

The Art of the Long View: Redefining Assessment for a New School Mission

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MY PRESENTATION PLAN

- Identify elements of our vision of excellence that must evolve
- Describe the implications of each on our impact on student learning
- Suggest alternative approaches that can maximize our collective impact
- Draw generalizations about our assessment future

Society's new mission
for its schools:

**ALL STUDENTS BECOME
LIFELONG
LEARNERS**

BIG change in the social mission of our schools:

Old vision	Weed out the unwilling or unable; rank the rest
Problem	Dropouts and low ranks don't develop essential lifelong learning skills
New vision	All become readers, writers, math problem solvers; then rank them

Change in the process of mission fulfillment:

Old vision	Create artificial scarcity of success—promote competition
Problem	Society needs academic success for all learners
New vision	All students must meet rigorous standards; all ready for college & work-place

So, we need to rethink:

- Gap between those who meet and don't meet academic standards
- Social priority: the gap must close; all must meet basic standards
- Assessment, as previously conceived and conducted, was intended to sustain (even maximize) the gap
- But paradoxically, assessment can become our most powerful gap narrower

Our legacy minimizes our impact:

- Decontextualized educ. discipline
- Lg-scale assessment for accountability
- Neglect of instructional efficacy
- Best result is most condensed result
- See only adults using assessment
- Disregard of impact as quality criterion
- Counterproductive emotional dynamics
- Failure to “sell” assessment literacy
- Sell products to naïve clientele

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Practice 1 Study & develop measurement for own sake—independent of context

Impact We don't link to instruction; practitioners don't understand or link to us

Alternative Strive for relevance in the classroom, not just in the board room

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Practice 2 Our tunnel-vision focus remains on large-scale applications for accountability

Impact Severely limits range of possible users to the least powerful at improving schools

Alternative Balance assessment to meet all user needs—including the most important of them

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We assess to:

- INFORM INSTRUCTIONAL DECISIONS
- ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO TRY TO LEARN

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For assessment results to inform decisions we must know:

- What decisions?
- Who's making them?
- What information will be helpful to them?

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Balanced Local Assessment Systems meet the info needs of all users:

- In the **classroom**
- With **interim/benchmark** assessments
- With **annual** testing

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Balanced Local Assessment Systems

SUPPORT LEARNING

Assessments *FOR* Learning

- How can we use the assessment process & results to help students learn more?

CERTIFY LEARNING

Assessments *OF* Learning

- How much have students learned as of a particular point in time?

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Classroom Level

Support Learning

- Continuous
- For practice
- Inform student and teacher
- Progress toward each relevant standard

Certify Learning

- Periodic
- For accountability
- Inform teacher
- To assign report card grades or report standards mastered

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Interim/Benchmark Level

Support Learning

- Periodic
- ID struggling learners
- ID standards our students struggle to master
- For immediate faculty & program improvement

Certify Learning

- Periodic
- Verify mastery of interim standards
- Evaluate program effectiveness

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Annual Testing

Support Learning

- Once a year
- ID standards student struggle to master
- Improve program next year

Certify Learning

- Once a year
- To hold schools accountable for learning

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Key to productive assessment:

If assessment isn't working productively day to day in the classroom **during the learning** —if bad decisions are made based on inaccurate evidence due to inept assessment—the other levels can't overcome the problems for the learner...

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Practice 3

Failure to establish the instructional efficacy of large-scale applications

Impact

Alternative

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Our Large-scale Testing History:

- 1950s • College Admissions Testing
- 1960s • District-wide Testing
- 1970s • State-wide Testing
- 1980s • National Assessment
- 1990s • International Testing
- 2000s • Every-pupil NCLB Testing
- 2010s • Common Core Testing

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Where are the estimations of effects?

How many standard deviations of gain in achievement can we demonstrate as our contribution to school improvement?

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Practice 3 Failure to establish the instructional efficacy of large-scale applications

Impact Accountability agents & policy makers place blind (misplaced) faith in such testing

Alternative Inform them about the lack of demonstrable effects; do the research; balance systems

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Practice 4 Defining tests as things that yield **scores**—most condensed version of results is best

Impact Focus on scores & data vs information; scores meet few **key** info needs in schools

Alternative Diversify reporting to include detail when needed; always report results by standard or learning target

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Effective Communication of Assessment Results

- Communication differs based on assessment purpose: formative vs. summative
- Students receive descriptive feedback about learning
- Students track and communicate about their learning
- Grading practices accurately communicate about student achievement only
- Standardized test results are interpreted and used correctly

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Expected achievement gain:

0.8 standard deviation when principles of effective communication are applied consistently

Hattie & Temperly, 2007

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Practice 5 Defining assessment as something adults do to students

Impact Leave out the most important data-based instructional decision makers

Alternative

Essential New Belief

What STUDENTS think about and do with assessment results is as important as what adults think about and do with them.

Students get to make their data-based instructional decisions **FIRST!**

Students interpret their results and CONTINUOUSLY decide:

- Can I learn this or am I just too slow, dense...stupid?
- Is the learning worth the energy I must expend to attain it?
- Is trying to learn worth the risk that I might fail...again...in public?

How can we help our students make the right decisions—the decisions that will lead to productive learning for them?

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING:
Creating a Culture of Confidence

Assessment for Learning Strategies

Where am I going?

1. Provide a clear statement of the learning target
2. Use examples and models

Where am I now?

3. Offer regular descriptive feedback
4. Teach students to self-assess and set goals

How can I close the gap?

5. Design focused lessons
6. Teach students focused revision
7. Engage students in self-reflection; let them keep track of and share their learning

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Practice 5 Defining assessment as something adults do to students

Impact Leave out the most important data-based instructional decision makers

Alternative Strive for relevance in the classroom, not just in the board room; study evidence of efficacy of AFL

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Expected Achievement Gain:
.4 to .7 standard deviation gain with largest gains for struggling learners

Black & Wiliam, 1998

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Practice 6 Failure to consider the impact of results as an assessment quality criterion

Impact Negative impacts allow assessment to do as much harm to learning as good

Alternative Develop a deep understanding of the attributes of a positive impact on learning—apply consistently in all contexts

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Practice 7 Rely on the anxiety arising from intimidation to be the emotional dynamic behind productive assessment

Impact Struggling learners give up in hopelessness in the face of insurmountable demands

Alternative Rely on learning success & confidence arising from student-involved AFL

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Revolution in our thinking...

We must assess accurately, and use results effectively to make sure students react productively to assessment results.

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The student's emotional reaction to results will determine what that student does in response.

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PRODUCTIVE RESPONSE TO ASSESSMENT RESULTS:

- I understand these results
- I know what I need to do next
- I'm OK
- I choose to keep trying

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THE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE HOPELESS RESPONSE:

- I don't understand
- I have no idea what to do next
- I'm no good at this stuff anyway
- I give up

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Essential New Belief:

What STUDENTS think about and do with assessment results is as important as what adults think about and do with them...

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Expected Achievement Gain:
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Principles of Assessment for Learning

Where am I going?

1. Provide a clear statement of the learning target
2. Use examples and models

Where am I now?

3. Offer regular descriptive feedback
4. Teach students to self-assess and set goals

How can I close the gap?

5. Design focused lessons
6. Teach students focused revision
7. Engage students in self-reflection; let them keep track of and share their learning

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Practice 8 Failure to convince colleges of education of the critical importance of assessment literacy among practitioners

Impact Almost universal lack of understanding of principles of sound assessment in schools

Alternative Change our argument for relevance pre & in-svc for teachers and leaders—cite evidence of efficacy of AFL

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“Assessment Literate” Educators:

- Can gather dependable evidence of student learning, relevant for the context
- Use the assessment process and its results **to support** and **to verify** learning

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Practice 9 Selling assessment instruments and services to a naive clientele

Impact Tremendous waste of resources over the decades

Alternative Demand opportunities to teach them in all contexts and take maximum advantage of those...

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We know...

- * What practitioners need to know and do
- * What will happen to student learning
- * How to deliver the proper tools into their hands very efficiently and effectively

The only unanswered question:

Will teachers and leaders be given the opportunity to learn?

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Assessment for Learning Strategies

Where am I going?
Where am I now?
How can I close the gap?

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High-Impact Practices

- Increased classroom assessment quality (accuracy)
- Increased descriptive feedback, reduced evaluative feedback
- Increased student self-assessment
- Increased opportunities for students to communicate about their evolving learning during the teaching

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Key impact reducers in 2011:

1. Chronic lack of assessment literacy...
2. A vision of excellence in assessment that remains out of balance...
3. Lack of attention to the development of local assessment systems...
4. Social leaders' belief that accountability can force change in schools despite a paucity of supportive evidence...
5. We have been compliant servants to the accountability agents rather than drivers of productive assessment use

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Our challenges in next 10 years:

- Contextualize our discipline
- Balance assessment systems
- Establish instructional efficacy
- Value information—detail when needed
- See students as key assessment users
- Consider impact as quality criterion
- Become agents of productive dynamics
- Demand assessment literacy
- Sell products to qualified clientele

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