



Consortium for Research on
Educational Accountability and Teacher Evaluation

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The vision of the Consortium for Research on Educational Accountability and Teacher Evaluation (CREATE) is improved student learning, development, and achievement in PK-12 schools, institutes of higher education, and other



Message From the President

Barbara B. Howard, Ed.D.
Appalachian State University

Education is all about change. Each innovation, each promising new practice, each discovery concerning the human capacity to assimilate information requires change. The art of teaching itself requires that one change or transform the thinking of another in some form or fashion. The very nature of education embedded as it is in this constant state of change challenges educators to evaluate their progress at ever increasing levels of rigor and responsibility demanded by our society in terms of strict systems of accountability. As educators, we cannot afford to try something and merely hope it works or invest decreasing resources in programs that lack sound measures of success. We must be able to provide sound feedback to those implementing our programs while assessing the learning of those most affected by it – our students.

In education, there are three interconnected areas most affected by this constant swirl of change: the programs we implement; the expectations for the personnel we supervise; and the assessment practices for the students we teach. Understanding sound evaluations practices in these three areas enables educators at all levels to make wiser decisions in both choice and implementation. These three areas – program, personnel, and student assessment – form the heart of educational activities and, as such, deserve our most careful attention and discussion.

CREATE is a national organization, which offers specific attention to these three significant areas of educational evaluation and research. For over three decades, CREATE has served to bring together those in education who are doing the work in the areas of program, personnel and student evaluation and research. Our membership boasts active involvement by practitioners from pre-k through graduate schools and researchers who inform their practice. Through our annual National Evaluation Institute, these worlds come together to explore new challenges while offering innovative solutions. Interactions among the various stakeholders benefit all. Each year, we offer through our concurrent sessions the latest thinking in research-based practices and their application in the “real world.” Through our nationally acclaimed keynote speakers, we offer the opportunity for our participants to not only hear the foremost leaders in their field but to engage them in conversation through more informal settings such as receptions and smaller sessions. Networking, which often continues beyond the conference setting, is one of the many valuable bonuses of participation in a CREATE National Evaluation Institute.

This year promises to be one of extraordinary offerings in terms of ideas and evaluation practices for programs, personnel, and student assessment. Our Board of Directors is working diligently on developing the 2010 National Evaluation Institute, which will focus on student assessment, at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. Other avenues for discussion and assimilation of ideas will come through a new online peer-reviewed journal publishing articles of interest in these three critical areas by our members and others. We plan to expand our presence in print publication as well as we revise our former publication, *The Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*. Our articles are now linked to ERIC, which will offer even wider dissemination. Rather than limiting these three areas to special interest groups within larger organizations, CREATE continues to offer a special home to those actively engaged in pursuing or consuming evaluations and research that impact education in the areas of programs, personnel and student assessment. Our connection to the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation remains strong, while our move to the University of North Carolina at Wilmington opens a new chapter in our continued growth as an organization. It is an excellent year to be a member of CREATE, and I look forward to serving as its President with the support of an outstanding Board of Directors and Officers.

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NEI 2010 at The College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, VA

The College of William and Mary is unlike any other university in America. We are the second oldest



college in the nation, founded in 1693, and we are one of eight “Public Ivy” institutions in the nation. William and Mary has a long standing commitment to academic excellence, rich

community, and tradition.

We are the home of the first Greek-letter society (Phi Beta Kappa, founded in 1776), the first student honor code, the first school of law in America, the oldest continually used academic building in America (The Sir Christopher Wren Building), and alma mater of four presidents. William and Mary professors are truly one of a kind, acting as teachers, scholars, and research mentors. The faculty are the cornerstone of a thriving intellectual community that produces experienced, engaged, successful graduates.

The School of Education at William and Mary is consistently ranked among the top 50 nationally. Historically, William and Mary has played an integral role in preparing future educators. In fact, the first “student teaching” experience in America was initiated by William and Mary faculty in the 1690s.

Today, the School of Education offers programs at the bachelor’s, master’s, educational specialist, and doctoral levels in areas including Curriculum and Instruction; Educational Policy, Planning and Leadership; and School Psychology and Counselor Education. In the past decade the School of Education has become an institutional leader in advanced studies, accounting for nearly a third of the master’s degrees and over half of the doctoral degrees awarded at William and Mary each year.

The College of William and Mary is located within Virginia’s Historic Triangle, which includes



Colonial Williamsburg, Yorktown, and Jamestown. Duke of Gloucester Street, which offers an array of shops and restaurants,

connects the William and Mary campus to Colonial Williamsburg.

An array of historical sites, houses, museums, and shops, including 88 original 18th century buildings, can be seen in Colonial Williamsburg. The Williamsburg area also offers terrific restaurants, live music clubs, art galleries, movie theaters, theme parks, and much more.



We are thrilled to host the **National Evaluation Institute October 7-9, 2010**, and we cordially invite you to visit, immerse yourself in, and enjoy both Williamsburg and The College of William and Mary!

Formative Assessment: An Integral Element of Teaching and Learning

By Christopher R. Gareis, Ed.D. &
Leslie W. Grant, Ph.D.

Formative assessment has become a hot topic in educational circles today. Open any journal, attend any conference, and you will find a plethora of information about how to use assessment as a part of instruction. Open any flyer from publishing companies and you will find resources available to help a teacher “formatively assess” student learning. But, in order for a teacher to harness the full power of formative assessment, assessment must be viewed as an integral part of the teaching and learning process rather than as a separate activity that comes at the end of instruction (that is, *summative assessment*). So, what is *formative assessment*? We define formative assessment simply as *the assessment of student learning integrated into the act of teaching* (Gareis & Grant, 2008). In other words, assessment is an inherent element of the teaching and learning process.

In working with in-service and pre-service teachers, we find it helpful to envision this definition of assessment as a simple model of teaching and learning:

$$C \rightarrow I_a \rightarrow A$$

In the model, “C” refers to *curriculum*, which is what students are expected to know and be able to do. In the current era of accountability, state standards have become the de facto curriculum in many of our schools, but, whatever the source of the curriculum, the relationship of curriculum to assessment is the same: Curriculum articulates the intended learning outcomes for students, and assessments are the techniques and tools by which adults gather information about the nature and degree of student learning. So, skipping over the middle of the model for a moment, the uppercase “A” at the end of the sequence refers to *assessment*. More specifically, uppercase “A” connotes any formal tool used to gather information (including quantifiable data) about the nature and degree of student learning for the purpose of (1) gauging student learning and (2) communicating the nature and/degree of student learning to others. Commonly, these types of *summative assessments* take the form of unit tests, benchmark assessments, and state standardized tests. Also, such assessments typically communicate information about student learning through the use of symbols (e.g., A, B, C, D, F), relative numerical scales (e.g., 85%, or 399 on a scale of 600), or proficiency levels (e.g. basic, proficient, advanced). Finally, information from such assessments has a wide prospective audience, possibly including an

individual student, a teacher, a parent, a guidance counselor, a college admissions officer, etc.

Now, returning to the middle of the model, “I” refers to *instruction*, which can be thought of as the means by which a teacher helps a student to acquire the intended learning objectives of the curriculum. Of course, instruction is inclusive of a plethora of possible activities, approaches, and strategies, such as direct instruction, project-based learning, scientific inquiry, advanced organizers, whole language, phonics, and so on. What is critically important to recognize, however, is the elemental role that assessment—denoted by the subscript “a”—must take in instruction. When assessment is integral to the act of instruction, it is intended for one of two purposes:

1. To provide honest, timely, supportive, accurate, constructive feedback to students in order for students to gauge and to consciously engage in their own learning, and/or
2. To accurately inform the teacher’s instructional decision-making, in both the near-term and the long-term.

The subscript “a” in this model may be called *formative assessment*. What we have found particularly useful about this simple model is that it visually conveys the understanding that assessment itself is part of the teaching-and-learning process as the teacher checks for understanding and monitors skill development over the course of a lesson or an extended unit. For example, a teacher might use an exit card for students to complete a mathematical operation before they leave the classroom or she might use thumbs-up/thumbs-down questioning to discern student comprehension during direct instruction. The teacher then uses the information gleaned from such activities to plan for the next day or, more immediately, the next moment of teaching. Simply put, ongoing, low-stakes assessments of student learning inform daily teaching decisions. What’s more, in the hands of a teacher with a facile skill set, formative assessment information can be used by *students* to make *learning decisions*—what we might call “assessment as learning” (Gareis & Grant, 2008, p. 174).

Viewing assessment as being integral to instruction (and not solely a summative indicator of learning) makes intuitive sense. So, why does it need our attention? We conclude with a few, briefly stated reasons. First, research during the past decade has established increasing evidence that teachers’ formative assessment practices in the classroom can significantly contribute to improved student learning (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2004). In studies of formative assessment practices, researchers found that students gain roughly the equivalent of one to two grade levels in learning in

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classrooms in which formative assessment practices are used effectively (Assessment Reform Group, 1999). Second, most teachers—veterans and novices alike—are not adequately prepared in the domain of assessment (Stiggins & Conklin, 1992; Tucker, Stronge, Gareis, & Beers, 2003). Third, and as alluded to previously, we are currently in an era of high-stakes assessment and accountability, one effect of which has been an increasing emphasis on external standardized assessments (“A” in our model) and a concomitant devaluing and misuse of assessment (“a”) in the classroom (Gareis, 2006).

What, then, can educators do? Robert Marzano (2009), a renowned researcher whose name has become virtually synonymous to *effective instructional strategies*, recently wrote that “one could make a case that *classroom formative assessment strategies* [emphasis added] are the best place” for schools and districts to start to expand the breadth of discussion of effective teaching (p. 37). James Popham (2009), a long-time noted expert in the assessment domain, goes even further by referring to formative assessment as the “silver bullet” for increasing student achievement. What is implicit in the recommendations of Marzano, Popham, and others (including us) is that *classroom teachers* are the critical variable if we hope to harness and effectively use the potential instructional power of formative assessment. That means that little “a” warrants a lot of attention.

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Teaching-Embedded Formative Assessment to Improve Student Learning: A Perspective from the Field

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(Louisville, Kentucky)

We have embarked in a district-wide effort to embed formative assessment into the daily teaching in our Jefferson County Public School (JCPS) classrooms. The school district is located in a large metropolitan area and has 150 schools serving approximately 97,000 students. The district educates a high percentage of at-risk urban students with high poverty levels (i.e., over 55% subsidized meals and single-parent homes). The district has a student assignment plan based on managed choice, which facilitates the racial desegregation of its schools by providing students with transportation from their home neighborhoods to other parts of the district.

Probably, we need to start by having a common language and understanding of “Assessment for Learning.” Another helpful element in this discussion is to analyze the difference between Assessment *OF* Learning and Assessment *FOR* Learning in a balanced assessment system. Let’s start this discussion by identifying what is NOT Assessment for Learning. Assessment for Learning is different from the end-of-the-year state-based accountability system or the every-six-weeks district-based benchmark system. Furthermore, Assessment for Learning is different from the end-of-unit summative classroom assessment that serves the purpose of grading students in subject areas or courses. All these aforementioned examples would fall under the category of Assessment *OF* Learning: valuable from a balanced assessment

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perspective, but with a different purpose, use, and decision-makers.

So, then, what is Assessment FOR Learning? It is an assessment that is so embedded into the daily teaching activities that it is difficult to even differentiate it as something detached from good teaching. It helps learning by providing information that teachers AND students can use as FEEDBACK so teacher can modify their teaching and students can adjust their learning. However, it is not all about identifying learning needs. This is just the first, diagnostic part. The second part, the prognostic part (using the medical metaphor) is the most important one: the assessment becomes formative when the evidence is ACTUALLY USED to adjust the instructional process by teachers and adapt the learning process by students. The bottom line is: once you get the formative evidence, what do you do with it? In this sense, from the student perspective, this means that the formative assessment motivates students to take an active role in their educational experience.

Following our District's leadership guidance, we are promoting formative assessment efforts at the classroom level. We believe that the main objective is to understand the value of a balanced assessment system. However, more importantly, that formative assessment quality requires five keys associated with *accuracy* as well as *effective use* (Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis, & Chappuis, 2006). *Accuracy* is about the assessment (1) purpose (i.e., accountability, benchmarking, formative); (2) learning target (i.e., knowledge, reasoning, performance skill, product); and, (3) assessment design (i.e., selected-response, open-response, performance, personal communication). *Effective Use* is about (4) effective communication (e.g., using rubrics) and (5) student involvement (e.g., using self- and peer-assessment).

Looking into these five keys in more details shows that this makes sense for teaching-and-learning processes. *Clear purpose* is about the teachers knowing exactly why they are using an assessment, for example deciding if this is about informing students of their progress/ improving teaching (i.e., formative assessment) or if it is about students' final grade (i.e., summative assessment). *Specific learning targets* refer to beginning with clear statements of the intended learning for both teachers and students. *Sound design* is critical since assessments must yield accurate results, which means deciding about the best testing format, and minimizing possible bias. *Effective*

communication of results includes timeliness, informative presentation, and clarity on next steps. *Student involvement* is based on the conceptualization that students learn best when they monitor and take responsibility for their own learning. All five keys of assessment quality are equally important and –in many ways- they remind us about the Student Evaluation Standards (2003): propriety, utility, feasibility, and accuracy Standards!

In this kind of formative assessment, we need to keep in mind three guiding questions: (a) Where are you trying to go? (b) Where are you now? And, (c) How can you get there? Under these three guiding questions, there are seven Assessment FOR Learning strategies (Chappuis, 2009) that we recommend: (1) provide a clear statement of the learning target, (2) use examples and models, (3) offer regular descriptive feedback, (4) teach students to self-assess and set goals, (5) design focused lessons, (6) teach students focused revision, and (7) engage students in self-reflection, sharing, and keeping track of their learning!

We will be learning more about issues associated with the know-how and to what extent the Assessment *for* Learning changes teaching practices and attitudes. In the spring of 2009, teacher teams at nine schools volunteered to be part of the pilot phase of the Assessment *for* Learning implementation. With the support of Vanderbilt's Peabody College, JCPS has started an evaluation of this Assessment *for* Learning experience. We will share results of this and other studies as we move forward with this effort.

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The Revision of the Student Evaluation Standards By The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation

Paula E. Egelson

**CREATE board member and Joint Committee for
Educational Evaluation Representative**

The Student Evaluation Standards were originally created in 2003, one of three sets of standards developed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE). The other sets of existing standards are the program evaluation standards and the personnel evaluation standards. The JCSEE was formed in 1975 by educational research and practitioner organizations for the purposes of developing standards to ensure useful, feasible, ethical, and sound evaluation practices. Today CREATE is one of 16 educational research and practitioner organizations that comprise the JCSEE.

The original purposes of the Student Evaluation Standards were to offer classroom teachers and others who evaluate students the principles and guidelines for assessing and improving student evaluations (Gullickson, 2003). The intent was not support the evaluation of high stakes testing, but rather the evaluation of classroom assessment practices. Additionally the standards were created to assist educators who did not have comprehensive training in evaluation. The 2003 Student Evaluation Standards included the areas of propriety, utility, feasibility, and accuracy and consisted of an overview, guidelines, common errors, illustrative cases and supporting documentation for the 28 standards.

The development and review of the standards is a highly rigorous process conducted by the JCSEE that involves, but is not limited to field trials, numerous revisions, national hearings, a validation report, and certification. All three sets of standards are revised by the JCSEE every five to 10 years and follow the process described above.

The Student Evaluation Standards are in the process of being revised. Dr. Don Klinger and Ms. Patty McDivitt are co-chairs of the Student Evaluation Standards Revision Task Force. Their goal is to revise the Student Evaluation Standards and have them approved by the JCSEE in 2012. Currently Klinger and McDivitt are surveying educational organization representatives about the Student Evaluation Standards and what should be included in the revised standards. They are also reviewing the research literature and conducting interviews with experts in the areas of student evaluation and student assessment.

Guiding questions include 1.) How do we get readers and learners engaged in the Student Evaluation Standards and make them relevant? And 2.) How do we create a product to increase the value of teaching and learning? The Task Force will expand to five to six members when the actual revision of the standards begins.

If you are interested in becoming a part of the revision process, please contact:

Patty McDivitt (pjmcdivitt@earthlink.net) and/or
Don Klinger (don.klinger@queensu.ca).

Publish Your Work with CREATE

**Submit your research for publication
in the
CREATE Newsletter!**

We welcome articles associated with educational evaluation and accountability. We prioritize articles presented at the annual National Evaluation Institute. Articles should be sent in electronic format and should be approximately two pages in length (singled spaced), Times New Roman, font 12.

Submit to: marco.munoz@jefferson.kyschools.us
or drdavis@olemiss.edu

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Save the date!!!

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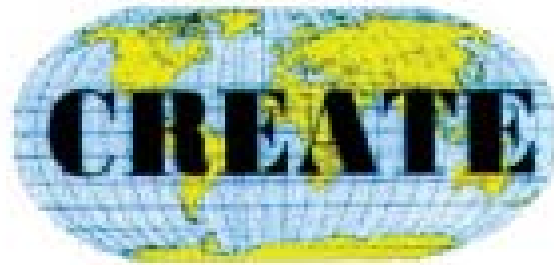
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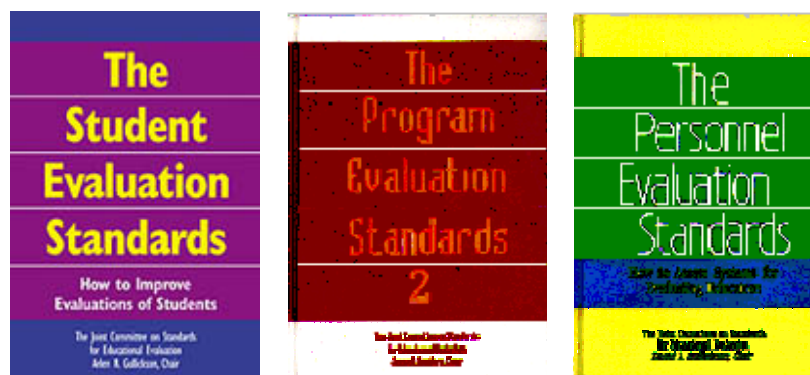
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