

Inclusive Assessment

Assessment of student learning has been shown to be a key factor in student motivation. Inclusive assessment takes on even more importance when we hear student voices. A survey of student perceptions conducted by Mark Chesler at the University of Michigan uncovered the following themes.

- The faculty have low expectations for us – many students of color reported that faculty did not expect them to perform well in class
- The faculty do not understand that we are different from the white students in their class – some students of color reported that they felt estranged and even excluded by assumptions made by faculty about students in general that did not apply to them
- We are not all alike – in contrast students of color also experience being stereotyped or lumped together when they are not alike

How does this manifest itself in assessment? One way is that we often use a single method to assess all students. That practice assumes that all students are the same and therefore can be assessed the same way.

Effective assessment should include evaluating changes that take place in students' knowledge, in their skill set and in their attitudes toward the discipline. This has been called the ABC's of student assessment (Joe Cuseo, working paper Research Gate)

- A- Affective – learning that represents a change in students' attitudes, perspectives or viewpoints
- B- Behavioral – learning that represents a change in student habits
- C- Cognitive – learning demonstrated by gains in knowledge and thinking skills

Below are some general Principles to create student-centered inclusive Assessment (university of Oregon)

1. Assessment utilizes multiple and varied methods of student performance
2. Where possible, assessment used BOTH quantitative and qualitative methods
3. Inclusive Assessment provides opportunities for students to express their learning in different modes and modalities
4. Effective assessment should require both independent and dependent groups
5. Targeted feedback should be given frequently
6. Assessment occurs before, during, and after learning

How do we achieve this in a way that honors each student and at the same time meets our learning objectives and is not overly burdensome?

Below are some suggested techniques and ideas that allow assessment to be a learning tool and give students the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in ways that reflect differences.

Effective Assessment utilizes multiple and varied methods of student evaluation

- Final Paper Options
 - Digital Story – reflecting the goal of the course
 - Short Play or dialogue – on a topic of significance
 - Verbal exam – students record their answers

- Action oriented project- students can construct a project that reflects the goal of the course
- Testing/Quiz options
 - Student generated test questions
 - Double entry journals (entry 1 the ideas/ entry 2 personal significance of the idea)
 - Audio protocol – students are recorded talking through the process of solving a problem or answering a question
- On-going class assessment
 - Background probe – short questionnaire at the beginning of a unit/topic to determine the appropriate level of instruction
 - Minute paper- end of the class question on unclear points
 - Concept Maps – diagrams the mental connections students make

Holding High Expectations for All Students

- Provide models of excellent work
- Distribute anonymous copies of students' written work from previous classes that range in quality and ask student to rank the students work and identify *their* reason for the ranking
- Provide students with a checklist of criteria that will be used to evaluate the quality of their work

Feedback should be Frequent

- Feedback should be specific and targeted for each student
- Students should be given the opportunity to practice the feedback in a follow up assignment or activity
- Feedback on progress should be given early in the term and there should be multiple sources of data before mid-term to help students determine their strengths and areas needing attention

Effective Assessment included a Balanced Blend of Quantitative and Qualitative

- In mathematical based courses – ask students to describe how they would solve a problem rather than just having them write the solution
- In language arts based classes – on exams include short objective test questions to understand students understanding of the lower levels of knowledge which will influence the higher levels of writing.

In summary, MacKinnon and Manathunga remind us that “Culturally responsive assessment demonstrates that flexibility, choice and relevance when coupled with the development of intercultural communication skills, enabling all student to choose subjects on the basis of desire to engage intellectually in the teaching and learning process.”

Adapted from:

1. MacKinnon and C.Manathunga, Journal of Higher Education and Research. Downloaded at Tufts, September, 2015.
2. http://tep.uoregon.edu/resources/newteach/fifty_cats.pdf
3. Chesler, Mark, The Center for the Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan. Occasional Paper #7
4. Cuseo, Joe. Downloaded from Research Gate. October 2015