Assessment and Evaluation Using Technology

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Capstone: A Project Approach

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I’ve learned through my education courses that assessment is basically feedback. It is

mainly for the students, but also, for the teachers, parents, administration and the district.

Assessment is really happening most of the time in a classroom. I was confused about the

difference between formative and summative assessment and how they work together, until I

read about the Garden Analogy.

The Garden Analogy is a good picture of exactly what the assessments do. Formative

assessing is watering the plant, and helping it grow. Summative assessing measures the plant to

determine the growth. Summative tests basically “sum up” the knowledge of students. It is easy

to remember which does what when you imagine forming a student into something by teaching

and nurturing & continual feedback, and then summing up what they‘ve absorbed.

Essays and Reports may be considered both summative and formative evaluations

depending on when they are given and how they are graded. They reveal at a deeper level of

what students have grasped of a unit they have studied. Essays are at times added at the end of a

formal test that allows students to describe in detail what they’ve learned and shows how well

they understand the material. Reports measure overall learning and feedback can be given in a

timely manner to nurture further growth.

I had no idea that there were two kinds of feedback. Descriptive and evaluative

feedback are clearly different. Evaluative feedback is used when a student’s skills or knowledge

is being judged or evaluated against specific criteria (Stiggins et al., 2004). Descriptive feedback

is used when a student is given opportunities to make adjustments and improvements toward his

or her understanding and performance (Hattie, 2008).

The NCLB Act requires every state to conduct an annual standardized-based assessment

of English language proficiency or each ELL. This is the same assessment that is administered

to determine an initial language acquisition level. (Syrja, 2011, pg. 43). The problem with these

State tests is that they contain cultural bias as they basically are created with the “One Size Fits

All” theory that disregards any special learning styles or language barriers.

A national assessment will contain terminology and topics that are based on typical

American verbiage and ideas that may confuse a foreigner, which makes the test results

unreliable. When the average is calculated of all the scores from a district or school with a

larger amount of ELLs, it will not be an accurate picture of the true abilities and progress of the

school as a whole. These tests set a high standard that schools cannot meet if they have a large

amount of ELLs, and when the AYP goals aren’t met the student and teachers are labeled as

failing. (Kajitani, A., et al. 2012)

Most schools use the results of the State test to make the initial placements, they also

use it to place students in the appropriate ESL class that fits them. If ESL teachers do not

conduct their own progress monitoring of each ELL’s language proficiency levels on an ongoing

basis with the mainstream classroom teachers, then they won’t have accurate information

regarding the students’ proficiency levels. If their ELLs are going to reach the academic, as well

as language goals that are required of them, then teachers need to work together to plan the

right instruction that will help their students reach the next level of language acquisition. (Syrja,

2011, pg. 43-45)

Differentiation takes time, but the cost of not doing it is enormous. Without the

appropriate differentiation, assessment results will be inaccurate at best, but if they aren‘t well

aligned they will probably be invalid. (Syrja, 2011, pg.47).

Incorporating Technology into Assessment and Evaluation is not difficult. There are

many sources on-line that can meet all of the needs of our diverse learners. In my own class I

would utilize all different types of resources on education websites. I would use funds from the

school budget to purchase tablets for each one of my students for use at home and on field trips.

The bottom line is that a teacher must really get to know their students to determine

which form of assessment and type of instruction will be best for each learning style. Identifying

an ELL’s level may not be easy, so teachers need to keep in mind that even though an ELL is

assigned to an overall level, they may be at different levels of language acquisition in different

domains. A typical ELL develops basic interpersonal communication skills in one or two years,

so their teachers may not be able to distinguish who the ELLs are in their own class just by

listening to them chat with classmates. They may sound proficient, but they are not really

comprehending the teachers’ lectures, activities, and even the textbooks. It would help the

teachers to plan instruction if they conducted their own informal assessments while they are

waiting to get the official notification of their students’ levels. (Syrja, 2011, pgs. 48-9).

References

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