
Session #4

Assessment and K.W.L.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By watching the video for this session and completing this session's learning activities, you will:

- Understand the student self-assessment plays in differentiated instruction.
- View an example student self-assessment using the K (know), L (learned) W (want to know) strategy.
- Analyze the video example in terms of concepts presented in the text and supplemental readings.
- Apply what you have learned in your own teaching situation or complete an alternative application assignment.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of your application experience

READING ASSIGNMENT:

Please read chapter 3 in the course text.

PREPARATION:

In order to focus your thinking as you begin this session, please read the following article excerpt.

Practical Ideas on Alternative Assessment

by Jo-Ellen Tannenbaum

Many educators have come to recognize that alternative assessments are an important means of gaining a dynamic picture of students' academic and linguistic development. Alternative assessment refers to procedures and techniques which can be used within the context of instruction and can be easily incorporated into the daily activities of the school or classroom. Although there is no single definition of alternative assessment, the main goal is to "gather evidence about how students are approaching, processing, and completing real-life tasks in a particular domain" (Huerta-Macias, 1995, p. 9). Alternative assessments generally meet the following criteria:

* Focus is on documenting individual student growth over time, rather than

comparing students with one another.

* Emphasis is on students' strengths (what they know), rather than weaknesses (what they don't know).

* Consideration is given to the learning styles, language proficiencies, cultural and educational backgrounds, and grade levels of students.

Alternative assessment includes a variety of measures that can be adapted for different situations.

NONVERBAL ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

"Physical Demonstration." To express academic concepts without speech, students can point or use other gestures. They can also be asked to perform hands-on tasks or to act out vocabulary, concepts, or events. As a comprehension check in a unit on Native Americans, for example, teachers can ask students to respond with thumbs up, thumbs down, or other nonverbal signs to true or false statements or to indicate whether the teacher has grouped illustrations (of homes, food, environment, clothing, etc.) under the correct tribe name. The teacher can use a checklist to record student responses over time.

"Pictorial Products." To elicit content knowledge without requiring students to speak or write, teachers can ask students to produce and manipulate drawings, dioramas, models, graphs, and charts. When studying Colonial America, for example, teachers can give students a map of the colonies and labels with the names of the colonies. Students can then attempt to place the labels in the appropriate locations. This labeling activity can be used across the curriculum with diagrams, webs, and illustrations.

To culminate a unit on butterflies, teachers can ask students to illustrate, rather than explain, the life cycle of butterflies. Students can point to different parts of a butterfly on their own drawing or on a diagram as an assessment of vocabulary retention. Pictorial journals can be kept during the unit to record observations of the butterflies in the classroom or to illustrate comprehension of classroom material about types of butterflies, their habitats, and their characteristics.

K-W-L CHARTS

Many teachers have success using K-W-L charts (what I know/what I want to know/what I've learned) to begin and end a unit of study, particularly in social studies and science. Before the unit, this strategy enables teachers to gain an awareness of students' background knowledge and interests. Afterward, it helps teachers assess the content material learned. K-W-L

charts can be developed as a class activity or on an individual basis. For students with limited English proficiency, the chart can be completed in the first language or with illustrations.

Sample K-W-L Chart

K

Lincoln was important.

His face is on a penny.

He's dead now.

I think Lincoln was a President.

He was a tall person.

W

Why is Lincoln famous?

Was he a good President?

Why is he on a penny?

Did he have a family?

How did he die?

L

Lincoln was President of the U.S.

He was the 16th President.

There was a war in America when Lincoln was President.

He let the slaves go free.

Two of his sons died while he was still alive.

Before a unit of study, teachers can have students fill in the K and W columns by asking them what they know about the topic and what they

would like to know by the end of the unit. This helps to keep students focused and interested during the unit and gives them a sense of accomplishment when they fill in the L column following the unit and realize that they have learned something.

ORAL PERFORMANCES OR PRESENTATIONS

Performance-based assessments include interviews, oral reports, role plays, describing, explaining, summarizing, retelling, paraphrasing stories or text material, and so on. Oral assessments should be conducted on an ongoing basis to monitor comprehension and thinking skills.

Role plays can be used across the curriculum with all grade levels and with any number of people. For example, a teacher can take on the role of a character who knows less than the students about a particular subject area. Students are motivated to convey facts or information prompted by questions from the character. This is a fun-filled way for a teacher to conduct informal assessments of students' knowledge in any subject (Kelner, 1993).

Teachers can also ask students to use role play to express mathematical concepts. For example, a group of students can become a numerator, a denominator, a fraction line, a proper fraction, an improper fraction, and an equivalent fraction. Speaking in the first person, students can introduce themselves and their functions in relationship to one another (Kelner, 1993). Role plays can also be used in science to demonstrate concepts such as the life cycle.

In addition, role plays can serve as an alternative to traditional book reports. Students can transform themselves into a character or object from the book (Kelner, 1993). For example, a student might become Christopher Columbus, one of his sailors, or a mouse on the ship, and tell the story from that character's point of view. The other students can write interview questions to pose to the various characters.

ORAL AND WRITTEN PRODUCTS

Some of the oral and written products useful for assessing students' progress are content area thinking and learning logs, reading response logs, writing assignments (both structured and creative), dialogue journals, and audio or video cassettes.

"Content area logs" are designed to encourage the use of metacognitive strategies when students read expository text. Entries can be made on a form with these two headings: What I Understood/What I Didn't Understand (ideas or vocabulary).

"Reading response logs" are used for students' written responses or reactions to a piece of literature. Students may respond to questions--some generic, some specific to the literature--that encourage critical thinking, or they may copy a brief text on one side of the page and write their reflections on the text on the other side.

Beginning ESL students often experience success when an expository "writing assignment" is controlled or structured. The teacher can guide students through a pre-writing stage, which includes discussion, brainstorming, webbing, outlining, and so on. The results of pre-writing, as well as the independently written product, can be assessed.

Student writing is often motivated by content themes. Narrative stories from characters' perspectives (e.g., a sailor accompanying Christopher Columbus, an Indian who met the Pilgrims, a drop of water in the water cycle, etc.) would be valuable inclusions in a student's writing portfolio.

"Dialogue journals" provide a means of interactive, ongoing correspondence between students and teachers. Students determine the choice of topics and participate at their level of English language proficiency. Beginners can draw pictures that can be labeled by the teacher.

"Audio and video cassettes" can be made of student oral readings, presentations, dramatics, interviews, or conferences (with teacher or peers).

PORTFOLIOS

Portfolios are used to collect samples of student work over time to track student development. Tierney, Carter, and Desai (1991) suggest that, among other things, teachers do the following: maintain anecdotal records from their reviews of portfolios and from regularly scheduled conferences with students about the work in their portfolios; keep checklists that link portfolio work with criteria that they consider integral to the type of work being collected; and devise continua of descriptors to plot student achievement. Whatever methods teachers choose, they should reflect with students on their work, to develop students' ability to critique their own progress.

The following types of materials can be included in a portfolio:

Audio- and videotaped recordings of readings or oral presentations.

Writing samples such as dialogue journal entries, book reports, writing

assignments (drafts or final copies), reading log entries, or other writing projects.

Art work such as pictures or drawings, and graphs and charts.

Conference or interview notes and anecdotal records.

Checklists (by teacher, peers, or student).

Tests and quizzes.

To gain multiple perspectives on students' academic development, it is important for teachers to include more than one type of material in the portfolio.

CONCLUSION

Alternative assessment holds great promise for students. Although the challenge to modify existing methods of assessment and to develop new approaches is not an easy one, the benefits for both teachers and students are great.

REFERENCES

Hamayan, E.V. (1995). Approaches to alternative assessment. "Annual Review of Applied Linguistics," 15, 212-226.

Huerta-Macias, A. (1995). Alternative assessment: Responses to commonly asked questions. "TESOL Journal," 5, 8-10.

Kelner, L.B. (1993). "The creative classroom: A guide for using creative drama in the classroom, preK-6. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pierce, L.V., & O'Malley, J.M. (1992). "Performance and portfolio assessment for language minority students. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

Tierney, R.J., Carter, M.A., & Desai, L.E. (1991). "Portfolio assessment in the reading-writing classroom." Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon.

PREPARATION:

Please consider the following questions with respect to the above article and the assigned reading in the course text. If you are taking this course as a member of a study team, discuss your answers with your colleagues. If you are taking this course as an individual, consider the implications your answers might have for your teaching situation.

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1. Which of the nonverbal assessment strategies described in the article is most appropriate for your classroom? Why?
 2. With respect to the reading assignment in the course ext, what mans do you currently use to get to know your learners? Do you feel the information you are now gathering is adequate? Why? Why not?
 3. Of in information gathering strategies described in the text in chapter three which one could you employ that you currently are not using? Why do you feel this strategy would be helpful?
 4. How could a K.W.L. chart be used to gather information about learners? How could this information be used to improve instruction?
 5. Consider your responses to 1-4 above. What implications do you see for your own classroom?

VIDEO PROGRAM:

View the video program for this session entitled, "Assessment and K.W.L." The running time for the video is approximately 25 minutes.

VIDEO PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

This video demonstrates how using a K.W.L. chart engages students in the lesson and allows them to relate the subject matter to their own lives. In addition, the video lessons shows how K.W.L. charts teach students to use higher order thinking strategies and how to monitor their own progress towards goals. To learn about this form of self-assessment, we traveled to Callanan Middle School in Des Moines Iowa and the 6th grade classroom of teacher Christy Moore to watch how she uses a K.W.L. chart in her lesson on natural resources.

VIDEO AND READING FOCUS QUESTIONS:

Please consider the following questions with respect to the information presented in the reading assignments and video program for this session. If you are taking this course as a member of a study team, discuss your answers with your colleagues. If you are taking this course as an individual, consider the implications your answers might have for your teaching situation.

1. Do you think that the lesson on natural resources was too complicated for the students? Why? Why not?
2. Rather than beginning her lesson explaining the K.W.L. chart, what could the teacher have done to spark her students' interest in the subject

of natural resources? For instance, the teacher could have started the discussion with a brainstorming activity with the question “How would your life change if you woke up tomorrow morning and there was no longer any oil or gas anywhere on the planet.”

3. Could this activity you identified in answer to #2 above also have served as a preassessment of what her students already knew about the subject? Explain your answer.

4. What type of follow up activity could the teacher use to further assess her students understanding of natural resources?

5. The teacher used exit cards to assess her students understanding of the subject. Was this also a self-assessment for the teacher? Explain your answer.

6. Consider your responses to 1-5 above. What implications do you see for your own classroom?

APPLICATION PROJECT:

Your application assignment for this session is to create a lesson or activity that demonstrates your understanding of course content as it applies to your teaching situation. Select one of the following options:
Option 1. Create a lesson or activity that involves the use of a K.W.L. chart. If you have access to a classroom, teach your lesson. If you do not have access to a classroom, draw on your past experience and describe the results of the implementation that you would anticipate.
Option 2. Create your own application project. (For detailed instructions and the application project rubric, please turn to the Application Project section for session 2.)

PROGRESS REPORTING

After you have completed created and implemented you application project, please turn to the Progress Report form for this session. Progress Report forms for all sessions are placed together at the back of this Course of Study book for easy removal and evaluation.

Session Notes: