**ASSESSMENT IN A BALANCED LITERACY CLASSROOM**

Alignment to 5-D Framework: Assessment for Student Learning

**Definition**:

According to McTighe and O’Conner in their November 2005 Educational Leadership article “Seven Practices for Effective Learning,” classroom assessments fall into three categories, each serving a different purpose:

* ***Summative* assessments** summarize what students have learned at the conclusion of an instructional segment. These assessments tend to be evaluative, and teachers typically encapsulate and report assessment results as a score or a grade.
* ***Diagnostic* assessments**—sometimes known as *pre-assessments*—typically precede instruction. Teachers use them to check students' prior knowledge and skill levels, identify student misconceptions, profile learners' interests, and reveal learning-style preferences. Diagnostic assessments provide information to assist teacher planning and guide differentiated instruction.
* ***Formative* assessments** occur concurrently with instruction. These ongoing assessments provide specific feedback to teachers and students for the purpose of guiding teaching to improve learning.

**Purpose:** To support the identification of a student’s strengths as well as to determine what teaching needs to occur next and shows how students are changing over time. Serves as a foundation for communicating with students and parents by providing evidence and examples that will help them understand how they/their children are developing as readers and writers.

**10 Understandings about classroom assessment by Carol Ann Tomlinson**

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| *From* “Learning to Love Assessment,” by Carol Ann Tomlinson, in the December 2007/January 2008 issue of *Educational Leadership, 65*(4). © 2007 by ASCD. Reprinted with permission. Learn more about ASCD at www.ascd.org. |

**Informative Assessment…**

1. Isn't just about tests: When one form of assessment was ineffective for a student, it did not necessarily indicate a lack of student success but could, in fact, represent a poor fit between the student and the method through which I was trying to make the student communicate.
2. Really isn't [always] about the grade book.
3. Isn't always formal:  Informative assessment could occur any time I went in search of information about a student- In fact, it could occur when I was not actively searching but was merely conscious of what was happening around me.
4. Isn't separate from the curriculum: if I wanted to teach for success, my assessments had to be absolutely aligned with the knowledge, understanding, and skill I'd designated as essential learning outcomes.
5. Isn't about "after"- I came to understand that assessments that came at the end of a unit—although important manifestations of student knowledge, understanding, and skill—were less useful to me as a teacher than were assessments that occurred *during* a unit of study. By the time I gave and graded a final assessment, we were already moving on to a new topic or unit. There was only a limited amount I could do at that stage with information that revealed to me that some students fell short of mastering essential outcomes—or that others had likely been bored senseless by instruction that focused on outcomes they had mastered long before the unit had begun. When I studied student work in the course of a unit, however, I could do many things to support or extend student learning.
6. Isn't an end in itself- The greatest power of assessment information lies in its capacity to help me see how to be a better teacher. If I know what students are and are not grasping at a given moment in a sequence of study, I know how to plan our time better. I know when to reteach, when to move ahead, and when to explain or demonstrate something in another way. Informative assessment is not an end in itself, but the beginning of better instruction.
7. Isn't separate from instruction- Informative assessment always demonstrated to me that my students' knowledge, understanding, and skill were emerging along different time continuums and at different depths. It became excruciatingly clear that my brilliant teaching was not equally brilliant for everyone in my classes. In other words, informative assessment helped me solidify a need for differentiation.
8. Isn't just about student readiness- I [became] aware of the potential role of assessment in determining what students cared about and how they learned. When I could attach what I was teaching to what students cared about, they learned more readily and more durably. When I could give them options about how to learn and express what they knew, learning improved. I realized I could pursue insights about student interests and preferred modes of learning, just as I had about their readiness needs.
9. Isn't just about finding weaknesses- When I saw "positive space" in students and reflected that to them, the results were stunningly different from when I reported on their "negative space." It gave students something to build on—a sense of possibility. I began to spend at least as much time gathering assessment information on what students *could* do as on what they couldn't. That, in turn, helped me develop a conviction that each student in my classes brought strengths to our work and that it was my job to bring those strengths to the surface so that all of us could benefit.
10. Isn't just for the teacher- The best teaching is never so much about *me* as about *us*. I began to see my students as full partners in their success… When students clearly understood our learning objectives, knew precisely what success would look like, understood how each assignment contributed to their success, could articulate the role of assessment in ensuring their success, and understood that their work correlated with their needs, they developed a sense of self-efficacy that was powerful in their lives as learners.

**The Role of the Teacher is:**

* To assess students using district tools in the testing windows and submit results as appropriate- (See Benchmark Sheet and Testing Calendar)
* To use a variety of on-going informative assessment tools and to understand the purpose of each tool- Use multiple measures that are diagnostic, formative, and summative
* To use diagnostic and frequent formative assessments to guide instructional decisions
* To provide timely, specific feedback to students
* To provide students and parents with assessment results detailing strengths and challenges

**The Role of the Student is:**

* To participate in each assessment, providing the teacher with data about what she/he knows and is able to do, as well as identifying areas of focus for future teaching
* To use assessment results to set goals

**The Administrator will see:**

* Teacher using multiple measures to assess what students know, understand, and are able to do
* Teacher collecting and analyzing data to inform instruction
* Evidence that the teacher shares assessment information with students and parents
* Students using assessment results to “own learning” and set goals

**Home/School Connection:**

* To be informed about their children’s reading and writing progress at various times throughout the school year
* To support their children’s progress by promoting and encouraging more reading and writing opportunities outside the school day
* To communicate observations and concerns to their children’s teachers

**DISTRICT ASSESSMENTS FOR BALANCED LITERACY INSTRUCTION:**

**Developmental Reading Assessment (D.R.A):** K-5 Fall & Spring formal assessments with Progress Monitoring as needed for students that score Basic and Below Basic.

The D.R.A. Assessment is done individually and is used to monitor reading growth two times each year with a series of texts to identify a student's current reading level and progress along a gradient of text levels over time. The identified levels include information on accuracy, fluency, and detailed comprehension scores. Students’ scores (independent level) are recorded on the D.R.A. Student Book Graph, Class Data Sheets and Data Wall.

At kindergarten and first grade, students are administered the grade level common assessment as the formal district measure. It serves as both a **screener and diagnostic tool** at Tier I to identify foundational reading skills such as letter identification, phonemic awareness, phonics, and sight recognition.

It is the belief of GCR2 that when an assessment is given, whether it is a classroom-based informal measure or a more formal district assessment it is imperative that teachers take the time to analyze it and use the knowledge gained to create an instructional design that attends, and adjusts if necessary, to the needs of each student.

**Resources:**

Critchley-Charlton, *Informal Assessment Strategies*, 2005

Fisher & Frey, *Checking for Understanding*, 2007

McTighe & O’Conner, “Seven Practices for Effective Learning,” EL November 2005

Tomlinson, “*Learning to Love Assessment”*, EL December 2007/January 2008