



Chapter 8

Classroom

Assessment

Chapter Summary

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Introduction

Assessment approaches and strategies provide evidence of understanding and are a critical part of the planning process. Assessment should be considered and planned before deciding on learning activities. Assessment approaches and tasks provide the context and direction for the learning activities that will be used to build understandings and skills.

Assessment

Assessment is the gathering and consideration of information about what a student knows, is able to do, and is learning to do. It is integral to the teaching-learning process, facilitating student learning, and improving instruction.

Teachers consider assessment during all stages of instruction and learning. The assessment process informs teachers as to what students know and what they are able to do in relation to learning outcomes. Informed by a well-designed and implemented assessment process, teachers are empowered to make sound pedagogical decisions to move students toward the achievement of learning outcomes.

Teachers use assessment to:

- obtain information about what students know or are able to do
- modify instruction
- improve student performance

Assessment practices should:

- be part of an ongoing process rather than a set of isolated events
- focus on both process and product
- provide opportunities for students to revise their work in order to set goals and improve their learning
- provide a status report on how well students can demonstrate learning outcomes at a particular time
- be developmentally appropriate, age-appropriate, and gender balanced, and consider students' cultural and special needs
- include multiple sources of evidence (formal and informal)
- provide opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do
- involve students in identifying and/or creating criteria
- communicate the criteria used to evaluate student work before students begin tasks so that they can plan for success
- be communicated to students so that they understand expectations related to learning outcomes

Also, assessment practices should help and encourage students to:

- be responsible for their own learning
- be involved in establishing criteria for evaluating their products or performances
- work together to learn and achieve outcomes
- feel competent and successful
- set goals for future improvements

Evaluation

Evaluation is often confused with assessment. Evaluation is a judgment regarding the quality, value, or worth of a student's response, product, or performance based on established criteria and curriculum standards. Through evaluation, students receive a clear indication of how well they are performing in relation to learning outcomes.

With information from assessment and evaluation, teachers can make decisions about *what* to focus on in the curriculum and *when* to focus on it. Assessment and evaluation identify who needs extra support, who needs greater challenge, who needs extra practice, and who is ready to move on. The primary goal of assessment and evaluation is to provide ongoing feedback to teachers, students, and parents in order to enhance teaching and learning.

Assessment for Learning (Formative), Assessment of Learning (Summative), and Diagnostic Assessment

Assessment is generally divided into three categories: assessment *for* learning (formative assessment), assessment *of* learning (summative assessment), and diagnostic assessment. For professional discussion and understanding, it is helpful to be aware of these terms and their meanings.

Assessment for Learning

→ For blackline masters...

Appendix E

Assessment *for* learning is characterized by the ongoing exchange of information about learning between student and self, peer, teacher, and parent. It provides information about student progress, allowing the teacher to make program adjustments to best meet the learning needs of a student or class. Assessment *for* learning provides detailed, descriptive feedback through comments. As a result of receiving feedback focused on the learning outcomes, students will have a clearer understanding of what they need to do to improve their future performance. If students are to become competent users of assessment information, they need to be included in the assessment process (Black et al. 2003).

Examples of assessment for learning activities include the following:

- Students learn the names of family members and bring a photograph or drawing of their family to class. They take turns introducing their family members to their peers. Observe students for the demonstration of specific learning outcomes, such as how well they share basic information and if they communicate words and phrases comprehensibly. Observations are recorded using an outcome-based observation checklist. Such information effectively informs the planning process, leading to improvement of future student performance in relation to specific learning outcomes.

Caution

Teachers should be aware that some students may live in foster or group homes and/or may not have a traditional family structure. An alternative activity may be necessary.

- After hearing German spoken clearly and correctly, students form small groups and read a short passage to one another. Each group selects a spokesperson to present the passage to the entire class. The teacher facilitates a discussion on the characteristics of good German pronunciation. Students then summarize some of the characteristics of good pronunciation in their learning logs. This knowledge is used to improve students' oral interaction and production skills.

Assessment of Learning

Assessment *of* learning most often occurs at the end of a period of instruction, such as a unit or term. It is designed to be summarized in a performance grade and shared with students, parents, and others who have a right to know.

Examples of assessment of learning activities include the following:

- At the conclusion of a unit on “My Family,” students prepare a personal collage using pictures of themselves, families, extended families, friends, their favourite activities, foods, books, likes, and dislikes. Each picture is labelled in German. The collages are then presented orally in German. An outcome-based rubric is used to evaluate how well students are able to share basic information and use pronunciation comprehensibly. The rubric is then translated into a grade that can be presented as part of a report card, portfolio, or parent-student-teacher conference.

Caution

Teachers should be aware that some students may live in foster or group homes and/or may not have a typical family structure. An alternative activity may be necessary.

- At the end of a period of study in which students have had the opportunity to learn and use several relevant vocabulary words, students write a test in which they match a German vocabulary word with the corresponding word in English. These tests are marked and contribute to an overall mark in a reporting period.

Summary of Planning Assessment of Learning

| | Assessment for Learning | Assessment as Learning | Assessment of Learning |
|---------------|--|--|--|
| Why Assess? | to enable teachers to determine next steps in advancing student learning | to guide and provide opportunities for each student to monitor and critically reflect on his or her learning, and identify next steps | to certify or inform parents or others of student's proficiency in relation to curriculum learning outcomes |
| Assess What? | each student's progress and learning needs in relation to the curricular outcomes | each student's thinking about his or her learning, what strategies he or she uses to support or challenge that learning, and the mechanisms he or she uses to adjust and advance his or her learning | the extent to which students can apply the key concepts, knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to the curricular outcomes |
| What Methods? | a range of methods in different modes that make students' skills and understanding visible | a range of methods in different modes that elicit students' learning and metacognitive processes | a range of methods in different modes that assess both product and process |

(continued)

Summary of Planning Assessment of Learning (continued)

| | Assessment for Learning | Assessment as Learning | Assessment of Learning |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| Ensuring Quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accuracy and consistency of observations and interpretations of student learning • clear, detailed learning expectations • accurate, detailed notes for descriptive feedback to each student | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accuracy and consistency of student's self-reflection, self-monitoring, and self-adjustment • engagement of the student in considering and challenging his or her thinking • students record their own learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accuracy, consistency, and fairness of judgements based on high-quality information • clear, detailed learning expectations • fair and accurate summative reporting |
| Using the Information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide each student with accurate descriptive feedback to further his or her learning • differentiate instruction by continually checking where each student is in relation to the curricular outcomes • provide parents or guardians with descriptive feedback about student learning and ideas for support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide each student with accurate descriptive feedback that will help him or her develop independent learning habits • have each student focus on the task and his or her learning (not on getting the right answer) • provide each student with ideas for adjusting, rethinking, and articulating his or her learning • students report about their learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indicate each student's level of learning • provide the foundation for discussions on placement or promotion • report fair, accurate, and detailed information that can be used to decide the next steps in a student's learning |

Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessment may occur at the beginning of a term, unit of study, or whenever information about the prior learning of a student is relevant. Various types of diagnostic assessments (e.g., tests, performance-based assessments) may be used to collect information. Teachers may use diagnostic assessment to:

- find out what students know and can do
- identify student strengths and plan instruction that builds on and extends those strengths
- target difficulties, identify the precise nature of them, and plan instruction to meet those difficulties
- make informed decisions regarding where to focus instructional time and effort

Determining the Assessment Purpose

Any assessment strategy can serve both formative and/or summative purposes, depending on how the results are used. In assessment *of* learning, tests are given to check learning at a given point and are included as part of the report card mark. When planning to administer a test, teachers can also use assessment *for* learning strategies. For example:

- Teachers can collaboratively develop test questions with students. Developing test questions gives an indication of what students know and can do. This helps students understand how to focus their test preparation and helps teachers determine how to most effectively guide student review.
- Teachers can ask students to rate, on a scale from easy to difficult, what has been learned. This helps students understand how to focus their test preparation and helps teachers determine how to most effectively help students review. Following a test, teachers ask students to identify what questions they considered to be the most difficult—the ones they found most challenging, not necessarily the questions they got wrong. Teachers can then take this information and work with students to categorize learning outcomes that proved difficult and to facilitate student self-assessment and goal-setting.
- Teachers can administer a non-graded pre-test prior to introducing a new activity. For example, if the instructional focus of a game to be played is to learn new vocabulary, students can be given a pre-test to check how well they know that vocabulary. After the learning experience, students can complete the same test and compare their performances. Based on this comparison, students can reflect on their learning in their learning logs.

It is possible to use the same test for both assessment *of* learning and assessment *for* learning. It is up to teachers to determine the purpose and use of the results of assessment strategies.

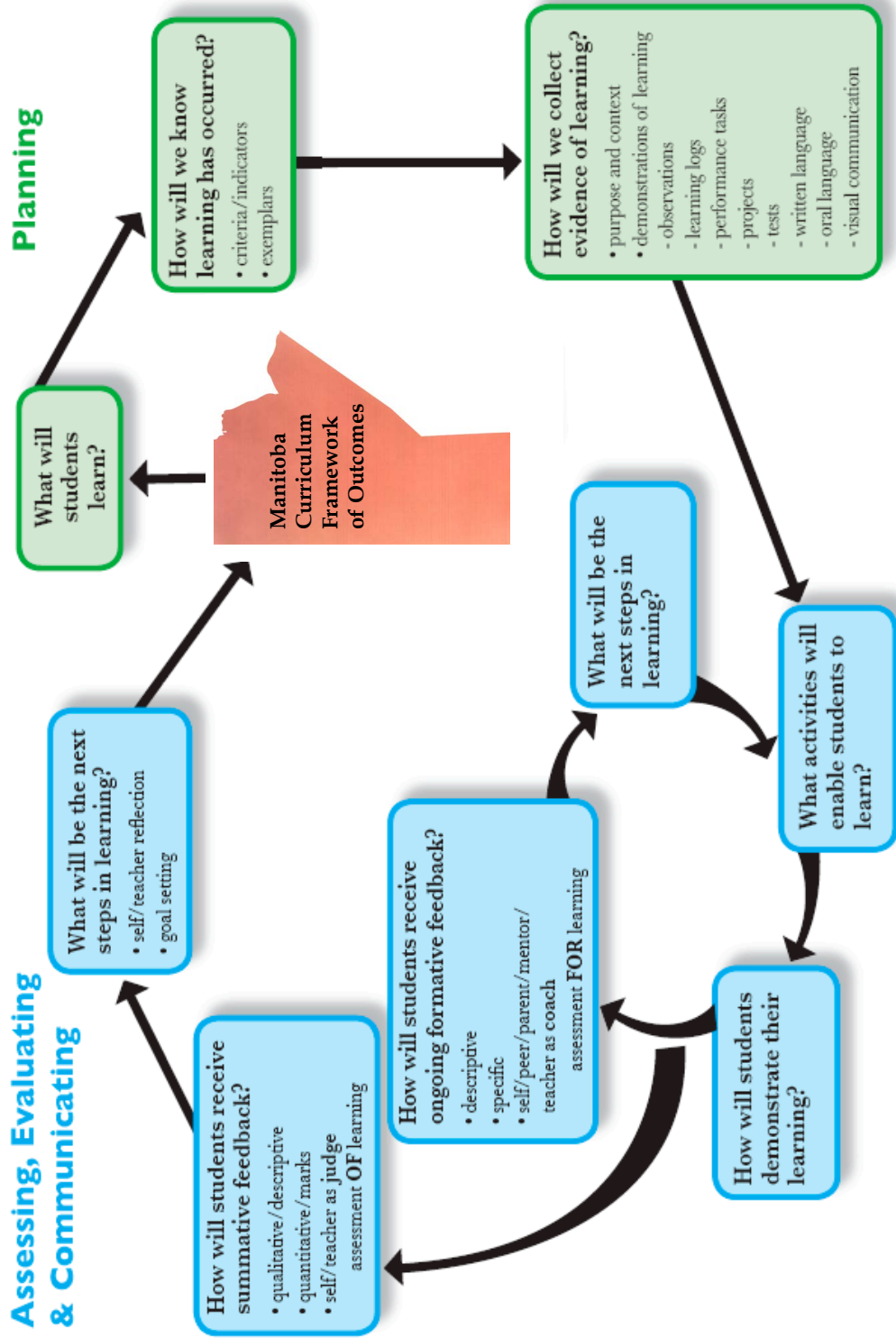
Meaningful Assessment

The quality of assessment largely determines the quality of evaluation. Valid judgments can be made only if accurate and complete assessment data are collected in a variety of contexts over time.

Assessment should occur in authentic contexts that allow students to demonstrate learning by performing meaningful tasks. Meaningful assessment achieves a purpose and provides clear and useful information. For example, it may identify misunderstandings in student learning and provide corrective feedback and direction for further instruction. Assessment enhances instruction and learning.

Meaningful content and contexts for assessment help students by engaging their attention and encouraging them to share their work and talk about their learning processes. Students need to take an active part in assessment. When students understand assessment criteria and procedures and take ownership for assessing the quality, quantity, and processes of their own work, they develop self-assessment skills. The ultimate goal of assessment is to develop independent lifelong learners who regularly monitor and assess their own progress.

Assessing Student Learning in the Classroom



Assessing Student Learning in the Classroom: ©Alberta Assessment Consortium (AAC). Source: *A Framework for Student Assessment* (p. 3). 2nd ed. (2005). Used with permission.

Principles of Effective Classroom Assessment

Effective assessment provides regular feedback and allows teachers and students to reflect on progress and adjust instruction for learning.

There are several critical factors to consider as you plan and develop an effective classroom assessment program. The graphic on the preceding page, “Assessing Student Learning in the Classroom,” outlines a framework for classroom assessment based on the latest research and best practices designed to enhance student learning. The following principles are central to an assessment process that informs teaching practices and enhances student learning.

Assessment aligns with outcomes from the curriculum framework.

General and specific learning outcomes identify expectations for student achievement across the curriculum. These outcomes should be used to articulate evidence and criteria for learning. When outcomes are clustered around a “big idea” or concept, they can be used as the basis for articulating expectations, selecting strategies, and developing activities. Well-aligned units and lesson plans incorporate a series of learning experiences that:

- clearly identify a cluster of outcomes around a big idea or concept
- describe what students should understand, know, and do to meet the outcomes
- provide learning activities that lead students to attain the outcomes
- use instructional approaches or strategies based on indicators of student learning

Teachers should plan assessment activities that require students to demonstrate what they understand and can do in relation to the selected outcomes so that valid inferences can be made on the results.

Assessment criteria are clearly communicated.

Criteria describe what students are expected to be able to do to meet intended learning outcomes. Criteria need to be written in age-appropriate language and communicated to students prior to beginning an assessed activity. Sharing criteria with students empowers them to monitor their learning and communicate their progress.

Assessment employs a variety of strategies.

The most accurate profile of student achievement is based on the findings gathered from assessing student performance in a variety of contexts. When teachers use a variety of assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning strategies consistently, they are able to accurately communicate student achievement in relation to the curriculum framework. For example, some skills outcomes can only be evaluated through performance assessment that provides students with a meaningful real-world context, and in second language instruction, observation of personal communication is an essential assessment strategy.

Assessment is ongoing.

The assessment process has no beginning or end; it is a continuous process that enhances teaching and learning and provides ongoing feedback to teachers, students, and parents about student learning. Teachers gather information about student learning and consider it as they plan further instruction. They use ongoing student assessment to make decisions on how to best support student learning while students work toward achieving the outcomes in the curriculum framework.

Assessment involves students in the process.

Whenever possible, students should be involved in determining the criteria used to evaluate their work. Such involvement leads students to a deeper understanding of what they are expected to know and do. Students should also be involved in the process of identifying their learning needs and goals. Teachers facilitate self-assessment, peer assessment, conferencing, and goal setting to enhance learning and allow students to become effective users of assessment information.

Assessment demonstrates sensitivity to individual differences and needs.

Assessment impacts student motivation and self-esteem and therefore needs to be sensitive to how individual students learn. “Accommodations to... assessment will greatly serve the needs of individual students who have communication, behavioural, intellectual or physical exceptionalities.... Such accommodations or adaptations should be made to ensure the most accurate understanding of a student’s performance...” (Toronto Catholic District School Board 2001, 14). As teachers conference with students, decisions are made with regard to the next steps in student learning. This includes accommodations for individual student learning needs.

→ For more information...

Chapter 8:
Assessment
Accommodations
for Students with
Special Education
Needs

Appendix C:
Examples of
Assessment
Accommodations

Accommodations to programming and assessment, including those for English as an additional language (EAL) students and for students with special education needs, ensure the most positive impact on student learning and an accurate understanding of student performance. Specific accommodations may include adjustments to the kind, breadth, depth, and pace of assessment.

Assessment includes many different tools and processes.

Assessment tools and processes include:

- tests and quizzes with constructed-response (performance-based) items and selected-response items (true/false, fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice)
- reflective assessments, such as journals, logs, listen-think-pair-share activities, interviews, self-evaluation activities, and peer response groups
- academic prompts that clearly specify performance task elements, such as format, audience, topic, and purpose
- culminating assessment projects that allow for student choice and independent application

Assessment should:

- be directly connected to curriculum expectations and to instructional strategies
- include various forms, such as observations, anecdotal notes, rating scales, performance tasks, student self-assessment, teacher questioning, presentations, and learning logs
- be designed to collect data about what students know and are able to do, what they need to learn and what they have achieved, and about the effectiveness of the learning experience
- demonstrate a range of student abilities, skills, and knowledge
- involve sharing the intended outcomes and assessment criteria with students prior to an assessment activity
- assess before, during, and after instruction
- provide frequent and descriptive feedback to students
- ensure that students can describe their progress and achievement

Assessment Accommodations for Students with Special Education Needs

➔ For more information...

Chapter 5

Assessment may need to be modified or adapted to accommodate students with special education needs. Based on a clear understanding of the specific needs of a student, teachers can make assessment accommodations related to:

- kind/task
- depth/detail
- breadth/volume
- pace/timing

The following chart describes examples of these types of assessment accommodation.

| | |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Accommodation in Kind (Task)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarize students with methods being used. • Use alternative assessment formats (e.g., oral tests, conferences). • Encourage student negotiation of performance tasks. • Provide exemplary models. • Allow students to practise the activity. • Convert short answer questions to a Cloze format. • Present tasks that begin with the concrete and move to the abstract. • Encourage the use of tools, such as dictionaries, word processors, and magnifiers. • Allow peer support, such as partner work. | <p style="text-align: center;">Accommodation in Depth (Detail)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break down complex tasks into smaller steps. • Provide written instructions in addition to verbal directions. Put an outline of steps on the board. • Include picture clues to support verbal instructions. • Modify the format of the evaluation by having fewer questions per page, or limit the overall number of questions. • Teach students to attend to key direction words in questions by using a highlighter. • Avoid excessive corrections by focusing on fewer expectations. |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Accommodation in Breadth (Volume)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce amount of reading and writing required. • Reduce amount of content per assessment task. • Provide clear, simple directions for the assessment activity. • Allow the use of notes or text during tests to assist students with weak recall, or provide a set of reference notes. • Monitor work to ensure time lines are met. | <p style="text-align: center;">Accommodation in Pace (Timing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide additional time to complete tasks and tests. • Have students repeat and rephrase instructions. • Allow students to complete the assessment task over several sessions. • Reinforce effective behaviour such as finishing on time and demonstrating commitment to the task. • Take into account improvement over time. |

Assessment Accommodations for Students with Special Education Needs: Adapted with permission from Toronto Catholic District School Board, *Assessment of Student Achievement in Catholic Schools: A Resource Document* (Toronto, ON: Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2001), p. 15.

Student-Directed Assessment

Involving students in the assessment process allows them to become effective users of assessment information. Students can become proficient users of student-directed assessment strategies such as conferencing, self-assessment, peer assessment, and goal-setting.

Conferencing

Conferences are usually short, informal meetings held with individual students or a small group of students and involve diagnostic listening, questioning, and responding. Interviews are conferences conducted to gather specific information. They may involve a set of questions asked for a specific purpose or a formal set of written questions to which a student responds in writing. For example, teachers may need information about the student's use of text and use a formal conference or interview to ask questions directly related to a particular aspect of the student's performance.

Sometimes more formal interviews are conducted regarding student attitudes and metacognitive behaviours. These are often presented as a set of questions or activities to which the student may respond orally, while the teacher records his or her responses.

Whether conferences are informal or formal, they are most beneficial for assessment purposes when they are held on a regular basis and both student and teacher come prepared with materials to share and questions to ask. Conference notes form a permanent record of the content of the conference and can be used to set goals for future learning.

Once students are familiar with conferencing procedures, peer conferencing can be used by students to obtain feedback and discuss their progress and goals.

The purpose of conferencing is to:

- provide opportunities for students and the teacher to discuss learning strengths and areas for improvement
- set learning goals
- learn about students' understanding of information, students' attitudes toward learning, and the skills and strategies students employ during the learning process
- provide opportunities for individualized teaching, guiding students to more challenging materials, and determining future instructional needs

Tips for Conferencing with Students

1. The tone of conferences should be relaxed and friendly, with a limited number of topics to discuss. Students should be aware of the purpose of the conference and the expectations of participants before the conference begins.
2. Manage conferences by setting aside definite times.
3. Record individual student names on a classroom calendar so that students know the day on which their conference will occur.
4. Use a class list to ensure that all students are seen in individual conferences.
5. Allow students to request conferences on a sign-up basis.
6. Ensure that all students select at least a minimum number of conferences (to be determined by the teacher) throughout the term.
7. Review class records frequently to ensure that all students are being seen regularly.
8. Schedule assessment conferences for five to ten minutes with a specific purpose in mind.
9. Maintain a friendly, relaxed atmosphere that promotes trust.
10. Ensure that students are able to work independently so conferences can occur without interruption. Discuss the purpose of conferences and the expectations of all members of the class during conference times. Establish procedures for problem solving other class issues that may arise during conference times.
11. Conference more frequently with students who are having difficulty.
12. Focus on only one or two topics at each conference.
13. Begin and end each conference on a positive note.
14. Review recent anecdotal notes and conference records to identify students in immediate need of conferencing.
15. Understand that students become more involved and accept more responsibility for the conference as they become familiar with the process.
16. In a group conference, each student involved has the opportunity to share his or her work, to emphasize what he or she is proud of, and to ask questions. Other participants point out what they like about the student's work and offer suggestions for improvement. It may be useful to observe and record anecdotal notes.

Reading Conferences

→ For more information...

Chapter 3

Reading conferences are usually one-on-one meetings between the teacher and the student. They involve diagnostic evaluation of reading skills, questioning, and responding. The tone of reading conferences should be relaxed and friendly, with a limited number of topics to be discussed. Students should be aware of the purpose of the conference and the expectations of participants before the conference begins.

Reading conferences can be used to:

- provide the teacher with information about student progress
- set new learning goals
- allow students to address difficulties or problems with the teacher
- discuss reading strengths and areas for improvement
- learn about students' reading abilities and the skills and strategies they employ during the reading process
- provide an opportunity for individualized teaching and guiding students to more challenging reading materials

Procedure

Conferences are more productive if both the teacher and the student are prepared. Some possible preparatory activities for students include:

- practising a piece to be read aloud to the teacher
- updating or reviewing a reading log or response journal and choosing segments to share with the teacher
- selecting a passage causing difficulty and preparing to discuss problems and problem solving used
- preparing a list of difficult words to be discussed
- selecting and preparing for discussion of a reading the student found interesting, exciting, or humorous
- preparing to discuss how a selection relates to another text or personal experience
- preparing a self-assessment and personal reflection list (e.g., things I am doing well as a reader, things I plan to work on as a reader)

Depending on the type of preparation for the conference, gather assessment data and provide feedback information to the student by:

- completing a running record of oral reading
- using a checklist or rubric to evaluate the student's response journal or reading log
- completing a specific strategy checklist
- completing a retelling assessment
- noting vocabulary development and strategy use
- noting connections the student is making to other texts, prior knowledge, and experience in the world
- observing the student's level of ownership of the reading process through discussion of the student's self-assessment and goals
- observing the range of text forms, genres, and topics the student is reading

- using interview questions related to specific aspects of reading, such as comprehension, style, and decoding text for meaning, as well as the student's self-perceptions as a reader

Oral Reading Miscue Analysis

Oral reading miscue analysis describes procedures used with oral reading to determine how the reader is processing print. Oral reading provides a means for examining the reader's use of three cueing systems—graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic. It is based on the premise that not all errors or miscues are equal and that careful analysis of miscues can yield important information about which cues and strategies the reader is using or failing to use effectively. Analysis is focused on the types of substitutions that the reader makes during oral reading.

The purpose of miscue analysis is to provide systematic analysis of the types of miscues the reader is making to determine which strategies need to be emphasized in word identification and comprehension instruction.

Running Records of Text Reading

Keeping a running record of text reading is a technique for systematically observing students as they read classroom texts. It is important to receive training in the administration and interpretation of running records of text reading. Running records provide documentation of students' actual reading of a text that the teacher can analyze and use to make instructional decisions. This is a very useful tool because it can be done almost anywhere and takes only a few minutes to complete. The analysis of records of oral reading behaviours provides the teacher with information about the strategies that the student is using or not using when reading text—information that is helpful when planning programs.

Running records of text reading can be recorded on a blank sheet of paper; no special form is required. The student or teacher may select the book to read. The teacher sits beside the student as he or she reads the text, records notes on the oral reading behaviours of the student, and then analyzes these records when time is available.

Think-Alouds

Think-alouds are reading tasks in which students are asked to verbalize their thoughts while reading. Think-alouds are an effective instructional strategy, can provide insight into how readers process text, and serve as a very effective assessment strategy for comprehension.

Personal Reflection and Self-Assessment

➔ **For blackline masters...**

Appendix E:
Self-Assessment Checklist;
Self-Assessment Rating Scale;
Self-Assessment Checklist and Goal-Setting

Personal reflection can be structured by the teacher or the students and may include personal responses about the learning process. Teachers can effectively model personal reflection for students on a daily basis.

When students self-assess they:

- reflect on what they have learned and how they learned it
- monitor and regulate their learning while they are learning
- see their strengths as well as areas that need work
- realize that they are responsible for their own learning
- evaluate the quality of their work and knowledge
- set goals for future learning and plan ways to achieve their goals
- see their progress in all curricular areas

Tools such as response journals and learning logs can become even more effective when accompanied by the use of probes or specific questions. In *Assessing Student Outcomes*, Marzano, Pickering, and McTighe offer the following journal-writing probes and questions that help students reflect on their own learning:

Reflecting on Content

Describe the extent to which you understand the information discussed in class. What are you confident about? What are you confused about? What do you find particularly interesting and thought provoking?

Reflecting on Information Processing

Describe how effective you were in gathering information for your project.

Reflecting on Communication

Describe how effective you were in communicating your conclusions to your discussion group.

Reflecting on Collaboration and Cooperation

Describe how well you worked with your group throughout your project.

Assessing their own thinking and learning provides students with valuable training in self-monitoring. One way to have students reflect on their learning is to have them complete sentence stems such as:

- This piece of work demonstrates that I can...
- I can improve my work by...
- After reviewing my work, I would like to set a new goal to...
- A strategy that worked well for me is...

Response journals, learning logs, end-of-the-class drawings, and partner talk are other ways for students to reflect on their learning in the classroom.

To maximize learning, teachers can create opportunities for students to compare their own self-assessment information with teacher assessments. This kind of authentic student-teacher interaction during the assessment process encourages students to honestly and thoughtfully assess their own work and take ownership of their own learning.

Students can assume more responsibility in the learning process by assessing and/or evaluating their own assignments or projects prior to teacher or peer assessment. Students can also write their own progress report comments and summary-of-learning letters to teachers and parents.

Portfolios

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work samples, student self-assessments, and goal statements that reflect student progress. Students generally choose the work samples to place in the portfolio, but the teacher may also recommend that specific work samples be included. Portfolios are powerful tools that allow students to see their academic progress from grade to grade.

The physical structure of a portfolio refers to the actual arrangement of the work samples, which can be organized according to chronology, subject area, style, or goal area. The conceptual structure refers to the teacher's goals for student learning. For example, the teacher may have students complete a self-assessment on a work sample and then set a goal for future learning. The work sample self-assessment and the goal sheet are then added to the portfolio.

Work samples from all curricular areas can be selected and placed in a portfolio, including stories, tests, and projects.

Effective portfolios:

- are updated regularly to keep them as current and complete as possible
- help students examine their progress
- help students develop a positive self-concept as learners
- are shared with parents or guardians
- are a planned, organized collection of student-selected work
- tell detailed stories about a variety of student outcomes that would otherwise be difficult to document
- include self-assessments that describe the student as both a learner and an individual
- serve as a guide for future learning by illustrating a student's present level of achievement
- include a selection of items that are representative of curriculum outcomes and of what students know and can do
- include the criteria against which the student work was evaluated
- support the assessment, evaluation and communication of student learning

- document learning in a variety of ways—process, product, growth, and achievement
- include a variety of works—audio recordings, video recordings, photographs, graphic organizers, first drafts, journals, and assignments that feature work from all of the multiple intelligences.

Work samples not only provide reliable information about student achievement of the curriculum, but also provide students with a context for assessing their own work and setting meaningful goals for learning. Furthermore, displaying concrete samples of student work and sharing assessments that illustrate grade-level expectations of the curriculum are key to winning the confidence and support of parents.

An essential requirement of portfolios is that students include written reflections that explain why each sample was selected. The power of the portfolio is derived from these descriptions, reactions, and metacognitive reflections. Conferencing with parents, peers, and/or teachers helps synthesize learning and celebrate successes. Some students become adept at writing descriptions and personal reflections of their work without any prompts. For students who have difficulty deciding what to write, sentence starters might be useful. For example:

- This piece shows I really understand the content because...
- This piece showcases my _____ because...
- If I could show this piece to anyone—living or dead—I would show it to _____ because...
- People who knew me last year would never believe I created this piece because...
- This piece was my greatest challenge because...
- My (parents, friend, teacher) liked this piece because...
- One thing I learned about myself is...¹

The student descriptions should indicate whether the product was the result of a specifically designed performance task or a regular learning activity. The level of assistance is also relevant—did the student complete the work independently, with a partner, with intermittent guidance from the teacher, or at home with parent support? Dating the sample, providing a brief context, and indicating whether the work is a draft or in completed form are also essential.

1. Adapted from Kay Burke, *The Mindful School: How to Assess Authentic Learning* (3rd edition) (Arlington Heights, IL: Skylight Professional Development, 1999, 1994, 1993), p. 68. Adapted with permission of Sage Publications, Inc.

Goal-Setting

➔ **For blackline masters...**

Appendix E:
Self-Assessment
Checklist and Goal-
Setting,
Long-Term Goal-
Setting

Goal-setting follows naturally out of self-assessment, peer assessment, and conferences. Students and teachers decide what they need to focus on next in students' learning, set goals, and plan the steps students will take toward achieving their goals.

Goals can be either short- or long-term. Short-term goals are small and specific and are likely to be achieved within a brief period of time. One way to help students set goals is to add a prompt to the end of a self-assessment task (e.g., "Next time I will...").

Students set long-term goals when they take an overall look at how they are doing and identify a specific focus for improvement. Long-term goals are bigger and more general and usually require an extended period of time to reach, sometimes as long as a few months.

➔ **For sample blackline masters...**

Appendix D:
Goal-Setting
Organizer 1, 2,
3, or 4

To coach students in setting SMART learning goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely) (Sutton 1997), teachers should advise students to look for strengths in their work as well as areas of potential growth.

Students need to set goals that are attainable and appropriate. Teachers can use direct instruction to help students develop goal-setting skills. When students set their goals, they need to:

- consider their strengths
- identify areas that need improvement
- use established criteria
- identify resources they will need to be successful
- design plans that will enable them to reach their goals
- share their goals with significant people in their lives
- plan timelines for goal review and attainment

Students may set specific goals for each of the language arts. Goals may be set for daily activities, for long-term activities, or for a term.

Once students describe what they need to do, they design a specific plan to meet their goals. Teachers ask students to provide specific information, such as a date by which they wish to accomplish their goal and the materials and resources they will need.

Learning Logs

Learning logs serve to develop student awareness of outcomes and learning processes. With encouragement, guidance, and practice, students develop the ability to reflect on learning activities, identify what they have learned, identify areas in which they need to improve, and set personal learning goals. It takes time and practice for students to become adept at such reflective thinking, particularly in the beginning stages. Learning logs kept by students and responded to by the teacher on a regular basis provide an effective assessment *for* learning tool.

Guided Reflection

Learning logs allow students to monitor their learning and write to the teacher about what help they need to improve. Teachers can direct students to focus on a particular area in their learning logs, such as reflecting on a specific experience, or breaking down vocabulary and grammar into categories that indicate levels of understanding, such as “Got it! Getting it! Don’t get it yet!” Information gained from periodic meetings with students about their learning logs allows teachers to plan how to help students improve.

Metacognitive Reflection

Metacognitive reflection can be defined as thinking about one’s own thinking and learning processes. Teachers help students develop metacognitive strategies through direct instruction, modelling, and providing opportunities for student practice. In this way, students become effective thinkers who self-monitor and develop control over their thinking processes.

Students use their metacognitive skills to reflect on what they have learned, how they have learned it, and what they need to do to pursue their learning further. When they engage in metacognitive reflection, students can monitor their own learning and strengthen their will to learn. Learning logs, conferences, and inventories can all be used to help students develop metacognitive awareness. Personal reflection on daily work, as well as on test and examination performance, can expand students’ self-knowledge. Students are able to see the progress they make, which in turn improves their self-concept.

Learning Lists

Lists that facilitate student reflection can also be included in learning logs. To remember particularly challenging words or phrases, students can make lists of these items. Creating lists can help students target their learning by recognizing areas in which they need to improve.

Peer Assessment

→ For blackline master...

Appendix E:
Peer-Assessment
Checklist

Peer assessment allows students to examine one another's work as it relates to specific criteria, and to offer encouragement and suggestions for improvement. Peer assessment offers students the opportunity to share with one another their insights about learning German.

To facilitate positive and effective peer assessment, teachers need to ensure that students understand the criteria and focus on a particular aspect of their peers' work. Students should be coached on giving descriptive and constructive feedback so they avoid using broad terms such as "good" or "bad." It may be helpful if teachers have students offer two positive comments and one question about their peers' work.

Peer assessment could be facilitated by having students:

- complete a self-assessment evaluation, using the comments made by their peers
- complete a peer-assessment checklist and discuss the results with the peer, explaining the feedback.

Teacher-Directed Assessment

Teachers use a number of tools to evaluate and assess student performance related to curricular outcomes. By assessing a variety of activities and using different tools, such as rubrics, rating scales, and anecdotal notes, teachers obtain a more accurate view of student performance.

Checklists, Rating Scales, and Rubrics

→ For blackline masters...

Appendix E:
Observation
Checklist;
Checklist and
Comments 1 and 2;
Rating Scale 1, 2,
and 3; Rubric;
Rubric and
Checklist

Checklists, rating scales, and rubrics are tools that state specific criteria and allow teachers and students to gather information and make judgments about what students know and can do in relation to curricular outcomes. These tools offer systematic ways of collecting data about specific behaviours, knowledge, and skills.

The quality of information acquired through the use of checklists, rating scales, and rubrics is highly dependent on the quality of the descriptors chosen for the assessment. The benefit of this information is also dependent on students' direct involvement in the assessment and understanding of the feedback provided.

The purpose of checklists, rating scales, and rubrics is to:

- provide tools for systematic recording of observations
- provide tools for self-assessment
- provide criteria to students prior to collecting and evaluating data on their work
- record the development of specific skills, strategies, attitudes, and behaviours necessary for demonstrating learning
- clarify students' instructional needs by presenting a record of current accomplishments

Tips for Developing Checklists, Rating Scales, and Rubrics

1. Use checklists, rating scales, and rubrics in relation to outcomes and standards.
2. Use simple formats that can be understood by students and that will communicate information about student learning to parents.
3. Ensure that the characteristics and descriptors listed are clear, specific, and observable.
4. Encourage students to assist with writing appropriate criteria. For example, what are the descriptors that demonstrate levels of performance for a piece of persuasive writing?
5. Ensure that checklists, rating scales, and rubrics are dated to track progress over time.
6. Leave space to record anecdotal notes or comments.
7. Use generic templates that become familiar to students and to which various descriptors can be added quickly to reflect the outcome(s) being assessed.
8. Provide guidance to students to use and create their own checklists, rating scales, and rubrics for self-assessment purposes and as guidelines for goal-setting.

Checklists usually offer a yes/no format in relation to student demonstration of specific criteria. They may be used to record observations of an individual, a group or a whole class.

Rating Scales allow teachers to indicate the degree or frequency of the behaviours, skills, and strategies displayed by the student and can show a range of performance levels. Rating scales state the criteria and provide three or four response selections to describe the quality or frequency of student work.

Teachers can use rating scales to record observations and students can use them as self-assessment tools. Rating scales also give students information for setting goals and improving performance. Teaching students to use descriptive words such as **always**, **usually**, **sometimes**, and **never** helps them pinpoint specific strengths and needs. The more precise and descriptive the words for each scale point, the more reliable the tool. Effective rating scales use descriptors with clearly understood measures, such as frequency. Scales that rely on subjective descriptors of quality, such as **fair**, **good**, or **excellent**, are less effective because the single adjective does not contain enough information on what criteria are indicated at each of these points on the scale.

Teachers can increase the assessment value of a checklist or rating scale by adding two or three additional steps that give students an opportunity to identify skills they would like to improve or the skill they feel is most important. For example, teachers can instruct students to:

- put a star beside the skill they think is the most important for encouraging others
- circle the skill they would most like to improve
- underline the skill that is the most challenging for them

→ For more information...

See Appendix E

Rubrics use a set of criteria to evaluate a student’s performance. They consist of a fixed measurement scale and detailed descriptions of the characteristics for each level of performance. These descriptions focus on the **quality** of the product or performance and not the **quantity** (e.g., not the number of paragraphs, examples to support an idea, spelling errors). Rubrics are commonly used to evaluate student performance with the intention of including the result in a grade for reporting purposes. Rubrics can increase the consistency and reliability of scoring.

Rubrics use a set of specific criteria to evaluate student performance. They may be used to assess individuals or groups and, as with rating scales, may be compared over time.

→ For blackline master...

Appendix E:
Rubric

Developing Rubrics and Scoring Criteria

Rubrics are increasingly recognized as a way to both effectively assess student learning and communicate expectations directly, clearly, and concisely to students. The inclusion of rubrics provides opportunities to consider what demonstrations of learning look like, and to describe stages in the development and growth of knowledge, understandings, and skills. To be most effective, rubrics should allow students to see the progression of mastery in the development of understandings and skills.

Rubrics should be constructed with input from students whenever possible. A good start is to define what quality work looks like based on the learning outcomes. Exemplars of achievement need to be used to demonstrate to students what an excellent or acceptable performance is. Once the standard is established, it is easy to define what exemplary levels and less-than-satisfactory levels of performance look like. The best rubrics have three to five descriptive levels to allow for discrimination in the evaluation of the product or task. Rubrics may be used for summative purposes by assigning a score to each of the various levels.

Before developing a rubric, teachers should consider the following:

- What are the specific German language arts curriculum outcomes involved in the task?
- Do students have some experience with this or a similar task?
- What does an excellent performance look like?
- What are the qualities that distinguish an excellent performance from other levels?
- What do other responses along the performance quality continuum look like?

Teachers can begin by developing criteria to describe the acceptable level. Then they can use Bloom’s taxonomy to identify differentiating criteria as they move up the scale. The criteria should not go beyond the original performance task, but should reflect higher thinking skills that students could demonstrate within the parameters of the initial task.

When developing the scoring criteria and quality levels of a rubric, teachers should consider the following guidelines:

- Level 4 is the **standard of excellence** level. Descriptions should indicate that all aspects of work exceed grade-level expectations and show exemplary performance or understanding. This is a “Wow!”
 - Level 3 is the **approaching standard of excellence** level. Descriptions should indicate some aspects of work that exceed grade-level expectations and demonstrate solid performance or understanding. This is a “Yes!”
 - Level 2 is the **meets acceptable standard** level. This level should indicate minimal competencies acceptable to meet grade-level expectations. Performance and understanding are emerging or developing but there are some errors and mastery is not thorough. This is an “On the right track, but...”.
 - Level 1 is the **does not yet meet acceptable standard** level. This level indicates what is not adequate for grade-level expectations, and indicates that the student has serious errors, omissions, or misconceptions. This is a “No, but...”.
- The teacher needs to make decisions about appropriate intervention to help the student improve.

Creating Rubrics with Students

Learning increases when students are actively involved in the assessment process. Students do better when they know the goal, see models, and know how their performance compares to learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes are clarified when students assist in describing the criteria used to evaluate performance. Teachers can use brainstorming and discussion to help students analyze what each level looks like. Student-friendly language can be used and students can be encouraged to identify descriptors that are meaningful to them. For example, a Grade 4 class might describe levels of quality with phrases such as:

- Super!
- Going beyond.
- Meets the mark.
- Needs more work.

Teachers can provide work samples to help students practise and analyze specific criteria for developing a critical elements list, which can then be used to develop descriptions for each performance level.

Although rubrics are often used as assessment *of* learning tools, they can also be used as assessment *for* learning tools. Students can benefit from using rubrics as they become more competent at judging the quality of their work and examining their own progress. For example:

- Teachers can involve students in the assessment process by having them participate in the creation of a rubric. This process facilitates a deeper understanding of the intended outcomes and the associated assessment criteria.
- After a rubric has been created, students can use it to guide their learning. Criteria described in a rubric serve to focus student reflection on their work and facilitate the setting of learning goals for a particular performance assessment. Students can use a rubric to assess their own work or the work of a peer, and they can use it to guide their planning for the “next steps” in learning.

Informal Observation

Informal observation is an integral part of ongoing instruction. Informal assessments include observations of students as they engage in authentic reading tasks, conferences with students about work in progress or completed assignments, and discussions with students regarding their awareness of the strategies they use to construct meaning from print.

Anecdotal Notes

➔ For blackline master...

Appendix E:
Anecdotal Notes

Anecdotal notes are used to record specific observations of individual student behaviours, skills, and attitudes as they relate to the outcomes in the curriculum framework. Such notes provide cumulative information on student learning and direction for further instruction. Anecdotal notes are often written as a result of ongoing observations during the lessons but may also be written in response to a product or performance the student has completed. They are brief, objective, and focused on specific outcomes. Notes taken during or immediately following an activity are generally the most accurate. Anecdotal notes for a particular student can be periodically shared with that student or shared at the student's request. They can also be shared with students and parents at parent-teacher-student conferences.

The purpose of anecdotal notes is to:

- provide information regarding a student's development over a period of time
- provide ongoing records about individual instructional needs
- capture observations of significant behaviours that might otherwise be lost
- provide ongoing documentation of learning that may be shared with students, parents, and other teachers

Tips for Establishing and Maintaining Anecdotal Notes

1. Keep a binder with a separate page for each student. Record observations using a clipboard and sticky notes. Write the date and the student's name on each sticky note. Following the note-taking, place individual sticky notes on the page reserved for that student in the binder.
OR
Keep a binder with dividers for each student and blank pages to jot down notes. The pages may be divided into three columns: Date, Observation, and Action Plan. Keep a class list in the front of the binder and check off each student's name as anecdotal notes are added to his or her section of the binder. This provides a quick reference of the students you have observed and how frequently you have observed them.
2. Keep notes brief and focused (usually no more than a few sentences or phrases).
3. Note the context and any comments or questions for follow-up.
4. Keep comments objective. Make specific comments about student strengths, especially after several observations have been recorded and a pattern has been observed.
5. Record as the observations are being made, or as soon after as possible, so recollections will be accurate.
6. Record comments regularly, if possible.

7. Record at different times and during different activities to develop a balanced profile of student learning.
8. Review the notes frequently to ensure that they are being made on each student regularly and summarize information related to trends in students' learning.

Observation Checklist

➔ For blackline master...

Appendix E:
Observation
Checklist

Observing students as they solve problems, model skills to others, think aloud during a sequence of activities, or interact with peers in different learning situations provides insight into student learning and growth. The teacher finds out under what conditions success is most likely, what individual students do when they encounter difficulty, how interaction with others affects students' learning and concentration, and what students need to learn in the future. Observations may be informal or highly structured; they may be incidental or scheduled over different periods of time in different learning contexts.

Observation checklists allow teachers to record information quickly about how students perform in relation to specific outcomes from the curriculum framework. Observation checklists written in a yes/no format can be used to assist in observing student performance relative to specific criteria. They may be directed toward observations of an individual or group. These tools can also include spaces for brief comments, which provide additional information not captured in the checklist.

Before using an observation checklist, teachers should ensure that students understand what information will be gathered and how it will be used. Checklists should be dated to provide a record of observations over a period of time.

Tips for Using Observation Checklists

1. Determine the specific outcomes to observe and assess.
2. Decide what to look for. Write down criteria or evidence that indicate the student is demonstrating the outcome.
3. Ensure students know and understand what the criteria are.
4. Target your observation by selecting four to five students per class and one or two specific outcomes to observe.
5. Collect observations over a number of classes during a reporting period and look for patterns of performance.
6. Date all observations.
7. Share observations with students, both individually and in a group. Make the observations specific and describe how this demonstrates or promotes thinking and learning. For example: "Eric, you contributed several ideas to your group's Top Ten list. You really helped your group finish the task within the time limit!"
8. Use the information gathered from observation to enhance or modify future instruction.

Question and Answer

➔ For more information...

Chapter 1:
Bloom's Taxonomy

Questioning can serve as an assessment tool when it is related to outcomes. Teachers use questioning (usually oral) to discover what students know and can do. Strategies for effective question and answer assessment include the following:

- Apply a wait time or “no hands-up rule” to provide students with time to think after a question before they are called upon randomly to respond.
- Ask a variety of questions, including open-ended questions and those that require more than a right or wrong answer.
- Use Bloom’s taxonomy when developing questions to promote higher-order thinking.

Teachers can record the results of questions and answers in anecdotal notes and include them as part of their planning to improve student learning.

Quizzes

Quizzes generally check for student learning as it relates to a single outcome or to several outcomes. Quizzes can be used to measure student achievement of outcomes pertaining to knowledge and comprehension skills. Care must be taken to ensure that students’ grades do not become unbalanced by including an overabundance of results from quizzes.

Different Purposes for Quizzes

- Graded quizzes check for learning on a few items that have been introduced and practised in class.
- Non-graded, pre- and post-quizzes check for student learning before and after an activity.
- Quizzes facilitate self-assessment and goal-setting when students reflect on their quiz performance.

Tests and Examinations

Tests and examinations are generally summative assessment tools that provide information about what students know and can do after a period of study. Tests and examinations are generally used by teachers to cover several outcomes at one time, and therefore do not appear in the grade-level samples assessment section of this resource. Questions on tests and examinations need to be aligned with the outcomes from the curriculum framework to ensure valid results.

Analysis of Test and Examination Results

Teachers can help students improve their performances on assessment *of* learning tasks by ensuring that students have an area in their learning logs dedicated to analysis of test and examination results. Students record the concepts they found challenging on a test or an examination. Periodically, teachers can ask students to review the concepts they have described as challenging and ask them to look for patterns. Such observations can form the basis of a student-teacher conference and help the student develop a study plan that aims to improve his or her learning. These observations could also help parents understand how best to help their child develop language learning skills. Teachers may use the information gathered from this part of the learning log to help plan future programming.

Performance Assessment

“A performance assessment is an activity that requires students to construct a response, create a product or demonstrate a skill they have acquired” (Alberta Assessment Consortium 2000, p. 5).

Performance assessments are concerned with how students apply the knowledge, skills, strategies, and attitudes they have learned to new and authentic tasks. Performance tasks are short activities that provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and strategies. They are highly structured and require students to complete specific elements. They may be content-specific or interdisciplinary and relate to the real-life application of knowledge, skills, and strategies.

Performance assessments focus on simulated real-life situations. The approach is student-centred; therefore, the learner’s context serves as one of the organizing elements in the development process.

To create a performance assessment, teachers should decide which outcomes are to be met and establish specific criteria (how students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding) to indicate whether or not students have met those outcomes. Rubrics or scoring guides that indicate the criteria for different levels of student performance are commonly used to evaluate a student’s performance. Results from performance assessments should account for the largest percentage of a student’s grade as they are a clear indicator of student understanding of the outcomes.

Performance assessment tasks can be organized into two categories: products (such as dioramas, slideshows, journals, video recordings) and performances (such as dramatic readings, puppetry, debates).

“When students are given or create tasks that are meaningful, non-contrived and consequential, they are more likely to take them seriously and be engaged by them” (Schlechty 1997).

Performance assessment is:

Contextualized

Students are provided with a meaningful context for real language use. Tasks are organized around one theme, which helps to ground the students in the context. The students know what task they are to complete and with whom they are to interact.

Authentic

Tasks are designed to present students with a real communicative purpose for a real audience.

Task-based

Students must follow a well-defined process to create and/or present a product in a way to elicit specific use of the second language.

Learner-centred

Tasks are realistic for students learning the second language in terms of age, cultural background, and level of cognitive and linguistic maturity. Students are expected to create products and/or present products based on their actual circumstances, backgrounds, and interests.

Performance assessments help students understand their development of communicative competence. Such assessments make it easy for students to see how they progress in their abilities to use the language effectively. Performance assessment instruments need to be flexible enough to be appropriate for every student in a classroom, allowing each student to demonstrate personal meaning.

A description of the performance assessment task and the evaluation tool (e.g., rubric, checklist) should be provided to students at the beginning of a unit of instruction to guide and focus student learning.

Performance Assessment is Contextualized, Authentic, Task-based, Learner-centred: Adapted with permission from the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota, *Developing Speaking and Writing Tasks for Second Language Assessment (The Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessments (MLPA): A MLPA Miniguide for Assessment Development)* (Minneapolis, MN: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota, n.d.), p. 3.