

YOUR PERSONAL LEARNING GUIDE FOR

ASSESSMENT

By the Authors of
THE MASTER TEACHER Weekly Pd PROGRAM

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Table Of Contents

Introduction	vii
--------------------	-----

Knowing What To Measure

Chapter 1 You Must Measure What Matters	1
Chapter 2 The 4 C's Of Assessment.....	7
Chapter 3 Caught Red-Handed: Five Pieces Of Evidence We Can't Ignore	13
Chapter 4 Nine Techniques For Using Assessment To Improve Learning	19
Chapter 5 The Paramount Importance Of Sequence	25
Chapter 6 Six Assessment Mistakes You Must Avoid	31
Chapter 7 Staying On The Right Side Of Excellence.....	37

Understanding What Students Have Really Learned

Chapter 8 Design Questions To Get The Learning You Seek	43
Chapter 9 Techniques To Check Comprehension As You Teach	49
Chapter 10 Practice: It Must Be Appropriate	55
Chapter 11 Student "Closure" Of Lessons Provides Us With An Accurate Check Of Comprehension	61
Chapter 12 Student Engagement: Six Things To Look For	67
Chapter 13 What You Need To Know To Assess Creativity In Your Classroom	73
Chapter 14 Five Great Sentences To Measure Durable Learning.....	79

Breaking Down Data

Chapter 15 Finding Nuggets In Mounds Of Data.....	85
Chapter 16 Digest Data In Bite-Sized Doses.....	91
Chapter 17 Using Perception Data To Change Your Thinking.....	97

Helping Students Become More Autonomous

Chapter 18 Getting Students To Look At Themselves	103
Chapter 19 Teach Students When And How To Ask For Help.....	109
Chapter 20 Nurture And Assess Self-Discipline In Students	115

Grading, Testing, And Giving Feedback

Chapter 21 The Test: Help Or Hindrance?	121
Chapter 22 Who Determines Grades?	127
Chapter 23 Cut Complaints About Grades	133
Chapter 24 Designing Homework That Students Will Do.....	139
Chapter 25 Must All Homework Be Graded?	145
Chapter 26 Feedback You Must Receive From Students.....	151
Chapter 27 Three Actions To Consider Before Giving Final Grades.....	157
Chapter 28 Make Feedback Work To Maximize Learning.....	163

Making A Difference

Chapter 29 How You Can Know You've Made A Difference.....	169
---	-----

Alignment with Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching	175
---	-----

Alignment with the Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model	177
---	-----

Introduction

There are only two real purposes for assessment. First, we need to know how well we have taught. Second, we need to know how well students have learned.

No teacher wants to waste valuable time teaching what students already know, nor do we want to move on when students haven't yet learned what we need them to learn. And yet, assessment is both an art and a science. There are certainly tried-and-true strategies that help get us the information we are looking for. But, if not handled gingerly, public questioning can turn into private shame and then disengagement. Assessing at the wrong time, when engagement is high but mastery hasn't occurred, can halt discovery and curiosity in its tracks. Further, giving grades too early can keep skilled learners from reaching for more and slower learners from feeling that success is within their reach.

That's why this book can be such a valuable resource to all teachers—both experienced and unexperienced alike. You will receive a refresher on the most important foundations a teacher must have to conduct fair and effective assessment. After all, assessing students from the wrong perspective or about the wrong things can do damage to students and their learning confidence.

Next you will receive multiple insights and strategies concerning the best ways to assess in multiple circumstances.

You will learn the best strategies for testing, grading, and giving feedback, as well as how to teach students to be better self-assessors of their own progress. You will also learn the best ways to preserve and utilize data.

Finally, you will understand how to measure whether or not you have made a difference.

We encourage you to fill out the journaling section provided after every chapter. Use this for your own professional growth. Your teaching confidence will grow and mature if you do.

— THE MASTER TEACHER Authors

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conventions is not enough. Students clearly need to develop high-level skills that they can apply in a variety of contexts. But skills without the knowledge of when to apply them and how they relate to content are not enough. Students need both content and skills—and these elements need to be balanced so they support each other. The tools we use to measure these key aspects of learning need to go beyond multiple-choice and short-answer exercises. To know whether students really understand what they are learning, we may need to have them perform the skill, such as presenting a well-reasoned argument, demonstrating problem-solving approaches, or testing a hypothesis and analyzing data to draw a conclusion. The level and completeness of learning can be captured in a rubric or matched against an anchor paper or product to ensure high levels of performance and diagnose areas of weakness.

The level of engagement students have with what they are learning makes a difference.

A third important element related to learning is the level of **engagement** students have with what they are learning. While not a direct measure of learning, engagement data can provide key insights: For example, the level of effort students are willing to invest, clues to how learning might be positioned, and how we might calibrate challenge and pace to increase engagement and commitment.

In the long term, the meaning, purpose, and value students see in what they are learning will play a key role in retention of what they learn, motivation to use what they have learned, and interest in continuing to learn. We can measure engagement with a variety of tools, but almost all involve asking questions of students. We cannot see inside the minds of students, and nonverbal behaviors are not always accurate indicators of real engagement. Therefore, we need to survey students, asking them to log entries at specific times, to report their levels of engagement, and to use individual response technologies.

Self-efficacy is a fourth aspect related to learning that is important to nurture and measure. The level of self-efficacy students feel will determine the amount of persistence they'll give to learning. It can determine whether a student will engage in challenging work

or find a way to avoid it. Self-efficacy can also impact how students react when they fail. Do they give up or use the experience to learn and improve? Similar to measuring engagement, our most effective tools typically will be surveys, dialogue, and other avenues through which students can tell us what they are thinking and feeling. Clearly, we should not guess.

The fifth element we need to measure is the impact of our **instructional practices**. The fact is that not all instructional practices are of equal value. Different groups and individual students will benefit most from a variety of practices and strategies. To be more effective with more students, we need to collect data and measure the effectiveness of our instructional practices. Obviously, monitoring data regarding the amount and rate of learning students show in response to the approaches we use is important. Sharing results and comparing outcomes with colleagues broadens the range of strategies we can draw from and match to particular students.

The Master Teacher pays particular attention to measurement and the improvement of instructional practices.

The Master Teacher knows that each of these five aspects to be measured is important and can give us information to maximize our instructional impact. However, when we consistently collect data on and measure the impact of our instructional practices, we build instructional capacity that remains with us when students move on. It's available to us whenever we need it. Meanwhile, we will have a growing impact with an ever-widening array of learners.

To Learn More:

Schmoker, M. (2008/2009). Measuring what matters. *Educational Leadership*, 66(4), 70-74. Online: www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/dec08/vol66/num04/Measuring-What-Matters.aspx

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Personal Learning Journal

This is your personal journal for student assessment. It focuses on a four-step learning process specifically designed to enhance lifetime learning. Every step is important. To actually acquire and remember knowledge, it's important to write what you learned as well as what you already knew. Likewise, it's essential to know what worked and didn't work—and to reflect. When reflection is followed by adjustments, that is, what you will do differently as well as when you will do it, long-term learning and improvement are enhanced.

Simply write your journal entry after reading each message, and apply what you've learned in the classroom. This journal will help you retain the material and provide you with notes to review at a later date.

I. Learning/Planning

a. What did I already know about this topic?

b. What did I learn that was new?

II. Action/Application

a. What did I do that worked?

b. What did I do that didn't work?

c. What did I *not* do—and what happened?

III. Reflection/Assessment

a. What will I do with what I've learned from my experience?

b. What do I still need to learn on this subject?

c. How can I get this information?

IV. Change/Adjustment

a. What will I do differently the next time?

b. When will I use what I've learned? (first day or week of school, before grade cards go out, etc.)

c. What impact do I think it will have on my students and/or colleagues?
