

Assessment in primary schools

With Semester 1 reports due at the end of Term 2, it is timely that teachers review their understanding of assessment, to ensure that the procedures they have put in place will assist them to make judgements about student achievement on the five point achievement scale. Making judgements at this point in time should inform their future planning for teaching/and learning programs in Semester 2.

So, what do we mean by assessment?

Assessment is the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about students' learning. The central purpose of assessment is to provide information on student achievement and progress and set the direction for ongoing teaching and learning.

Principles for assessment and reporting in NSW government schools

This definition provides us with the opportunity to look at two types of assessment:

- assessment of learning
- assessment for learning.

Assessment of learning

Assessment of learning looks at a student's level of performance on a specific task or at the end of a unit of teaching and learning. The information we gain from this kind of assessment can be used for reporting.

When deciding on a level of achievement, we need to make *on balance* judgements that best fit. For example: 'This piece of work demonstrates strengths here and weaknesses here, but *on balance*, it fits best into this judgement.' An on-balance judgement *does not* just focus on a single piece of work.

We also need to understand the context of a standards framework, specifically, content and performance standards.

Content standards

What have the students had the opportunity to learn? What do we expect them to know, understand and do? This is set out in syllabuses and school teaching and learning programs.

Performance standards

How well have the students achieved?

Assessment for learning

Assessment for learning should occur as a regular part of teaching and learning. The information we gain from assessment activities should be used to shape our future teaching and learning processes.

We should remember that assessment for learning is an essential and integrated part of the teaching and learning process that reflects a belief that all students can improve. It helps students understand and recognise the standards they are aiming for. It also provides feedback that helps them understand the next steps in learning and to plan how to achieve them.

How can we ensure assessment is most effective?

It is important to assess what has been taught and link it directly to syllabus outcomes. We need to allow for a range of performances and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know and can do.

When we set assessment tasks, we should ensure they have clear and explicit criteria for making judgements and that they promote reliable and consistent judgements by teachers. Professional learning support for consistent teacher judgement can be found at:

<http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/consistent_teacher/index.htm>

Consistent Teacher Judgement

Consistency Moderation Assessment Reporting

Teaching & Learning cycle

Consistent Teacher Judgement in Action – A resource for schools has been revised to reflect the Curriculum Programming and Planning, Assessing and Reporting K-12 policy. Its aim is to help establish the understandings necessary to ensure that consistent teacher judgements about student achievement can occur across all key learning areas.

The revised Consistent Teacher Judgement resource is divided into four sections:

- Consistency
 - What is consistency?
 - Planning for consistency
 - Consistency in practice
- Moderation
 - What is moderation?
 - Planning for moderation
 - Moderation in practice
- Assessment
 - What is assessment?
 - Assessment for learning
 - Assessment of learning

We should allow students to clearly understand and be involved in the assessment process. We should provide meaningful feedback to them, their parents and other teachers.

The information we gather will come from both formal assessment activities and informal observations and will be built up over time and in different situations. We need to weigh up the assessment information collected for a student up to that point in time.

How is *Quality Teaching* embedded in good assessment practice?

When we plan assessment tasks, it is useful to consider the following questions.

What do you want the students to learn?	Consider the key concepts in KLA outcomes and content and how they relate to each other.
Why does that learning matter?	Does the learning have meaning in the world beyond the classroom and how does the learning in one task link to the learning in another?
What are you going to get the students to do or produce?	Consider how the students will demonstrate their deep understanding of key concepts. Which products and performances will be most meaningful to students?
How well do you expect them to do it?	How will the students know what a quality product or presentation looks like? How they will know when they have achieved the outcomes?

There are a number of resources available to teachers to assist them in making informed decisions around assessment. These include:

- The *Curriculum planning, programming, assessing and reporting to parents K–12* website at <http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/timetoteach/index.htm>.
- The *Board of Studies Assessment Resource Centre (ARC)* website at <http://arc.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/>.

Board of Studies Assessment Resource Centre (ARC)

The Assessment Resource Centre is a valuable resource that will assist teachers in awarding A to E grades for their Semester 1 reports for students in Stages 1 to 5.

It contains samples of student work that show typical performance at each grade level at **the end of each stage**, which will assist teachers in making consistent judgements about the standards of performance demonstrated by their students. There is also advice on how teachers can use these samples for reporting at intermediate periods within the Stage.

Teachers may find it useful to access work samples from the end of the previous Stage, when making judgements about student achievement at various points of time in their current Stage.

There are now approximately 1200 student work samples on the ARC website, as well as advisory materials. These will continue to be added to throughout 2007.

Sadie Gow
Senior Assessment Adviser K–6
School Based Assessment and Reporting



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