
Introduction

The greatest joy of teaching occurs every time you realize that one of your students “gets it.” The happiness will start deep down inside and then ooze out of you. You’ll not only smile, you’ll beam. At first, it may be hard for you to control your enthusiasm. Then your learners will see your satisfaction, sense your delight, and share in the excitement. Hopefully, all students who “get it” will recognize the moment it happens to them too. This scene illustrates your ultimate quest: to develop performance-based assessments and assessment systems through which learners know immediately for themselves when they understand the learning, have achieved the expectations, and genuinely “get it.”

Once one learner gets it, you will be inspired to ensure that all of your learners get it, and as often as possible. These special moments capture what teaching is all about. “Getting it” inspires your students to keep learning and for you to keep teaching. The secrets are to engage your learners actively in the learning process, to connect the learning meaningfully to their individual lives, and to check the learning frequently through different strategies that allow the learners to demonstrate anticipated outcomes in various ways, especially in ways that learners can assess themselves. Careful development of performance-based assessments also enables you to thoughtfully align the curriculum and instruction for your learners as individuals and as members of a shared learning community. As a result, you equip your learners for lifelong learning, preparing them for careers in fields that may not yet exist, in an ever-changing, interdependent, global society.

Effective learning and teaching do not just happen by accident. You may have been told that you are a natural teacher, and certainly some people seem more capable and comfortable than other people who teach. However, the best teachers have honed their knowledge, skills, and dispositions so that learning and teaching become a finely tuned machine ready to transport everyone on their travels to their individual destinations. Effective teachers are continually seeking ways to make the

whole process clearer and simpler for everyone, so schooling is positive, productive, and practical.

For example, you can design the most elaborate curricular plans and prepare the most exciting instructional strategies. However, if you have not tailored your approaches to match your specific educational context and to fit your learners' needs and interests, unfortunately you may have wasted most of your efforts. Your learners may not make the necessary connections to the new ideas and complex skills you present; they may not be able to master their content standards and learning expectations. You will have to try again, and you may become discouraged. Your learners (along with their parents and your administrators) may wear out too. Maybe these results account for the high rate of burn-out contributing to the growing percentage of attrition our nation is experiencing among our new as well as our veteran teachers.

This text reveals the secrets to success to help educators who want to create stimulating learning and teaching environments in their elementary school classrooms for and with their learners. Whether you are a teacher candidate aspiring to start your career, a veteran teacher seeking more insights to improve your practices, a mentor teacher guiding a novice, a school administrator leading other educators, or even a teacher educator wanting to model appropriate assessments with your teacher candidates, this book will greatly improve your effectiveness and satisfaction before, during, and after the learning.

The ideas and examples awaiting you will guide you in developing performance-based assessments to strengthen your teaching, the learning, and the schooling in elementary school classrooms. All three aspects happen at once. As you refine your expertise related to teaching, your learners will attend physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially, leading to increased achievement of their learning proficiencies. When learning and teaching are synchronized, then the schooling is enhanced. The overall program fits together; rates of attendance, achievement, and completion increase. And everyone knows that improving your learners' achievement as shown on daily assignments, unit assessments, and standardized tests encompasses one of your major, if not the most important of all tasks. This text will guide and support you all the way.

Performance-based assessments allow you to plan your teaching and to facilitate learning experiences accompanied by engaging, challenging, and rewarding outcomes. In Chapter 1 you are introduced to the purposes for performance-based assessments, so you fully understand why you are doing what you are doing. And in Chapter 2 you explore the facets of understanding so you can plan your assessments to increase learner engagement and achievement.

Next you begin a three-part exploration into when to use performance-based assessments. In Chapter 3, you investigate the various roles of baseline assessments for gathering preassessment data by matching performance-based assessments with academic expectations by building on prior learning. In Chapters 4 and 5, you discover how to align assessments with curriculum and instruction and the many strategies for using formative assessments. In Chapter 6 you extend the conversation for administering summative assessments.

In Chapter 7, you analyze the five types of inquiry of performance-based assessments so you understand what information you are going to assess of your students. When you assess your students' learning, you are seeking all kinds of evidence so you can give them insightful feedback. In Chapter 8, you identify the five forms of appraisal that your students need to demonstrate learning across the curriculum. You want to use the most authentic form of assessment to showcase your learners' strengths and equip them to overcome their weaknesses. Then in Chapter 9, you combine the five types of information with the five forms of appraisal into a graphic organizer called a template to guide your preparation and practices. As one teacher shared with me, "The assessment template is the best tool I have learned in this whole teaching program. Thank you for making assessments so easy for me and my learners." Many examples are provided for you.

In Chapter 9, you also learn how to build and use rubrics. Again, a simple technique has been developed for you to incorporate rubrics into your planning procedures and teaching repertoire. Additionally, you are guided through the processes of creating rubrics with your learners. In Chapter 10, the many different approaches to assessment are connected with various kinds of evaluation for accountability. You may think the words *assessment* and *evaluation* are synonymous; however, they play extremely different roles that assist you with your methods of accountability.

Each chapter includes special features. Planning and implementing performance-based assessments requires several interconnected steps. This text guides you in the beginning; then you will be supported in creating a system and making modifications to fit your own situation. Checklists have been included to help you follow the process quickly and easily. The checklists can be used for each individual learning experience and each unit of learning. You might want to copy these pages so you can follow the steps closely as you align your assessments.

Developing performance-based assessments can pose a challenging task for many classroom teachers. Therefore, to extend the concepts and practices captured in each chapter, frequently asked questions with

answers have been included. The questions come from teachers just like you. This text reflects your concerns and connects with your needs.

Each chapter also features graphic organizers to help you associate the vocabulary in a professional context. Illustrations are used throughout the text so you can visualize the processes. Finally, at the conclusion of each chapter, five activities have been written for you to apply the concepts and practices into your own teaching. When you discover the five types of information and five forms of appraisal in Chapters 7 and 8, you will realize that the activities parallel the approaches that are presented in this text. The activities will allow you to experience performance-based assessments immediately. At the end of the book is a list of readings and references that you may find useful.

On the Corwin Press Web site (www.corwinpress.com/gallavank5), there are four appendices. Appendix A presents the Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students developed by members of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Council on Measurement in Education, and the National Education Association in 1990.

Appendix B describes the four domains of learning, so you can be sure you are teaching holistically; it also itemizes the taxonomies and multiple intelligences to guide you in your instruction and inquiries. In Appendix C, you will find a poem written about performance-based assessments. I hope you enjoy and appreciate it too.

Appendix D offers a list of Web sites related to performance-based assessments, including the content standard Web sites, that many teachers have found to be helpful. These resources will save you time, money, and energy once you become acquainted with their services. Performance-based assessments encompass an area of study that many of you will want to pursue through graduate studies or professional development.

The hope is to share a zeal for performance-based assessments. Developing performance-based assessments can be a bit overwhelming, with everything effective learning and teaching entail. Here's the greatest secret: This text is here to help you to become the best teacher possible, so you and your elementary school learners will shine with pride in your accomplishments. Let performance-based assessments be your friends!