

Introduction

Much has been written in the last few years about the different types of assessments of student learning used for different purposes to satisfy the information needs of different individuals with an interest in our educational systems. At a time when the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law requires the annual assessment of at least half of the K-12 students in our schools, with sanctions for poor school performance that increase in severity the longer the school fails to make adequate yearly progress (AYP), it is becoming increasingly clear that assessments *of* learning cannot provide the information that teachers need on a daily basis to provide high quality instruction to students (Stiggins, 2007). Along with the required assessments *of* learning, what are needed are assessments *for* learning (Stiggins and Chappuis, 2006). This, as we elaborate later in this proposal, includes both learning for individuals and learning for institutions.

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Together, assessments *of* learning and *for* learning provide a much broader array of information about student learning to the various individuals who need to know how students are performing. Together, these assessments of learning and for learning provide a balanced assessment system (Stiggins, 2006). The assessments that comprise this balanced assessment system include the annual or summative assessments required by NCLB or adopted by state or local policymakers, interim assessments sometimes used to periodically measure student progress in learning important content standards, and most importantly, the assessments for learning that teachers carry out daily to gauge how well students are learning and how they should modify instruction to increase the likelihood of student success. These classroom or formative assessments have been shown to have substantial impact on the learning of students, especially when the students are active participants in the learning and assessment processes (Black and Wiliam, 1998).

A critical issue in the development and use of classroom or formative assessments within balanced assessment systems is that educators lack adequate preparation in classroom-based assessment. As a result, they are unable to fully capture the benefits of such assessments in improving student learning. Here in Michigan, although such classes are taught in a few colleges of education, there is no certification requirement that educators learn such techniques prior to becoming a licensed teacher. This requires that these educators learn these techniques and strategies on the job through professional development, if they learn them at all. Obviously, this is an inefficient way of learning these important skills, since it means that educators may teach for years before they learn how to adequately assess their students in an on-going manner.

Proposal for Michigan State University

The adequate preparation of teachers to develop, implement, and use the classroom-based assessments of student learning, in order to balance the summative and interim assessments that are implemented in their schools by state and local district educators, has been described in several recent articles and publications (Stiggins, 1999; Stiggins, 2000). Prospective educators could learn such skills through experiencing them in the college courses they take in preparation to be a teacher, they could be taught these skills and strategies explicitly in a course of study, and/or they could practice these skills when they first have interactions with elementary or secondary students - when they are mentoring students or while student teaching. Each of these ways of learning about classroom or formative assessment has advantages.

At Michigan State University, we propose to use all three types of learning opportunities to help prospective teachers experience formative assessment, learn about different strategies and techniques, and to practice implementing them within their instructional strategies. This comprehensive approach will help to assure that these teachers-in-training learn and use the strategies that will maximize their students' learning from the start of their teaching career and not have to wait until appropriate professional development opportunities are provided at a later time.

Before explaining our plans for the preparation of undergraduates, we set the stage for a larger systemic effort that includes the learning of future teacher educators and the learning of the institution. We do not intend to pursue this plan detached from that larger context. As of 2005, MSU decided to commit to TEAC accreditation, which involves substantial ongoing data collection (which largely involves embedded assessments in the teacher preparation program itself). Our approach to and plans for TEAC have been ambitious, and involve the creation of a system of formative and summative assessments of both individual prospective teachers in the program, as well as courses and the program more generally. Taking seriously Stiggins' (2000) argument that, when prospective teachers collaboratively participate in assessments it leads to greater motivation, knowledge, and commitment, we have reasoned that the preparation of our teachers will be strengthened by their knowledge of assessments (see this proposal for that plan) and their experiences with assessments used by the program across all of their courses and field experiences. The institution, in turn, will be stronger for the use of such data in program improvement.

As we have embarked on a much more extensive use of formative assessments in teacher education, another piece of the puzzle has emerged: The preparation of future teacher educators to both teach teachers to use assessments and to use assessments appropriately in their own practice as teacher educators. If we do not help doctoral students become familiar with, committed to, and knowledgeable about the use of the range of assessments available to them, we do them - and the future teachers they teach - a considerable disservice.

For the purposes of this paper, we focus on our planned activities with prospective teachers. However, we do so presuming that these activities will fit into a much larger agenda that concerns our on-going institutional improvement through TEAC and our work to educate future generations of teacher educators.

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The Preparation of Future Teachers

The components of the classroom or formative assessment learning process is as follows:

Experience Formative Assessments - The first step in learning to use classroom or formative assessment is for the prospective teachers to experience the range of such assessments in the classes that they take within the College of Education at Michigan State University. Steps in this direction have already been taken. In preparation for the first report to TEAC, the Teacher Preparation program required that almost all instructors who teach almost all of the various courses that students take to become teachers use classroom or formative assessment methods as part of their evaluation of the learning of students in their courses. Courses with multiple sections committed to using the same assignment and scoring rubrics. Because this was an ambitious project, there was considerable unevenness across courses and sections in the use of these assessments. Continued work will be done to institutionalize these collective assessments and their use.

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As would be expected from such initial efforts, some of this work is quite innovative in how student achievement is measured. In some cases, students are highly involved in the assessment process and are expected to provide information on the extent of their own learning to their instructors and fellow classmates.

On the other hand, some of the other efforts could use improvement. The College has committed to funding an assessment resource person to assist these and other individuals to improve the range and types of assessments that are used to measure student achievement in these teacher preparation classes. This individual will be working with instructors and students to help them plan new assessments, review existing ones, and learn how to improve the quality of the assessments used in teacher education courses. Each of these efforts, when taken together, serves to provide students with first-hand experience in using techniques to measure their learning different from traditional multiple-choice tests. Given the College's commitment to students experiencing these assessments directly, along with resources to help faculty and student design and implement better quality assessments, these classroom assessments will only improve in quality over time.

Our long-term goal is to have every prospective teacher encounter a range of high quality locally developed assessments across the courses they take in the program. Some of the assessments in this battery will include repeated measures, and many of the assessments will be collaboratively conducted with the prospective teachers so that they might keep track of their own learning over time (Stiggins, 1999). Below we address the capacity building efforts that this aspect of our work entails.

Learn About Formative Assessment - The second step in the process of helping prospective teachers become proficient users of formative or classroom assessment is for the College of Education to provide a one-semester class for prospective teachers. Such a course has been drafted (see attachment). The purpose of this class is to explicitly teach prospective teachers about different assessment strategies and techniques that they may use and help them understand when and how to deploy such

assessments. The key is to help them learn how to collect reliable and valid information on the performance of students that they can use to adjust instruction in an on-going manner.

As can be seen from the course outline, the course will provide students with explicit information on many of the classroom assessment strategies that they have experienced in their college courses. Although they may not have recognized these strategies when they were experiencing them, this course will make such work explicit and present information about when techniques are most useful and efficient in assessing students for different purposes. The goal of this class is to provide teachers with information and ideas about a variety of formative assessment techniques that will encourage them to use them when they become teachers.

While the outline of the class had been drafted, this class has yet to be established within the College of Education. Establishing such a class would take about a year, having first to be approved at the department, College, and overall university levels. To move the course along quickly, our plan is as follows: Create a masters level version of the course that can be taken by students across all programs in the COE, but targeted for teachers. With appropriate advertising and offering it either on-line or as a hybrid, we anticipate being able to fill a class immediately. Because TE has also developed one-unit courses for school districts and teachers to use in induction programs, we might also create a one-credit version of this course to create an appetite for it among MA students.

Our work on this course at the MA level will allow us to lay out the specific course content and how it might overlap with or complement existing required courses in the teacher education program. That will position us well to understand the implications for program redesign at the undergraduate level. Currently, there is no wiggle room in the requirements for the teacher preparation program. However, the Department is working on several experimental programs - one that would involve immersing students in field experiences much earlier on, and one that would focus on post-BA students. If we lay the groundwork for the content of the class and its relationship to other required course content from the start, we anticipate being able to launch this class in these new programs from their inception.

Practice Formative Assessment - The third and final step in the process is for prospective teachers to implement the classroom or formative assessment strategies when they are working with students. For example, a prospective teacher may be serving as a mentor for a student struggling to learn fifth grade mathematics. Later, this individual will also be engaged in a directed teaching assignment where they may be asked to prepare and present instructional plans for a unit of study (e.g., a unit on addition of fractions). The interactions that prospective teachers have with elementary, middle school, or high school students provide opportunities for the prospective teacher to learn how to plan and deliver instruction, they also provide an opportunity for the prospective teacher to practice using the classroom or formative assessment strategies and techniques that they have experienced and learned about. This will help prospective teachers understand how good quality classroom assessments can be embedded within high quality instruction and used to help the teacher gauge the success of the instruction for all students.

To make these opportunities to practice classroom or formative assessment

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techniques more valuable as learning opportunities, we will target the internship year subject matter courses, as well as capacity building for field instructors (FIs) and collaborating teachers (CTs). Field instructors and methods class instructors already work carefully with interns on their lesson planning and teaching experiences. And several groups have already launched work in focusing on interns’ experiences with assessments. We plan to extend that work by intentionally requiring the use and re-use of several forms of assessment over the course of the internship year in all content areas.

It is suggested that the FIs and CTs, who supervise these directed-teaching assignments, gather groups of students with similar teaching assignments (e.g., secondary mathematics) and work with them as a *learning team* so that these prospective teachers also have the experience of working together with colleagues to examine student learning and improve their instructional strategies. Thus, these supervisors can help the learning team examine the instructional plans, the delivery of the instruction, and using formative assessment strategies, how effective the instruction appeared to be. The supervisor can then suggest ways in which each of these could be improved and made more coherent and effective.

This raises the issue of the capacity both field instructors (who are often, but not always, doctoral students or retired teachers) and collaborating teachers. We will not be able to require the use of assessments as envisioned without deepening the capacities of CTs and FIs alike to use such assessments and to teach new teachers to use such assessments. We imagine several approaches to this issue. First, the assessment resource person can consult with the methods instructors about embedding assessments into required assignments during the internship year. Second, a curriculum for teacher educators’ use of assessments would be developed. A longer version might be turned into a doctoral seminar entitled “The Uses and Pedagogies of Assessment in Professional Education” and open to students across the University who are interested in using and teaching assessment. A shorter version would become an on-line module required of all instructors in the teacher education program. Just as all new researchers are required to take a tutorial in human subjects and the ethics of social science research, so too doctoral students and faculty will be required to take a tutorial in how to embed and use assessments in the professional courses offered through the Department of Teacher Education.

Taken together, prospective teachers will have an opportunity of trying to use classroom or formative assessment strategies, and then work within a learning team comprised of prospective teachers in the same content area to examine how they could improve both their instructional methods and assessment techniques. The goal of these efforts is to encourage new teachers to be more “fluent” in the use of formative assessments in their classrooms and to work with colleagues to improve the learning opportunities of students in the schools in which they are employed.

Summary

The purpose of this three-part program of *experiencing, learning about* and *practicing* formative or classroom assessments is for teachers to become proficient in the use of such assessments to improve student learning as they complete their college preparation to become a teacher.

Each of these strategies, employed together should give prospective teachers the opportunity of becoming proficient assessors even before they become certified teachers. Moreover, although not discussed here, this program of assessment preparation would be part of the larger institutional learning. Summative assessments from individual classes or of performances in the internship year will be gathered and analyzed in ways to inform program improvement and development. And materials and courses will be developed to help support the on-going learning of faculty and prospective teacher educators as they participate in our Department-wide efforts to prepare all graduates for the informed use of a wide range of assessments in the service of student learning.

References

Black, P. and William, D. (1998) Assessment and classroom learning. *Educational Assessment: Principles, Policy and Practice*. (5) 1, 7-74.

Stiggins, R. J. (1999). Evaluating classroom assessment training in teacher education programs. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 18(1), 23-27.

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Stiggins, R. (2006) Balanced assessment systems: Redefining excellence in assessment." Portland, OR: Educational Testing Service/Assessment Training Institute.

Stiggins, R. and Chappuis, J. (2006) What a difference a word makes - Assessment FOR learning rather than assessment OF learning helps students succeed." *National Staff Development Council*. (27) 1, 10-14.

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Classroom-Based Assessment (Proposed) CEP 830

Description The purpose of this course is to give educators an introduction to the types of assessment they are likely to use at the classroom level. Learning will occur through reading, class discussion, individual and group projects, and student reflections on past assessment experiences and anticipated use of assessments in the future when they become a teacher.

Course Objectives Upon completion of the course, students will be able to

1. Know the different types of assessment measures that educators may use in their classroom and school.
2. Understand the advantages of each type of assessment and when each is most suitable.
3. Demonstrate how the students they teach can be actively involved in the assessment process.
4. Create examples of each method of assessment aligned to clear instructional targets.
5. Know how to administer and score the assessments that they use.

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6. Analyze student assessment results to determine student achievement and instructional gaps.
7. Communicate assessment results to students, parents, and other educators.
8. Create a classroom climate conducive to self- and peer-assessment.
9. Demonstrate that they value the use of multiple approaches to the assessment of students.

Course Format This course will be structured so that it will meet as a large group several times during the semester, provide online access to materials, as well as expecting students to meet in small groups to work on projects together. There also will be times when students will work on projects individually. The instructor will be available throughout the semester to assist students individually or in small groups.

Proposed Textbook “Classroom Assessment for Student Learning - Doing It Right - Using It Well” Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis, and Chappuis. ETS - ATI, Portland, OR

Proposed Course Topics The following topics will be presented, either in lecture format, self-study, online, or through small-group participation. This outline is adapted from the book listed above:

Overview of the Course

- Review of the Course Syllabus
- Course Requirements and Grading
- Organization of the Class - Full-Group, Small Group, and Individual Learning
- Textbook
- *Keys to Quality Classroom Assessment*

Assessment for and of Learning

- Purposes for Assessment
- Different Types of Assessment Methods
- Assessment and Student Motivation
- What Assessment for Learning Looks Like

Setting Clear Instructional and Assessment Targets

- Why Develop Clear Targets?
- Types of Clear Targets
- Sources of Targets
- Clarifying and Extending Learning Targets

Matching Assessment Methods to Learning Targets

Assessment Methods

- Matching Assessment Methods to Targets
- Developing Assessments
- Pilot Testing, Review, and Revision of the Assessments

Selected Response Assessment

- Types of SR Exercises
- When to Use SR Exercises
- Developing High-Quality SR Items
- Guidelines for Improving SR Items
- Using SR Items in Assessments for Learning

Extended Written Response Assessment

- When to Use EWR Exercises
- Developing High-Quality EWR Items
- Developing High-Quality EWR Scoring Rubrics

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Performance Assessment

- Types of Performance Assessments
- When to Use Performance Assessments
- Development of Performance Assessments
- Developing High Quality Rubrics for Scoring Performance Assessments
- Using Rubrics as Instructional Tools

Personal Communication as Assessment

- Types of Personal Communication
- When to Use Personal Communication Assessments
- Avoiding Bias
- Using Personal Communication Assessments

Communicating About Student Learning

- Balancing Assessments for and of Learning
- Information Management
- Communications Strategies

Report Cards

- Purposes of Grades
- Grading Principles
- Grading Guidelines
- Steps in Report Card Grading
- Grading Practices Rubric

Portfolios

- Types of Portfolios
- Purposes for Portfolios
- Keys to Successful Use

Conferencing About and With Students

- Purposes for Conferences
- Types of Conferences
- Student-Led Conferences

Using Assessment of Learning in the Classroom

- Understanding Standardized Tests
- Using, Not Overusing Standardized Tests
- Interpreting Standardized Test Scores
- Legitimate Ways to Prepare Students for These Tests
- Communicating Standardized Test Results to Others
- Educator Responsibilities

Creating Classrooms Conducive to Formative Assessment

- Creating a Classroom Where Self- and Peer-Assessment is "Safe."
- Teacher Modeling of Self-Assessment
- Classroom Norms
- Building a Classroom Learning Community

Student Presentations

- Showcase Portfolios
- Assessments
- Other Artifacts of Learning

Grading Student grades will be based on the showcase portfolio that students put together, their student-led conference in which they document the learning that they have accomplished, as well as selective artifacts (such as sample assessments) that they created.

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