

ASSESSMENT EVALUATION

Week One - Assessment Evaluation

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Scholastic Reading Inventory

Two times a semester, all the students are sent to the computer lab to take the SRI test. There is no pre-testing or preparation, and the scores are not part of their grades, it is just to see how they are coming along with their reading. Scholastic claims, “the most powerful feature of the *SRI* is its ability to administer fast and reliable low-stakes assessment to inform instruction and make accurate placement recommendations” (Scholastic, 2014). I believe if it were used in the proper way, then this would be an accurate claim; however, my school uses it for the scores to go on file, but the teachers are not given the scores to make any differentiation changes in class. We are not able to use the SRI test to inform our instruction without getting the scores. The low-stakes claim is accurate though. We don’t make a fuss of the test in school, and the kids don’t get stressed about the test. The only problem with that is that many students don’t try very hard because many of the test questions use multiple choice and I think many of the students guess so they can be done, which doesn’t give us accurate information. The scores aren’t very actionable since the score comes at the end of the test and the students don’t take the test for another few months. The score also doesn’t offer much in the way of usable feedback, just a score (Wiggins, 2012).

The positives are that the test offers timely feedback, so the students don’t have to wait for their mistakes (Wiggins, 2012). The tests are universal and easy to compare so as to get an accurate view of level within the school and to the larger state or country levels. In the case of our test, it is useful to get a sense of where American children are compared to the Korean students I teach. We are an immersion school, so the parents want to see their children compared to native speakers, since their end goal is to get their child into a native English speaking university eventually. This gives a good sense of where the student is and where they need to go to achieve their goal.

If the test was given in the proper way, this test would be mildly effective, but reading in class and having the teacher observe their reading and comprehension is more actionable, because the students can use the feedback right away the next time they read, on-going, because the test is only once in awhile but reading in class is often and repetitive, and timely since it can happen during or after they read when it’s fresh in the memory (Wiggins, 2012).

Placement Tests

Our placement tests are written in the office after teachers collaborate on what their class went over and what was emphasized to get a better test and to make sure we aren’t putting a bunch of questions on there that only one teacher focused on in class. We write the tests and review them as a group to make sure the questions will be understood by our students and there is no confusion. The tests are always multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, true/false, or matching for easy, concrete scoring. They are given twice a semester.

The positives of this summative test are in the collaboration amongst teachers. Preliminary research has “found a positive relationship between teacher collaboration and differences among schools in mathematics and reading achievement” (McClure, 2008). The teachers also try very hard to make sure there is as much critical thinking as possible in the test to show transfer or knowledge and not just rote memorization. The short answers also offer an easy to use grading system without any confusion.

The negatives to this test are that this is not “grounded in authentic performance-based task” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006, p. 153). We are still required to use only short answers for ease of grading. It may be easy to understand, but it doesn’t promote transfer as much

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as written responses or other performance tasks would. It is also a summative test that is high stakes for the kids, since it is linked to their level placement for the next grade.

Projects

We offer a project class for the students each week. We generally work on a project for one month. The projects are decided on based on themes and/or content we are covering in other classes. Sometimes they are science-based, sometimes they are literature-based, for example. The teachers decide the project for the month together and plan it together. The projects are always different and tend to be hands-on and more performance-based.

The positives are teacher collaboration and that they are more authentic tasks. The collaboration of the teachers is similar to the placement tests mentioned previously and is possibly related to higher student achievement (McClure, 2008). This project class also helps to show understanding. "Understanding is revealed as transferability of core ideas, knowledge, and skill, on challenging tasks in a variety of contexts" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006, p. 153).

The negatives are that the class is separated from other classes and only once a week. Separating the class tends to create the idea that doing authentic tasks is not the same as using the information learned in another class. It can be compartmentalized by the students and hinder real transfer, in the same way that students have trouble using the grammar learned in grammar class when they are writing in writing class. Projects would be more effective if they are the basis of learning and the 'subjects' were attached to that rather than having a separate project class. This is related to the second negative that it is only once a week. If we were really integrating the project idea, it should be utilized everyday of the week to build transfer knowledge about all the subjects together. Having it once a week is telling the students that we think reading is more important than projects because we have reading class four times a week and project only once.

Question and Response in Class

In science class, the bulk of our formative assessment comes from discussion and question and response in class. We use multiple media sources for the students to receive the content and we talk about it. Most of the students participate in discussion, but many have to be called on to respond if they aren't participating. We do some assignments and homework, but students can have parents and/or older siblings that 'help' them with that, so I try not to rely on that alone for assessing their ability to understand the content.

The positives are timely and actionable feedback (Wiggins, 2012). The students can participate in the learning more and they are receiving quick feedback they can begin using right away in class.

The negatives are that they are not performance-based and many times require only to restate the content. The knowledge they tend to show in this assessment are simply retention of the information, not transfer of the knowledge. I plan to use more essential questions to make discussion and responses more critical and challenging in the future.

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References

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