



GENERATION ASSESSMENTS Assessment Practices that Drive Student Achievement

By Tammy Stephens, NGA Founder

Assessment practices are an integral part of improving student achievement. The **NGA Assessment Practices Rubric** is based on the following educational research on a repertoire of strategies teachers need to have in order to inform instruction and improve the teaching and learning process.

Content & Skills

According to the research conducted by Wiggins & McTighe (2005) the assessment process should clearly identify what students should know and be able to do. When this step in the assessment process is skipped, there is often a disconnect between what students are asked to do and what they are actually being assessed on.

Performance Criteria

Once the content and skills that will be assessed have been clearly identified, the next step is to determine how students will demonstrate understanding. In projects that involve technology, it is not unusual for assessments to be performance based. Often in performance based projects teachers create rubrics outlining the criteria for the project.

Students should be involved in the assessment process. At a minimum students need to be informed on what they will be assessed on at the beginning of a project or unit. However, it is even better if they are actively involved in the assessment process. This is often done is through involving them in peer reviewing one another's work with the performance criteria. Another great way to involve students in the assessment process is to have them help create the performance criteria for the project. That way everyone is fully aware of expectations and it is in student friendly language.

Performance Task

In order for an assessment to be successful in informing instruction there needs to be a clear linkage between what has been identified as essential for students to know and be able to do and the task you have given them to perform to demonstrate their understanding.

Not all performance assessments are created equal. The best performance assessments are those that are authentic and relevant to a student's life. They also are not built around one word answers, but require students to show or demonstrate their thinking through models, diagrams or displaying and analyzing evidence that they have collected.

In order for a performance task to be fair it should:

- Have content that is equally familiar to all students
- Tap the knowledge and skills have had adequate time to acquire in class
- Not contain cultural, ethnic or gender bias
- Not contain any language barriers for English Language Learners

Formative Assessment

In order for assessment to be useful, it needs to be more than a one-time event. When a teacher plans assessment strategies for a unit or lesson it should be a comprehensive strategy that incorporates formative assessment practices. Ongoing formative assessments are also important in giving the teacher useful information on where students need more help.

How to Use the NGA Assessment Practices Rubric

The NGA Assessment Practices Rubric is designed to be used as a form of professional development. Teachers should be placed in groups of 3-5 people, ideally seated a round tables. They should bring five copies of a lesson plan and any accompanying assessments (both formative and summative) that they used.

Each teacher should share a little about the lesson and assessment practices used as well as the context it was used in. After the teacher is done sharing the other teachers in the group should go through the NGA Assessment Rubrics and come to consensus on how they

would score the assessment practices used by the teacher. It is important that the teacher who brought the lesson should just listen to their colleagues and not interrupt to defend their lesson.

Often the teachers evaluating the assessment practices will struggle with scoring the rubric because different elements were not clear. It is important for the teacher who brought the lesson to hear this and understand what was not clear so they can improve and clarify the assessment process.

Typically it takes a group about 45 minutes to complete the rubric. Often this is done as part of a professional development program that occurs over an extended amount of time. If there is not time for everyone to share teachers may take turns at different sessions.

As teachers do this process repeatedly over time these practices become part of their internal talk and gradually change the teaching and learning process in powerful ways.

If you would like more information on the NGA Assessment Rubric contact Tammy Stephens at tstephens@nextgenassessments.com.

Bibliography

A Guide to Authentic Instruction and Assessment: Vision, Standards and Scoring. Madison, WI Center for Education Research. Newmann, F.M., Secada, W.G., & Wehlage, G.G. (1995).

Bryk, Anthony S. Nagaoka, Jenny K. and Newmann, Fred M. *Authentic Intellectual Work and Standardized Tests: Conflict of Coexistence?* Consortium on Chicago School Research, January 2002.

How to Critique an Assessment." ToolKit98. 2001. Northwest Educational Regional Laboratory. 18 May 2006
<<http://www.nwrel.org/assessment/toolkit98/Act3-6.html>>.

Wiggins & McTighe's Understanding by Design, Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development; 2nd Expand edition (March 30, 2005)