Assessment Strategies

Curriculum Accountability
The key dimensions of Curriculum Accountability are:
1. Constructing a responsive curriculum, based on the SACSA Framework and on an understanding of the diversity of learners and their needs.
2. Providing ongoing feedback to learners, based on a range of assessment strategies.
3. Implementing intervention and support programs, based on analyses of learner achievement data.
4. Reporting to learners, parents and caregivers, and the community, the learning Outcomes and Standards.
(South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework. An Overview.)

Assessment for Learning
Teachers use a range of assessment strategies to find out what their students' know, can do and understand.

“In most areas of learning, no single assessment method is capable of providing evidence about the full range of learning outcomes”.


In choosing from the range of assessment strategies available at any time, teachers should be mindful of maximising the opportunities for learning through the assessment process, by ensuring that learners can know more about where they are in their learning, where they need to go next and ways in which they can get there.

“Learners need information and guidance in order to plan the next steps in their learning”.


Some Assessment Strategies:

Observation:
• Group work
• Oral presentation
• Performance eg. music, drama
• Class work—participation

Conference:
• Student/teacher
• Group discussion

Product Analysis:
• Performance or presentation
• Portfolio of work
• Student work eg assignments
• Tests

“Assessment is one of the most powerful tools for promoting effective learning”.


DID YOU KNOW?

Allan Luke Video and Notes
Professor Allan Luke’s November 15th seminar entitled ‘Pedagogy and Assessment’ was video-taped for use at staff meetings. Notes from this seminar will also be available to assist leaders to further explore pedagogy and assessment at the local level to support targeted improvements in learning. This will be available in early 2007. More information about this in the next newsletter.
It could be said that in some cases this may be the only way of obtaining evidence about particular learning outcomes, e.g., during a performance, a practical lesson, group work, and involvement in a local project.

“A strong justification for using teacher observation in assessment is its capacity to enhance assessment validity. By extending the range of possible assessments, teacher observation allows assessment to be more:

- **comprehensive**—ensuring recognition of all desired learning outcomes, especially those not otherwise assessable than in classroom contexts;
- **connected**—situated within familiar learning contexts and closely related to curriculum frameworks, learning experiences, and pedagogical planning;
- **contextualized**—sensitive to the effects of context on performance and deriving assessment evidence from a variety of situations and occasions;
- **authentic**—interesting, challenging, worthwhile, and meaningful to students;
- **holistic**—emphasising relatedness and connections in learning and involving performance on complex wholes rather than separate components.

All of these characteristics can be supported as important for high-quality learning and assessment. Assessments with these characteristics have better representation of, clearer reference to, and stronger consequences for desirable learning outcomes. Appropriate representation, relevance, and appropriate consequences are often now recognized as the requirements of valid assessments.”


Maxwell also talks about factors affecting the validity of teacher observations and what to do about them:

“Accurate recording requires transparent and unbiased perception of the student’s performance. Justifiable interpretation requires careful consideration of what the student’s performance signifies, in terms of learning outcomes, taking into consideration any factors that may have influenced the performance.” Page 9.

Maxwell describes five factors that can affect the validity of teacher observations:

1. **Prejudgments and prejudices**—Prejudgments—judgments formed in advance based on prior knowledge/information Prejudice—stereotyping
2. **Selective perception**—seeing and hearing what we want
3. **Providing inadvertent clues**—the teacher unwittingly providing clues to the student
4. **Inappropriate inference**—drawing the wrong conclusions.
5. **Inconsistency**—evidence is interpreted differently in different circumstances.

GO TO THE WEBSITE [http://www.qscc.qld.edu.au](http://www.qscc.qld.edu.au) AND READ MAXWELL’S ARTICLE ABOUT WHAT CAN BE DONE TO GUARD AGAINST THE FACTORS WHICH AFFECT THE VALIDITY OF TEACHER OBSERVATIONS.
A Teacher’s Story…

Recently I was asked to participate in developing an example of an ASOTE—Assessing SACSA Outcomes through Evidence. I readily agreed believing that it would be simple enough to take some ‘finished and polished’ work samples and thinking it would help me develop an understanding of evidence of student learning. Little did I realise that I would embark on a learning journey that would lead to lessons about assessment taught to me by a six year old girl.

These are two of the lessons she taught me:

**LESSON 1—LISTEN TO THE CHILD!**

We had been focussing all term on the environment, particularly looking at Society and Environment. For this activity I asked students to create an art work that reflected what they knew about the environment.

My expectation was that they would probably label their artwork and from that I could assess what they knew. One student had been struggling and I knew she would require assistance—or so I thought! She approached me with a very simple picture and dutifully I went about the task of asking her to explain her picture to me.

What came next was a shock and made me rethink what I knew about assessment.

**LESSON 2—IT’S THE SMALL STEPS THAT COUNT!**

What I learned next came as a result of Lesson 1. As an educator I would often look at the end product, which was usually a ‘good copy’ and 9 times out of 10 it would be a written piece of work. Thinking about my student’s picture I gradually came to the realisation that if her work sample provided evidence towards 3 learning outcomes then how many other times had she displayed evidence of work that I had overlooked.

I started to look closer at my students’ work and the conversations I had with them and what I discovered surprised me.

Many times I could find evidence of achieved outcomes in the small steps my students took.

No longer do I look at the end ‘polished’ piece of work as the only evidence of learning, now I look for the steps my students take along the way as well. Lesson 2 learned!

The lesson I learned that day was evidence of an outcome does not always need to come from a ‘polished piece of written work’, and that sometimes even a piece of work like a simple picture can provide evidence towards outcomes in 3 different Learning Areas—Society and Environment, The Arts and English.

The student who created this picture was later seen in the yard organising a group of friends into groups to pick up rubbish. I realised that this was valid evidence towards Outcome 1.12 in Society and Environment. Previously I would not have considered this.

**What are ASOTEs?**

Assessing SACSA Outcomes through Evidence (ASOTE) examples have been developed to improve the consistency of teachers’ judgements about student achievement of SACSA Outcomes. They contain moderated sets of student evidence that demonstrate achievement of Outcomes and Standards in the SACSA Framework.

Examples of ASOTEs are available on the CD ROM: Moving Forward with SACSA : resources for leaders to support the understanding and practice of consistency of teacher judgement. Contact your District Office if your school does not have a copy. Another round of ASOTEs will be available at the beginning of next year.
DECS Professional Standards for Teachers in South Australia

The Professional Standards for Teachers (PST) “articulate what is valued about teachers’ work and describe the essential knowledge, relationships and practice that characterise teacher quality and promote success for all students and children. They will increase public understanding of the enormous contribution teachers make to young people’s lives”. Steve Marshall, Chief Executive. 4 January 2006.

One of the professional elements in the PST is Practice and one of the descriptors within this element is:

**ASSESS AND REPORT LEARNERS’ ACHIEVEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT**

- use accurate, constructive, specific and timely feedback as a teaching and learning tool
- provide specific feedback to learners on all significant work
- incorporate a diverse range of authentic assessment tasks and activities and ensure assessment criteria are made explicit
- employ a range of inclusive assessments that prepares learners for different pathways and stimulate further learning
- use a system for monitoring and celebrating learners’ progress and achievements
- inform parents and caregivers strategically about the progress of the learner

The PST can be used to assist teachers, schools or districts to reflect on their own practice and inform future directions.

Try using the model below to reflect on your own assessment practices.

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: A MODEL**

**Inquiry Question:**... Do I provide effective feedback to my students on all significant work?

**NOTICING:** WHAT'S HAPPENING?

1. I tend to do this incidentally during class time.
2. I put comments on their work such as ‘good’, and don’t often identify future steps for improvement. I sometimes discuss feedback with individual students.

**THINKING:** WHAT'S THIS REALLY ABOUT?

The feedback I give is not always very constructive. It doesn’t give the student much help in knowing what they do well and what they need to do next to further their learning.

**REFLECTING:** WHAT'S THIS TELLING ME ABOUT ME / US?

I am not giving the students specific feedback that helps them to improve their learning.

**PLANNING:** WHAT CAN I / WE DO?

I am going to commit to giving feedback to my students as close to the learning as possible and make it as explicit as I can, so that the students know what the feedback is saying and identifies future steps for learning.

**JUDGING:** HOW WILL I / WE KNOW IF THERE’S A DIFFERENCE?

I’ll make sure I have conversations with students and they will be able to tell me what they know and what they want/need to learn about next.