Emily Aron

Assessment Design Checklist

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Checklist

Questions	Evidence of Understanding
Is my assessment formative in some way?	- In a timely manner, I will return the assessments back to students and go over responses and potential misunderstandings. - Students will be able to use the feedback for support on future assessments. As appropriate, students will be able to revise their work.
Do my questions require students to use a range of types and depths of thinking?	- As appropriate, some questions are lower level to check students' knowledge. - As appropriate, some questions involve higher order thinking skills.
Does the assessment relate to learning goals?	- The assessment method effectively fits in with desired results. - The questions stem from targeted standards.
Does my feedback further student learning?	- The feedback relates to specific, clear learning goals. - The feedback focuses on both strengths and constructive criticism to support further learning. - Students can apply my feedback to future assignments - it can generalize to other tasks.
Will the assessment guide my teaching?	- I review and take action on student progress on formative assessments to adjust my instruction in the short-term. - I interpret data on summative assessments to make plans going forward.
Is my assessment equitable and free of bias?	- I have judged each item for bias and made any appropriate adjustments. - I have considered (and acted upon, if applicable) if this assessment can be ungraded and/or be executed in an alternate way.

Question 1: Is my assessment formative in some way?

By assigning formative assessments, I gain a better understanding of where my students are at in their learning. Their results inform my instruction as we continue with a unit. As Shepard (2000) mentioned about the strategy of dynamic assessment, my assessment needs to help me find "out what a student is able to do independently as well as what can be done with adult guidance" (p. 10). One example from my professional experience that led to forming this question is my use of daily math exit slips. Based on the lesson's standards, I assign several questions for independent work at the end of the math block. I use student responses to guide how I need to reteach (if applicable), how I need to differentiate, and how I need to pace future lessons. After all, "assessment is the giving and using of feedback against standards to enable improvement and the meeting of goals" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 6). If I have students that are not yet fully grasping multiplication as rescaling (e.g. CCSS.5.NF.B.5.B), this tells me that I need to reteach the concept so that my students can improve and meet the goals of the standard. It is my responsibility as the assessment giver (and often the assessment maker) to ensure the assessment is formative in some way so that it can support students in achieving current and future learning goals.

Evidence of Understanding

I believe that for assessments to be most effective, I need to review them and give feedback in a timely manner. This is because formative assessments are, as Dylan Wiliam (2016) put it, "about using information to adapt your teaching...to make sure that the learning is proceeding in the right direction." By going over the assessment with my students, they have the opportunity to ask questions and explain their thinking. In a recent math lesson on classifying quadrilaterals, I had some students that were not stating *all* of the classifications for the shape on their exit slips. For example, they stated the shape was a parallelogram, but they needed to state it was a quadrilateral and a trapezoid too. By reviewing the exit slips in a timely manner, I was able to do a Google Hangouts (this was during Remote Learning) the next day with a small group and reteach how to classify quadrilaterals. In addition, for my feedback timing to be most effective, I need to consider factors such as the type of task I assigned. For the exit slips, students answer surface knowledge questions so that I can assess their initial understanding of the lesson's standards. During this task acquisition of a new math concept, "immediate error correction…can result in faster rates of acquisition" (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 98). It is more beneficial that I grade and give feedback on the exit slips during that day's math lesson as opposed to at a later date. For assignments that require more processing and more difficult items, Hattie and Timperley provide evidence that delayed feedback is more necessary.

My assessment needs to be formative in some way so that it also can support a student's current and future understanding. The feedback I give on assessments should help students progress on a future assessment. For instance, my students complete a response to reading assessment every few weeks.

After reading two stories, students use [RACES](#) to complete their written response. In my feedback, I specifically comment on what they are doing well on and what they can still improve on in regard to RACES. Students can apply this feedback on a rewrite and/or the next response to reading assessment. Even my summative assessments can have formative elements to it. After every end-of-chapter math test, I encourage my students to complete test revisions. As Bennett (2011) noted, a summative assessment's primary purpose is as an assessment of learning, but its secondary purpose is as an assessment for learning (p. 8). By giving the opportunity for revisions, students continue to grow from summative assessments.

Question 2: Do my questions require students to use a range of types and depths of thinking?

The creation of this question came in part from one of my teaching goals this past year. My district uses [Danielson's Framework For Teaching](#) for teacher evaluations. For Domain 3: Instruction, one of the components involves questioning and discussion techniques. By using questioning based on Robert Marzano's question types and Bloom's Taxonomy, I can create assessment questions that include a range of types and depths of thinking. In Marzano's *Classroom Assessment and Grading That Work*, he argues that the ideal assessment involves Type I, Type II, and Type III items or tasks. Essentially, there should be items or tasks that address basic details and processes (Type I), complex ideas and processes (Type II), and a student's ability to make inferences and applications beyond class material (Type III) (Marzano, 2006, p. 62). Using questions based on Bloom's Taxonomy has helped me and will continue to help me include these three types of questions within assessments. This past school year, I strived to include more higher order thinking questions (Type II and Type III items) in assessments, especially in reading. For both oral and written assessments, I asked students a range of questions based on Bloom's Taxonomy. Higher order thinking skills are a feature of an emergent, constructivist paradigm that Shepard (2000) explained in "The Role of Assessment in a Learning Culture." She stated that open-ended performance tasks have supported students "to reason critically, to solve complex problems, and to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts" (Shepard, 2000, p. 8). Making sure that an assessment has higher order questions, such as ones based on Bloom's Taxonomy, helps to stretch student thinking and to test different skills.

Evidence of Understanding

When creating an assessment, I will keep track of the types of questions on it. My inclusion of "as appropriate" for my evidence of understanding statements is to recognize that based on the learning goals, different assessments will call for different types of questions. If I need to check a student's basic understanding of a text, I will assign knowledge and comprehension questions. If I need to check a student's understanding between two texts, I will assign analysis questions. In Bob James' designing of his nutrition unit, he goes through a similar thought process. He distinguishes what content needs to be covered through traditional quizzes and tests and what can be covered by a

performance task and a project (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 32). As I work toward creating questions based on Bloom's Taxonomy, I need to also consider if the questions on the assessment "represent important thinking and problem solving skills" (Shepard, 2000, p. 7). This is in line with the social-constructivist model of teaching and learning that Shepard explains. On science assessments, for example, I can create more questions that involve higher order thinking skills and that allow for students "to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts" (Shepard, 2000, p. 8). My science curriculum, Mystery Science, often includes such questions on their assessments. In the future, I will consider where I can modify and add questions to provide important thinking and problem solving opportunities.

Question 3: Does the assessment relate to learning goals?

When designing an assessment, it is critical that it relates to the learning goals of the unit. The learning goals are influenced by Common Core standards. While my daily math exit slips focused on usually one standard, that one standard was a part of the bigger picture of the math chapter. When students then take the chapter math test, it is important that the test covers all of the standards that relate to the topic so I can gauge student comprehension. More specifically, I want to make sure that the assessment provides me with "information and interpretations about the discrepancy between [a student's] current status and the learning goals" (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 101) that relate to the task, processes to understand the task, and student commitment to reduce the discrepancies. Daily exit slips let me evaluate any discrepancies that my students may have about the task and the processes to complete it. Wiggins & McTighe (2005) warn against instructional designs that have "no explicit big ideas guiding the teaching and no plan for ensuring the learning" (p. 3). By implementing these exit slip assessments that relate to the chapter's overall big ideas (learning goals), I work toward interpreting student understanding as they learn about the chapter's math concepts. Then, the test will cover all of the learning goals of the math chapter. For any subject assessment, the format and the type of questions will depend on the learning goals that I had previously plotted out at the beginning (or during, if revision was needed) of the unit.

Evidence of Understanding

When designing an assessment, I need to make sure that the assessment method effectively fits in with the desired results, or learning goals, for the unit. The Understanding by Design model has helped me reflect on the types of assessments that are most appropriate for a unit's learning goals. When planning an upcoming unit, I need to consider the assessment evidence I will use "to document and validate that the desired learning has been achieved" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 18). In science, I teach about the ecosystem and food webs (based on Mystery Science's Web of Life unit), which is based on NGSS 5-LS1-1 and 5-LS2-1. Within this unit, I plot out the formative and summative assessments I will assign to check on how students are understanding the desired learning goals. For instance, students complete written assessments that have a range of Type I, II,

and III questions (as referenced in Question #2). This method of an independent, written assessment helps me interpret how students are understanding the basic concepts and applications of the concepts. During this unit, my students also create a Google Slides presentation with a partner. This assessment comes after owl pellet dissections - partners organize the bones they found to determine the prey, research the prey, and then present information on the prey and their related food webs. This method of a partner presentation assessment helps me interpret the students' research methods, understanding of prey and food webs, and collaboration skills. With my desired learning goals in mind, I can determine which methods of assessment will help students achieve these goals.

When designing an assessment, I need to also choose questions that stem from the target standards. As aforementioned, these questions can come in the form of Type I, II, and III items and be based on Bloom's Taxonomy. My fifth grade team collaborates on the design of math chapter tests. We start with the test that our Go Math curriculum provides and often make modifications to it. During this process, we make sure that the chapter's target Common Core standards are addressed. As Black and Wiliam (1998) concluded, "teachers do not generally review the assessment questions that they use and do not discuss them critically with peers, so there is little reflection on what is being assessed" (as cited in Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 101). In meeting with my team to analyze assessment questions, we work toward ensuring that the assessment effectively relates to learning goals.

Question 4: Does my feedback further student learning?

Giving feedback is one of the core components of teaching. When I am designing assessments, I need to plan for the feedback I could give that would further student learning. After all, assessments are "the giving and using of feedback against standards to enable improvement and the meeting of goals" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 6). In Question #1, I described how my students use RACES to structure their responses to reading. Before I assign the assessment, I go through the prompt and draft a teacher model. This helps me plan for how my students might incorporate RACES in their own writing. In my feedback to students, I specifically comment on how they used the elements of RACES to write a meaningful response. This past year, I tried to set aside more class time for students to reflect on their graded responses individually or with a small group. This reflection time typically involved the opportunity to revise their writing for further feedback. Knowing that I would give students reflection time during class, I strived to give feedback that focused "not just on strengths and weaknesses but also on offering corrective advice, that [the feedback] directs students to higher order learning goals, and that it involves some praise alongside constructive criticism" (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, p. 208). When I gave feedback, I commented on strengths, suggested areas of improvement, and often posed guiding questions. All of this was to help my students assess their work and support their further learning and success on future assessments.

Evidence of Understanding

In determining if my feedback will further student learning, I need to confirm that it relates to specific, clear learning goals. When I provide feedback, "it is important that it is related to (and that students understand its relation to) goals, standards or criteria" (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, p. 208). Since my school's grading system is standards-based, my students are knowledgeable of the standards being assessed (I adapt the standards into student-friendly "I Can…" statements). My feedback then can be specific toward how students are developing in the standards, such as how they are implementing text evidence to determine a story's theme (CCSS.RL.5.2). This specific feedback helps students apply it to future assignments. It is critical that I use assessments "to help shape and document learning" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 31) as opposed to just for grading purposes. Learning about the four levels of feedback (task level, process level, self-regulation level, and self level) in "The Power of Feedback" was eye-opening. It helped me reflect on the quality of my past feedback and gave me insight into how I can improve my feedback in the future so that it can more effectively apply to future assessments. For example, while my giving of task level feedback has benefits, it "often does not generalize to other tasks" (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 91). I need to work on giving process level and self-regulation level feedback since those can help with developing a student's understanding and confidence on tasks. When I design assessments, it is important to consider how I will be able to provide this kind of feedback to further student learning.

Question 5: Will the assessment guide my teaching?

Assessments are not a one-and-done activity. With quality assessments needs to come quality teaching and reflection on my end. Part of the reason why assessments are valuable is because they inform my teaching. Along with other class activities, assessments give me a snapshot of student learning and allow me to make inferences on what should be the next steps for the individual student and the whole class. As Wiggins & McTighe (2005) state, it is assumed "that all purposeful and effective teachers follow a cycle of plan-revise-teach-assess-reflect-adjust many times" (p. 8). After an assessment is given, the next steps are to reflect on the results and adjust my instruction accordingly. This adjusted instruction could be for the next day's lesson or when I teach the unit again the next school year. When students complete daily math exit slips, their performance on it guides my decision on whether or not we need to spend more time on the particular lesson the next day. Such ongoing formative assessments "provide teachers with a window into the efficacy of instruction, enabling them to make adjustments to keep students on track toward instructional goals" (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014, p. 74). Assessments should help me compare the instructional goals to where my students are currently at in order to help me find ways to improve my instruction.

For an example of a more long-term influence that assessments have, I found ways to strengthen my biography research writing unit during my second year of teaching based on how my students performed on the final paper and presentation during my first year. I spent more instructional time, for example, guiding my students on how to take notes on a graphic organizer since this would support their writing on the final paper.

Evidence of Understanding

After an assessment is assigned, there are important steps to follow in order to ensure that the assessment is guiding my teaching. I make a distinction between formative and summative assessments in my evidence of understanding because of the different assessment purposes. The primary purpose of formative assessments is as an assessment for learning. I review such assessments in a timely manner and take action to further student progress. This timely review might take place within the lesson (e.g. math exit slips) or within a day or two of assigning it (e.g. a reading assessment that I need to review before another connecting activity later in the week). Based on my review and how student results compare to the desired results, I might need to adjust the design of my unit en route if feedback from assessments reveals that students may not be reaching the learning goals (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 6). During my writing lessons, students focus on a specific skill (e.g. dialogue). If I am conferencing with students and notice misunderstandings, I will often call the class back together to reteach the skill. If necessary, I will focus on it again the next day and adjust my upcoming lesson plans.

Summative assessments also guide my teaching. The primary purpose of these are as assessments of learning. These generally take place at the end of a chapter/unit, but I can still gather useful data to help me improve my teaching in the next chapter/unit. When grading a math chapter test on multiplying fractions, I can carry over information I learn to the next chapter on dividing fractions. If students can still improve in creating models and breaking down word problems, I can plan to strengthen or rework my instruction on similar concepts in the next chapter. When evaluating if my assessment will guide my teaching, I need to devise "activities and questions that provide feedback to [me] about the effectiveness of [my] teaching, particularly so [I] know what to do next" (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 102). Through my design of quality formative and summative assessments, I will analyze the resulting student data and make appropriate adjustments to my teaching as I plan for what to teach the next day, week, month, and so forth.

Question 6: Is my assessment equitable and free of bias?

It is critical that when I am designing an assessment I carefully review if it is equitable and free of bias. This benefits both my students and I in creating a safe, productive learning environment. Otherwise, assessment bias offends and unfairly penalizes students while diminishing "the validity of educators' test-based inferences about students" (Popham, 2012, p. 6). As evidenced by my

checklist of the assessment design process, assessments play a fundamental role in teaching and learning. In order to have assessments that best guide my teaching, they need to be equitable and unbiased. Along with this, I need to create assessments that focus on what children learn at school, as opposed to what they might bring to school. While a student's funds of knowledge can add to a lesson, such as a class discussion, I cannot disservice any student with assessment items that might unfairly penalize them based on personal characteristics. I believe that by developing in my cultural competency (through personal inquiry and professional development), I will strengthen in my ability to create equitable, unbiased assessments and in my ability to intentionally incorporate "relevant cultural knowledge into instruction, curriculum, resources, learning environment, outreach, and assessment" (Mayfield, 2020, Figure 1.1).

Evidence of Understanding

When I am designing an assessment, I will judge each item for bias and make any appropriate adjustments. To do so, I will refer to the question posed in Popham's (2012) booklet: "*Might this item offend or unfairly penalize any group of students on the basis of such personal characteristics as race, gender, ethnicity, or religion?*" (p. 26). The issues of an item being offensive or unfairly penalizing a student(s) are the main contributing factors to assessment bias, so I will be extraordinarily attentive as I review them. If any items warrant a "yes" response, then I will make adjustments. As I do so, I will consider the following questions: Do I remove the question entirely? Do I rethink how I assess the item's content? Do I need to collaborate with a colleague about this item? What professional development do I need to learn from this? In addition, it is important that I consider (and act upon, if applicable) if the assessment can be ungraded and/or be executed in an alternate way. In describing assessments, Milner (2018) claims that they "should be seen as opportunities for educators to adjust their practices and respond to students, not as opportunities to punitively grade or sort students through explicit or implicit tracking systems" (para. 3). On certain assessments, I can decide to not formally grade them. Instead, I could provide just written or oral feedback. This can lead to more of a dialogue between the student and I. We can discuss their strengths and areas for improvement without them focusing solely on what letter grade is at the top of the assessment. For alternate assessments, one method is implementing student-made rubrics. Stommel (2018) suggests this because then "the making of the rubric becomes an act of learning itself rather than a mechanism (or set of assumptions) created entirely in advance of students arriving to a course" (Student-made Rubrics section). I believe that I could start implementing such rubrics in writing class. The students and I can discuss how our learning goals can present themselves within a rubric. In summary, this checklist question encompasses topics that I certainly want to keep developing in - creating equitable, unbiased assessments are immensely beneficial for both students and teachers.

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