

Assessment for Teaching

Edited By Patrick Griffin

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A fresh approach to the practical use of assessment information in schools is presented to the reader of this text. Developed from evidence-based research and informed by ‘on the ground’ experience in education, this book offers a new perspective to the interpretation and use of assessment findings in the classroom.

Cultivated from the view that assessment is for teaching (instead of the more commonly adopted stance, ‘teaching is for learning, of learning’) the comprehensive and practical approach presented in this book informs teaching strategies by facilitating the interpretation of assessment data through a developmental paradigm. The developmental approach (instead of a deficit approach) offered to the reader recognises what the primary or secondary student is ready to learn instead of what they don’t know/can’t do/haven’t learnt. The aim of the approach is to improve student outcomes through the identification and planning of individual learning goals, utilising a developmental scale. The sharing of assessment data and team-based interpretation is encouraged through the promotion of collaboration between teachers in the context of professional learning teams.

Each chapter is structured in a fashion that makes the information accessible to the experienced and inexperienced educator alike, as well as the tertiary teaching student. They comprise an exercise for practising the application of the chapter content to the classroom, response templates for each exercise, guidelines for assessing the value of the exercise in a professional learning team, and lastly, short review exercises for the reader to cross-check their understanding of the content covered.

The early chapters set the scene by outlining the major concepts and ideas being conveyed, and an explanation of the developmental approach to teaching and assessment, along with the developmental paradigm that facilitates the higher order thinking this new approach to assessment requires. The reader is also shown how the assessment data can be utilised to identify a student’s zone of proximal development (i.e., using the information to determine what the student can do, what they struggle to do, and what they cannot do). The procedures for conducting assessments are then described.

Chapters 4 and 5 promote understanding of how the approach can foster cultural change in schools through the school and leadership teams, as well as by helping teachers develop collaborative, team-based practices where decisions are informed by the evidence provided from the assessment data. Chapter 6 explores judgment-based assessment and presents ways to formalise teacher judgment to reduce the risks associated with subjectivity, while at the same time promoting the value of a teacher’s professional opinion. Chapter 7 extends understanding of judgment-based assessment further by demonstrating how it can be interpreted within the developmental paradigm. Chapters 9 and 10 lead the reader through the ‘how’, that is, the application

of assessment designs to identify the scaffolded, developmental pathway, which can be directly linked to the teaching strategies employed. The final chapters tie the content together with the generation of reports using the developmental paradigm as a basis, the teaching of students with special needs, and lastly, a case study presentation that brings the approach alive in the 'real world' sense. A particularly useful resource presented in Appendix A is the description of how to use the online testing and reporting linked to the book, an informative and time-saving resource for all professional educators from leadership down.

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Improving Learning Through Dynamic Assessment: A Practical Classroom Resource

Fraser Lauchlan and Donna Carrigan

Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London and Philadelphia, 2013, 160pp., \$49.95 (AU paperback), ISBN: 9781849053730.

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Fraser Lauchlan has long been a researcher and practitioner in the area of Dynamic Assessment (DA), and this book is an attempt to help make DA practices accessible and relevant for educational and developmental psychologists today. With an emphasis on providing structured intervention that directly follows appropriate assessment, this book is structured for ease of use and moves through a clear structure from theoretical background to case studies and professional development tools.

In the early sections of the book, Lauchlan and Carrigan describe the key ideas of formative assessment and DA. They pay close attention to the idea that identification of a child's strengths/weaknesses and learning style can guide effective classroom instruction, and that there is little point in assessing merely to label a child; rather, assessment needs to be useful for future intervention. They note that DA is not meant as a replacement for standardised assessment, but rather an addition to provide more information. In their theory section, they present a strong case for DA and detail five important reasons why educational and developmental psychologists may want to utilise a dynamic assessment approach:

- It allows an examination of the process of a child's answers rather than just an examination of the answers themselves. This can hold keys to understanding learning strengths and deficits.
- It provides an opportunity for a child to demonstrate willingness and ability to learn — in essence, DA can provide a response to intervention benchmark.
- One can judge how/if child learns new strategies and at what rate.
- It can aid in minimising test anxiety and the effect of cultural and/or minority factors.
- The assessment itself can provide sufficient intervention by helping change or adjust a child's ways of doing tasks.