies 6-20 uppercase letters of the alphabet out of sequence	Identifies 21-25 uppercase letters of the alphabet out of sequence	Identifies all 26 uppercase letters of the alphabet out of sequence
	Identifies lowercase letters of the alphabet out of sequence	Identifies 0-5 lowercase letters of the alphabet out of sequence	Identifies 6-20 lowercase letters of the alphabet out of sequence	Identifies 21-25 lowercase letters of the alphabet out of sequence	Identifies all 26 lowercase letters of the alphabet out of sequence
	Identifies letter sounds of the alphabet out of sequence	Identifies 0-5 letter sounds of the alphabet out of sequence	Identifies 6-20 letter sounds of the alphabet out of sequence	Identifies 21-25 letter sounds of the alphabet out of sequence	Identifies all 26 letter sounds of the alphabet out of sequence

Comments:

PERSUASIVE ESSAY RUBRIC

Name:

Date:

		Whatever!	Yeah, maybe?	I'm convinced!	I'll do whatever you want me to!!	
		1	2	3	4	Score
C R I T E R I A	Content (claim and support)	The argument or claim is not mentioned; no reasons are given to support the claim; no reasons are given against the claim	The claim is confused or unclear; 1 or 2 weak reasons, irrelevant reasons, or confusing reasons; no argument against the claim is mentioned	The claim is made; reasons are given in support of the claim but important reasons are overlooked; no arguments against the claim are mentioned	The claim is made; clear accurate reasons support the claim; arguments against the claim are discussed and proven insignificant	
	Organization	The writing is very disorganized and often off topic	The writing is workable but sometimes is off topic	The writing has a clear beginning, middle, and end	The essay has a compelling opening, a fully developed body, and a conclusion that calls for action	
	Sentence Fluency	So many run-ons and fragments make the piece difficult to read	A few of the sentences contain run-ons, fragments, or are awkward to read	The sentences are well constructed but do not vary	The sentences are clear, complete, and of varying lengths and types	
	Mechanics	Mistakes in spelling, usage, and punctuation detract from the clarity and meaning	Mistakes in spelling, usage, and punctuation are few but do not detract significantly from the piece	There are no mistakes in spelling, usage, or punctuation	Not only are there no mistakes but the writer is inventive in his/her use of mechanics	

Comments:

Total points

Grade