Assessment Resources and Tools

How can we accurately and fairly assess what our students have learned?

Or in other words, what do you want your students to understand (understanding goals) and what will serve as evidence that they understand it (ongoing assessment)?

When understanding is the purpose of instruction, the process of assessment is more than just one of evaluation, it is a substantive contribution to learning. Assessment needs to inform students, teachers and teaching artists about what students currently understand and about how to proceed with subsequent teaching and learning.

The following documents provide an introduction to, and overview of, assessment in the arts, along with tools and websites for additional resources in designing your own understanding goals and ongoing learner assessment.

- **Tools and Websites**
- **Glossary of Assessment Terms**
- **Assessment Fact Sheet**
- **Tools for Ongoing Assessment**

For more information about Arts Learning, please contact the Arizona Commission on the Arts at:

Arizona Commission on the Arts
http://www.azarts.gov/about-us/staff/

Tools and Websites

- **Assessment in the Arts** (PDF) - A resource document compiled by the Arizona Commission on the Arts. http://azarts.yourdesk.biz/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/Assessment-in-the-Arts_ACA.pdf

- **American Evaluation Association** - An international professional association of evaluators devoted to the application and exploration of program evaluation, personnel evaluation, technology, and many other forms of evaluation. http://www.eval.org/

- **Arizona Department of Education- Arts Education Standards and Assessment** - The Arizona Department of Education has compiled a list of state and nationwide resources for arts education standards and assessment. http://www.azed.gov/art-education/standards-assessment/

- **CCSESA Arts Assessment Resource Guide** – The California County Superintendents Educational Services Association created a guidebook to arts assessment in 2008. This guidebook includes both general and discipline-specific assessment tools. http://www.ccsesaarts.org/CCSESA_FILES/AssessmentToolkit.pdf

- **Envisioning Arts Assessment** (PDF) - A guide developed by the Arts Education Partnerships to help design large-scale art assessment decisions. Also provides informational support and activities to be used as both a practical tool and reference. http://cfaefl.org/assessmentproject/userfiles/envisioning_arts_assessment.pdf

- **The Evaluation Center** - The site's purpose is to improve the quality and consistency of evaluations and enhance evaluation capacity through the promotion and use of high-quality checklists targeted to specific evaluation tasks and approaches. This part of the site contains glossaries, helpful web links, and more. http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/home/

- **The National Assessment of Educational Progress - Arts Education Assessment Framework** - The NAEP alongside the National Assessment Governing Board and the U. S. Department of Education created this report in 2008. It includes information about both organizations as well as assessment tools for arts organizations and educators. http://www.nagb.org/content/nagb/assets/documents/publications/frameworks/arts-framework08.pdf

- **The National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts** - The Education and Evaluation section of the National Guild website contains links to information on education policy, reform and research. It covers current teaching and evaluation and assessment practices. http://nationalguild.org/resources/education.htm

- **Toolbox on Arts Learning Assessment** - With the support of Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust and the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE) has launched an on-line toolbox as a new resource for improving assessment of student learning in the arts. After spending a year surveying and interviewing Chicago area arts organizations on their assessment strengths and weaknesses, CAPE identified a six step "road map" for improving practice. Each step of the on-line toolbox features planning tools, guiding essays, and examples from actual practice. www.artsassessment.org

Glossary of Assessment Terms

ACHIEVEMENT: Ability to demonstrate accomplishment of some outcome for which learning experiences were designed.

ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS: Behaviors along a continuum that represent degree of attainment of a criterion.

ASSESSMENT: The process of judging student behavior or product in terms of some criteria. Assessment may include, but is not limited to, what is normally considered testing. Evidence may also be assessed from discussions of works of art, art production work, museum visit reflections, portfolios, writing samples, etc. Assessment measures may use a variety of means to record evidence of student learning and understanding, such as rating scales, rubrics, observation checklists, content analysis, or interviews.

CONCEPT: Specifically, an art concept is the knowledge taught that should show up as a competency in the art product or statements about art (e.g., varied shapes, balance).

CRITERION: A behavior, characteristic, or quality of a product or performance about which some judgment is made. It represents what a teacher intended to teach and what is checked to see if students did indeed learn what the teacher thought was taught.

DIRECT ASSESSMENT: Observation of the student performing (e.g., explaining a judgment about an art piece, creating an arts work, discussing the process that led to a direction shown in a portfolio, etc.)

EVALUATION: A judgment of merit based on various measurements, notable events, and subjective impressions. A total art program evaluation assesses the quality of components such as facilities, resources, teacher preparation, extracurricular arts activities, or safety and includes curriculum evaluation and the program for assessment of student learning. Assessment of student learning in the arts can lead to refining or reinforcing curriculum (what is taught, when) and instruction (how).

INQUIRY APPROACHES: Cognitive strategies, or arts process behaviors: The behaviors, predominately cognitive in nature that contributes to learning in the arts. They include: experimenting, being analytical and reflective in thinking, persistence, varying ideas or approaches, observing closely, thinking divergently and imaginatively, analyzing and making well-reasoned judgments. It is these behaviors; strategies or approaches to learning that contribute to the innovative thinking needed for creative problem solving.

INSTRUMENT OF ASSESSMENT: A method of gathering data about student performance in the arts.

ONGOING ASSESSMENT: The continual process of providing students with clear responses to their work that will help them improve their performances of understanding. The ongoing assessment process tells teachers and students about what the student understands and about how to proceed with subsequent teaching and learning. The process requires two conditions: 1) that performances of understanding have clear assessment criteria that are closely related to the understanding goals and that 20 students have the opportunity to receive feedback about their performances of understanding.

OUTCOMES OF LEARNING: Goals or objectives written in terms of what students should know and be able to do. Outcomes of learning in the arts are observable, life-oriented capabilities that students acquire learning with and through the arts.

PERFORMANCES OF UNDERSTANDING: Activities that require students to use knowledge in new ways or situations. In such activities students reshape, expand on, and extrapolate from apply and build on what they already know. Performances of understanding help students to build, as well as demonstrate, their understanding.

Special thanks to the Arts Learning Program, Ohio Arts Council, for the content of this article.

Assessment Fact Sheet

What is learner assessment?	Learner assessment is the process of collecting and recording information about student knowledge and skills and then interpreting that information against instructional objectives and standards of quality.
What is the difference between formative and summative assessment?	**Formative** assessment provides performance information before learning and teaching are complete--when immediate corrections can be made. **Summative** assessment provides performance information after teaching and learning are complete. **Example:** Assessing a cast's performance after a rehearsal to help the actor improve is formative. Assessing a cast's performance after the play opens in order to decide whether the play should continue is summative.
How is assessment information used?	Assessment information provides evidence that can be used to: • Improve the performance of learners and educators • Evaluate students, curriculum, instruction, and programs • Answer research questions
What is performance based assessment?	Performance-based assessment, also called "authentic" or "alternative" assessment, is presenting students with realistic tasks or problems that require them to apply knowledge, engage in complex thinking processes, and/or demonstrate a combination of skills.
What is a strong assessment program?	A strong assessment program is a varied, yet balanced, collection of assessment strategies that are clearly and coherently connected to curricular goals and objectives.

What are the essential components of a performance-based assessment?	A performance-based assessment must include: 1. **Standards, goals, and objectives:** statements of what students should know and be able to do as a result of their learning experience. 2. **Assessment tasks:** a set of questions, problems, or prompts requiring students to demonstrate what they know and can do. 3. **Criteria:** a set of expected behaviors, qualities, or characteristics of performance that will be used to judge the quality of the results a student achieves in performing the assessment task. 4. **Instruction:** the teaching methods and strategies, sequencing, and resources that will result in high quality performance of the assessment tasks.
What is a rubric?	A rubric is a method of expressing assessment criteria. A rubric describes learner performance at various levels of proficiency, communicating what a knowledgeable evaluator would observe in an excellent or advanced performance, as well in performances that are acceptable and unacceptable. **Scoring rubrics** are used for evaluating students' work at the end of a specified period of time and assigning a final score or grade. **Coaching rubrics** are used to guide students as they work on a product or performance.
What are arts assessment portfolios?	Arts assessment portfolios are collections of student work that display and document what has been learned over a specific period of time. An arts assessment portfolio may contain any item that documents a student's learning. For example: • Student writings and reflections • Works of art created by the student (e.g., drawings, musical scores, or scripts)

	• Video or audio tapes of the student's performances • Rough drafts, sketches, rehearsal tapes, and idea resources that demonstrate the ability to generate and develop ideas • Self-assessments and reflections that show the student's growth in the arts
Key Questions in Improving Assessment	The "backward design" approach of Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe begins with desired results. The sequence of the questions below is consistent with backward design: • What do students need to know and be able to do? • What aspects of student knowledge and skill are most important? • How will I know that students have achieved the knowledge and skills they will need? • How will I help them achieve the knowledge and skills they need?

Resources

Danielson, C. and Abrutyn, L. (1997) *An introduction to using portfolios in the classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Herman, J.L. Aschbacher, P.R. and Winters, L. (1992). *A practical guide to alternative assessment.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

W.G. Spady, (March 1994). *Choosing outcomes of significance.* Educational Leadership, pp. 18-22.

Wiggins G. and McTighe, J. (1998). *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Special thanks to the Arts Learning Program, Ohio Arts Council, for the content of this article.

Tools for Ongoing Assessment

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Portfolio assessment is based on the idea that students can demonstrate what they are learning and what they understand through organized collections of their work. Learning can then be assessed through those collections. Portfolios are most revealing when students are engaged in sustained projects that call for original thinking. Engagement and inventiveness seem to develop most readily in classrooms in which students are given choices about the focus and direction of their work. Portfolios are most effective when students are doing authentic work in a discipline that is close in form and process to that done by adults in the domain or discipline.

Key Ideas about Portfolio Assessment

- Assessment of portfolios reveals a student's particular profile of strengths and "chosen challenges."
- Portfolio assessment is inseparable from learning and thus occurs at several points in the term rather than only at the end of the school term.
- Assessment of portfolios recognizes student growth. Assessment provides a picture of development by comparing student work from at least two points in time.

(From Seidel & Walters, 1990)

RUBRICS

Rubrics, like portfolios, exhibitions and other authentic approaches to assessment blur the distinction between teaching and assessment. They exist as a compliment to instruction. A rubric is a type of scoring guide that expresses more than one level of achievement for one or more criteria. An instructional rubric is often used with a relatively complex assignment and provides students with informative feedback about their works in progress and their final products.

A rubric:

- Is related to an authentic learning in the subject area.
- Includes subject-specific content.
- Focuses on subject-specific knowledge or skill.
- Describes or specifies levels of achievement.

Although the format of an instructional rubric can vary, all rubrics have two features in common:
1) a list of criteria or what counts in a project and 2) gradations of quality of student work.

Instructional rubrics have several features that support student learning. They:

- are written in language that students can understand.
- refer to common weaknesses in students' work and indicate how such weaknesses can be avoided.
- can be used by students to evaluate their works- in-progress and thereby guide revision and improvement.

Learning improves when feedback reminds students of the need to monitor their learning and guides them in how to achieve learning objectives. Students themselves can be the source of feedback, given the appropriate conditions and supports.

(Brophy, 2000, Andrade 1999)

THE ROLE OF QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES
Questions help guide students' reflective thinking about the work they made and the work they've observed. Open-ended questions prompt the student to engage more deeply in the thinking process and help to guide the inquiry. By open -ended we mean problems without clearly defined methods of solution and without one right answer. These are the kinds of issues that professionals in the arts work on. No one tells a painter what to paint or how to paint it; nor does anyone tell a conductor how to perform a score. Students too can be given problems that they must define and solve for themselves. In looking at pieces of performance or fine art work we want to ask students "What's going on here?" (understanding) and "What do you see that makes you think so?" (evidence/assessment). Good questions help students to be energetic thinkers.

What do you learn by making the work and what do you learn by watching?
How can reflection and questioning techniques help us to make considered choices?

Both the Lincoln Center Institute and Harvard Project Muse (**M**useums **U**niting with **S**chools in bducation) Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education: Quest (**Q**uestions for bnderstanding, **E**xploring, **S**eeing and **T**hinking about the arts) have developed a framework and a series of questions that help students build their receptivity to experiencing any given art work and the ability to reflect upon that experience. You may contact them directly for additional information.

Deborah Brzoska who works as a consultant with The Kennedy Center arts education programs suggests a method called "Quick Write" as part of a teachers 'and teaching artists' program or project evaluation.

Quick Write
1. In my arts education project, one main thing I am trying to accomplish is…
2. I will know I have accomplished this when I see….

Bibliography

Andrate, Heidi Goodrich (1999). *When assessment is instruction and instruction is assessment: Using rubrics to promote thinking and understanding*. In L. Hetland & S. Veenema (Eds.), The Project Zero Classroom: Views on understanding. Cambridge, MA: Project Zero.

Blythe, Tina and Associates. *The Teaching for Understanding Guide*. San Francisco, California; Jossey-Bass Inc., 1998.

Educational Testing Service and Harvard Project Zero, Winner, E. ed. *Arts Propel: An Introductory Handbook*. 1991.

Lincoln Center Institute: *Entering the World of the Work of Art*. Website: http://www.lincolncenter.org/lci/philosophy/enterfr.htm

McTighe, Jay and Grant Wiggins. *Understanding By Design*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2004.

O'Neil, Susan. *Harvard Project Zero: Project Muse (Museums Uniting with Schools in Education): The Muse Guide*. President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1996.

Seidel, S., Walters, J., Kirby, E., Olff, N., Powell, K., and Veenema, S. (1997). *Introduction. Portfolio practices: Thinking through the assessment of children's work* (pp. 9-22). Washington, D.C.: NEA Publishing Library.