

EDUC 421: Assessment & Motivation

Weekly Journal Reflections



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EDUC 421: Assessment & Motivation

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Topic	Assessment
“K”	<p>What do I already know about assessment? (From teaching experience, professional development with Sandra Herbst, and my Fall 2021 practicum and course work)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is integral to teaching and learning, with learners at the centre! • It must be aligned with the curriculum and our lessons, with clear criteria re: the what, the how, and the why—all of which must be clearly communicated to students. Students must know what to expect and what is expected in order to be successful. • It seems like it should be straightforward (assess student learning), but it is highly complex. • Complex as far as the parties involved: teacher, student, admin, and parents/guardians. • Complex as far as type: formative, summative, diagnostic, formal, informal, behavioural, emotional, screening, authentic, performance-based, and many more. • Complex as far as the intended goals: to improve student learning (first and foremost); to guide instruction; to help decide to re-teach or move forward; to identify student deficits in learning; to help diagnose disabilities; to help pinpoint optimal teaching and learning strategies; to help students (and teachers) learn from mistakes; to better understand how to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners. • Historically, assessment focused on assessment of learning, but there has been a shift to assessment for learning. Recognizing the difference between evaluation (to give marks and or judgements) vs. assessment (to give feedback that will ultimately improve student learning). • With this shift, came a number of other shifts: (1) a move away from a heavy reliance on summative assessment (final exams, standardized tests) toward a focus on formative assessment (checking for understanding daily, within the classroom, from lesson to lesson, often via informal ways such as thumbs up/down, “Think, Pair, Share”, or in discussions/brainstorms); (2) a shift to involving students in the assessment process via self-reflection, goal-setting, and listening to student feedback; and (3) a move away from letter grades and percentages to proficiency scales. • Assessment is intrinsically linked to motivation, which is intrinsically linked to emotion, which are intrinsically linked to learning. Emotion is inevitable, but we must ensure that it is positive. No learning takes place with negative emotion. With repeated negativity, students lose motivation to learn and ultimately become disengaged. Our feedback is key, and we must focus on the positive. • Assessment is a continuous process of teach, assess, teach, assess. • The more we know/understand our students, the better we can assess them. • Teachers should vary their assessments, with a focus on quality over quantity. • In the BC Redesigned Curriculum, teachers must assess learning standards (Curricular Competencies and Curricular Content) as well as the core competencies (communication, thinking, and personal and social).
“W”	<p>What do I wonder about assessment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we ensure that our assessments capture all ways of knowing? • How do we ensure that our assessments are accessible, inclusive, and fair to all our diverse learners? • How do we decide which skills and/or content must be mastered? What if mastery does not seem feasible? When do you decide to move on? What about the students who have not achieved mastery? • How do we engage students in self-reflection if they struggle deeply with self-regulation and self-awareness? • Our parents/guardians are just as diverse as our learners and communicating student learning to them can be a challenge in and of itself—what are some tried and true strategies when communication is especially challenging? • Teachers need to be honest about student performance, growth, and progress. Unfortunately, not all feedback is going to be ideal. How, then, can we relay the “non-ideal” information (to students and their parents or guardians) in a way that does not hurt their feelings or cause negative emotions? • How the transition will unfold as we move from BC’s current reporting model for K-9 students to the new “gradeless” proficiency-based reporting model. Will teachers be given additional training?
“L”	<p>What did I learn about assessment from the assigned articles this week?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overwhelmingly, research shows that students learn and perform better on assessments if they have been provided direct, explicit instruction. This fact, in and of itself, is not necessarily new to me (I learn better when provided with explicit instruction and I have seen my own children, and the students I have taught, learn best when provided with such instruction). However, this week’s article, “Putting Students on the Path to Learning: The Case for Fully Guided Instruction” (Clark, Kirschner & Sweller, 2012), solidified my belief in direct, explicit instruction and verified my thoughts on unguided learning. The article states that: “Each new set of advocates for unguided approaches seemed unaware of, or uninterested in, previous evidence that unguided approaches had not been validated. This pattern produced discovery learning, which gave way to experiential learning, which gave way to problem-based and inquiry learning, which has recently given way to constructivist instructional techniques” (pg. 7)—all of which the evidence shows is sub-par to guided learning. • Most students benefit from being assessed on worked examples (i.e., the “worked example effect” in Clark, Kirschner & Sweller, 2012, pg. 10). Students need to know exactly what to expect and what is expected of them. Direct, explicit instruction provides such worked examples. • The above, however, does not necessarily hold true for expert learners (i.e., the “expertise reversal effect” discussed by Clark, Kirschner & Sweller, 2012, pg. 10). The “expertise reversal effect” was also laid out in Melanie’s analogy on teaching the “farm-kid” who had been driving since he could reach the pedals vs. the new driver who had never been behind the wheel of a vehicle. • Assessment success, therefore, comes with “the wisdom of instructional techniques that begin with lots of guidance and then fade that guidance as students gain mastery. It also shows the wisdom of using minimal guidance techniques to reinforce or practice previously learned material” (Clark, Kirschner & Sweller, 2012, pg. 10).

What do you think makes assessment practices conducive to learning? Draw on your own experiences as a learner, and as an educator (in the broad sense of the term).

I think a teacher's values and beliefs about assessment determines if assessment practices are conducive to learning or not, with conductivity hinging on whether a teacher places more emphasis on *assessment OF learning* or *assessment FOR learning*. This is not to say that assessment of learning (summative) does not have a place in the classroom; it does, but research (and my own experience) has shown that assessment for learning (formative) should comprise the bulk of our assessment and be placed at the centre: "evolving research on formative assessment (since the mid-1990s) shifted the focus from simply proving learning with documentation to improving learning with quality assessment processes" (Erkens, Cassandra, et al., 2017, pg. 1).

If a teacher approaches assessment with the sole goal of determining what her students know so that she can assign grades and move on, her students will lack opportunities to improve or succeed and her assessment practices will not be conducive to learning: "when assessments are simply scored and recorded, they fail to give learners helpful insight into where they go next in their journey" (Erkens, Cassandra, et al., 2017, pg. 2). Learning is unlikely if students are not given opportunities to practice or learn from their mistakes.

If, however, a teacher approaches assessment with the goal of using it as a guide in the learning process (to provide practice and feedback, to improve upon her instruction, to differentiate student learning, to find out where additional supports are needed, etc.), her assessment practices will prove extremely valuable and be highly conducive to learning:

Assessment is choice. What we *choose* to do with assessment design, execution, and response reveals how we feel about learners, what kind of relationship we want to have with them, and how (or if) we will support them when they stumble. The truth is that assessment is rarely a neutral experience; every assessment decision will contribute to or take away from the learning culture in the classroom" (Erkens, Cassandra, et al., 2017, pg. 8).

Assessment as guide provides opportunities for all students to succeed, leading to positive emotions which, in turn, increases motivation and builds hope, efficacy, and achievement.

Assessment, in and of itself, is not the key to learning. It is the purpose of assessment and what is done with assessment results that will unlock student success. Assessment practices are only conducive to learning if they are relevant and practiced with purpose; if they take students from where they are to where they need to be. Our assessment practices must guide us toward student achievement—otherwise, what is the point?

**Pause and Ponder: What quote or passage encapsulates your biggest takeaway from this chapter?
What immediate action will you take in the classroom because of this takeaway?**

"The balance between the formative and the summative purposes is not a fifty-fifty proposition. In the same way that athletes practice more than they actually play games, the majority of a teacher's instructional practices should lean toward formative assessment. Grades and scores are not essential to learning, so most of a teacher's day-to-day attention should be directed toward descriptive feedback that advances the learner toward proficiency" (Erkens, Cassandra, et al., 2017, pg. 37).

Athletics is, was, and always will be, a huge part of my life. I was a competitive athlete growing up, participating in team sports (volleyball/basketball/baseball) as well as in individual events (figure skating/long-distance running/downhill skiing). I still make time for athletics and have coached my children's activities for several years. I thus appreciate Erkens, Cassandra, et al.'s (2017) analogies—those drawn between athletes and students, coaches and teachers, and sports and assessment (with practices likened to formative assessment and games/performances likened to summative assessment)—and truly believe that I have a much better understanding of assessment purpose because of these analogies.

As an athlete and coach, I have always understood the importance of building in more practice to prepare and ready (oneself and one's team) for games and performances. As a teacher in charge of guiding student learning, I can now take this same understanding into my classrooms and use it to guide my instruction and assessment practices. Reflecting here, it seems like a no brainer—"practice makes perfect" is a saying I have heard and said before—yet I, and many teacher-colleagues, do not necessarily practice this popular phrase or embody this mindset in the classroom. Instead, we focus on grand evidence of learning (projects, presentations, quizzes, and tests), which we mark, grade, score, and move on from. We spend most of our days *evaluating* (not *assessing*) how our students are doing. Even work that we say is "just for practice" is often marked, defeating the purpose of practice as students do not feel free to take risks in their learning when there is a score attached.

We do not do this despite our students. We do this because there is a deeply engrained belief in the teaching profession; that is, to help students reach proficiency, teachers must assign work, students must do the work, and then teachers must mark and assign a score to said work. After reading this chapter, I can fully rid myself of this crippling belief (which I have carried on and off over the past two and half years of teaching) and shift focus away from summative assessment with scores to formative assessment with ample descriptive feedback! What a freeing shift—for both myself and my future students ☺

Briefly summarize your PD activity and key take-aways. What connections, if any, to assessment and/or motivation can you draw from your professional development activity?

I was fortunate to attend School District #28's Professional Development Day (via Zoom) where guest speaker, Katie White, addressed several of our District's assessment concerns. White's presentation, "Finding Balance in a Shifting Assessment Landscape" (January 28, 2022), was extremely informative and highly relevant to assessment and motivation. As such, I was able to draw several connections to my EDUC 421 coursework.

First, in class (and in the course text) we have learned that the "traditional" model of assessment can be detrimental to student motivation and engagement:

When marks, grades, or scores are used as the primary feedback mechanism to track student learning on all assessments, especially formative assessments, learners lose sight of the goal, and they have little support to adjust and make a significant difference in their own growth trajectory. There is a better way." (Erkens, Cassandra, et al., 2017, pg. 29).

White's presentation highlighted the "better way", speaking to the shift occurring in British Columbia, and in our District, as educators transition from a grades-based system of assessment and reporting to one based on proficiency scales.

Second, we have learned that there are many questions, concerns, and hurdles facing educators as they make this transition. Our District is no different; it has raised the same concerns and questions and will have to maneuver the same hurdles. Educators in our schools want to know how they can adapt their assessment practices to align with the new system; how assessment will look for grades K-9, where curricular competencies, as well as content, must be assessed using proficiency scales. White was invited to address these essential questions, posed as follows: what are the attributes of a balanced assessment system?; how might assessing curricular competencies impact the tools we use and the ways we plan?; and, how might we leverage proficiency scales to advance learning and to communicate with stakeholders?

Third, as in class, several key take-aways emerged amidst the answers to these questions:

- "Good teaching is a response to students' learning rather than the cause of students' learning" (Rodgers & Raiden-Roth, 2006); i.e., good teachers take their cues from their students.
- Not all our students will learn what we want them to learn, when we want them to learn it (no matter how good our lessons and units are or how well we deliver them). Thus, we need instructional agility (the ability to pivot), and we need to plan with openness and curiosity. Then, we must take student feedback and use it to inform how we pivot, where we pivot, and when we pivot.
- Assessment allows us to pivot at the right time, in the right direction.
- Assessment = checking in. This is an explanation our students can understand and appreciate.
- In a balanced assessment system, we must focus on verifying (gathering evidence) and on growth (changing current state); we must balance the two, focusing on equity, hope, and achievement.
- Assessment is two-fold: (1) design (where am I now? where am I going?); and (2) response (what will I do with the results).
- Our design is only as good as our response. It is imperative that our assessment results generate a productive response (action).
- Action is an essential requirement: if not proficient, create a plan to get student to proficiency; if proficient, celebrate the success and determine what is next.
- Focus on the language we use in our feedback (positively framed).
- Ensure that our students know that task completion is important, but that quality and understanding is even more important.
- Proficiency scale = a tool used to describe degrees of quality and/or consistency in relation to a learning goal; it measures a student's performance in relation to the provincial learning standards (competencies and content).
- "Proficient" is a measure of ability at one time, on one task. Proficiency over time = competency. To say a student is competent at something, we need a body of evidence over time, in multiple contexts.
- Proficiency-based assessment rests on precision, flexibility, and task neutrality.
- Curricular competencies and curricular content are partners; we cannot assess one without the other.
- There are times and places for quantitative feedback, but qualitative feedback is far more beneficial to students as it leads to a better understanding of how they can improve, what they missed, and what they can do next. It allows us to delay conversion to letter grades or percentages and focus instead on critical feedback and response.
- It is crucial that our assessments are accurate and reliable, and that they lead to effective response and clear communication. This will build up student confidence and motivation. Validity & reliability + accuracy & clarity = successful assessment practice.
- As teachers, we are human and thus there is subjectivity in a proficiency-based system. However, we are also professionals with professional integrity and professional judgment. It is crucial that we make professional judgments in relation to a body of evidence (not solely on one task/test/quiz/etc.).
- If we are goal-focused and use task-neutral rubrics, we will be successful in a proficiency-based system.

I appreciate these take-aways and will draw upon them as I, too, make the transition from grades-based to proficiency-based assessment and reporting in my future teaching practice.

Pause & Ponder: Do your typical feedback routines align with the essential aspects of this assessment tenet? Why or why not?

“The communication of assessment results must generate productive responses from learners and all stakeholders. Whether through feedback or grades, the communication of proficiency must serve as a catalyst for continual learning” (Erkens, Cassandra, et al., 2017, pg. 5).

Thus far, my experience with assessment and feedback routines has been limited by the roles I have filled in education (i.e., teaching on call and/or in part-time, temporary teaching positions while incumbent teachers are on leave). Such roles require me to step into another teacher's shoes, for a limited and finite amount of time—ranging from a single day up to several months. Regardless of duration, it always feels like the expectation is to follow the lead of the certified, contract teacher's assessment routines and protocols (many of which I found ineffective and would not support in my own classroom). In my experience, then, assessment has occurred under the directive of the incumbent for whom I am covering, which unfortunately has not enabled me to develop my own feedback routines.

My personal beliefs regarding such routines, however, and what I plan to do in my own classroom once I become certified, aligns with the aspects of this second tenet. The goal of all my assessments will be to generate a productive response: “If the teacher's feedback or grades fail to produce a productive response—even if the results are less than favorable—then the teacher cannot claim to be effective” (pg. 42). I want to be an effective teacher! I want to motivate my students; I want to help them grow, improve, and succeed; I want to catalyze, not inhibit, student learning. When I give formative assessments (feedback) as well as when I give summative assessments (grades or a proficiency score), I want to communicate the results in ways that will increase achievement, build confidence, and foster hope: “The reward of spending so much time marking papers [or assessing other evidence of student learning] lies in a student's ability to improve as a result of the teacher's communication” (pg. 43). When we communicate in ways that motivate and give hope, student efficacy increases, and students become invested in their own learning—willing to take the next step to move their learning from where they are to where they need to be (pg. 41).

When I get my own classroom, I plan on using the questions posed by Erkens, Cassandra, et. al (2017) as part of my assessment routine guide. This will ensure that I am *communicating* to the best of my ability!

In my formative feedback routine, I will ask myself:

- (1) Does my feedback elicit a positive response?
- (2) Does my feedback identify what is next for the learner?
- (3) Is my feedback targeted to each learner's level?
- (4) Is my feedback strengths based?
- (5) Does my feedback cause thinking?

In my summative feedback routine, I will ask myself:

- (1) Do my grading practices build hope and efficacy?
- (2) Do my grading practices lead to accurate grades?
- (3) Do my grading practices emphasize if learning occurs?
- (4) Do I teach students to be more responsible?
- (5) Do my grading practices balance rehearsals and performances?

Pause & Ponder: What does it mean for assessment information to be valid, accessible, and reliable?

Erkens, Cassandra, et. al (2017) argue that accurate interpretation of assessment information depends on the validity, accessibility, and reliability of assessment results. This may seem simple and straightforward, but what does it truly mean for assessment information to **be** valid, accessible, and reliable? The answer is not clear-cut and can be confusing for teachers and students alike. As such, I believe that it is worthwhile to reflect upon each concept individually.

First, what does it mean for assessment information to be **valid**? If a student makes a valid point in class, one might say that their point is accurate and pertains to class discussion. Similarly, Erkens et. al say that “validity is the extent to which the assessment information accurately shows what to measure and the extent to which that information leads teachers to accurate inferences about students’ understanding (or lack of understanding)” (pg. 63). In other words, validity is the extent to which an assessment measures what it claims to measure (Baerg, Week 6 Lecture). Valid assessment information is produced when assessments are planned with the end in mind—that is, when teachers determine, in advance of the learning, what the learning standards, sub-standards, skills, and/or targets will be, how they will be met and measured, and then align their lessons and tasks accordingly. Teachers must provide explicit information to students on what they need to know and/or do, so that they know what they need to know and/or do to be successful.

Second, what does it mean for assessment information to be **accessible**? If a class’s resources are accessible to everyone, one envisions a classroom where students and teachers can access resources without difficulty. By association, assessment information is accessible when everyone (including students) can access it with ease. According to Erkens et. al, “teachers must provide students with opportunity and access to their assessment information, including ways to reflect on the information so that teachers know how learners are interpreting their scores and what impacts those scores are having on their confidence and achievement” (pg. 61). Accessibility also pertains to the clarity of assessment information—that is, assessment information must be meaningful and purposeful; observations and/or evidence must tell you what a student knows and/or can do, or does not know and/or cannot do, so that you can take steps to improve learning (Baerg, Week 6 Lecture). Put simply, “if accurate interpretation is kept secret, no one benefits” (pg. 61).

Third, what does it mean for assessment information to be **reliable**? If a student is “reliable”, one infers that the student can be depended upon at any given time, in any given context. Reliability, as it relates to assessment information, is also about dependability, stability, and consistency—particularly regarding the inferences drawn from assessment information. Erkens et. al argue that the reliability of assessment information depends upon: (1) internal consistency, (2) external consistency, (3) parallel assessment consistency, and (4) test or retest consistency. Essentially, “reliability is found in consistent results across multiple examples or evaluators” and “accurate and accessible results can be deemed inequitable if reliability is not taken into consideration” (pg. 62).

In breaking down each concept, it is clear that accurate interpretation of assessment information is dependent upon assessment results that are valid, accessible, and reliable. At the classroom level, validity, accessibility, and reliability of assessment information is critical because teachers and learners use the information to decide their “next steps”:

Data (and the inferences we draw) lead to conclusions that influence teacher and student actions and inform student beliefs and motivations. When these inferences are inaccurate, they lead students and teachers to judgements and decisions that can be misleading or damaging to learner’s confidence. Inaccurate inferences also lead to decisions that waste valuable time and resources for both teacher and the learner” (Erkens et al., 2017, pg. 60).

For teachers, “next steps” guide instruction; for students, they guide the learning trajectory. These steps are imperative to positive educational outcomes, and ones we must take wisely. This begins with valid, accessible, and reliable assessment practices!

Pause & Ponder: What concerns or queries do you have about assessments in relation to what you are teaching in your practicum?

My Experiential Practicum is fast approaching! With only three days until “go-time”, I must admit that I have a slight case of the pre-practicum jitters. I liken how I am feeling to how I have felt prior to big races, games, or performances; to those minutes leading up to final presentations; or, in my early days of teaching on-call, to the moments before going into unfamiliar classrooms with little (or no) time to prepare. That heightened awareness that all eyes will be on me. That sense of being ready, but also questioning my readiness. That feeling of excitement, but also fear of “messing up.” I am feeling “all the feels” heading into this practicum!

I will spend my three weeks in a split grade six/seven classroom. I had the opportunity to observe this class once last semester, during my Observational Practicum, and it was a wonderful experience. The past few Tuesdays have been spent familiarizing myself with the class (routines and procedures), the Coaching Teacher (CT), and her twenty-seven delightful students. My CT's teaching style (and pedagogy) aligns closely with mine, and the students are active, engaged, and eager to learn. I could not have asked for a better practicum placement! The instructional component excites me (I feel that my time as a TTOC has equipped me for this part of practicum) and I feel adequately prepared to assess student learning (again, I feel that my TTOC experience, and my role as a part-time contract teacher, has armed me in this area of teaching). And yet, the jitters are still present! Why?!?! It boils down to lesson planning. As a Cohort, we have discussed how complex, time-consuming, and anxiety-provoking the UNBC lesson template is. I have put together lessons, instructed hundreds of students in more than one hundred classrooms, and assessed evidence of student learning, but I have never (in my three years of teaching) seen lesson plans that resemble the ones we are expected to produce in this practicum. I believe that it is the level of planning (and the short amount of time to get it done) that is stressing me out! I have never been asked to create lessons, or build-in **assessments**, to the degree of complexity or rigor demanded here.

To keep it manageable, my CT and I have decided that I will focus my lessons on Math and English Language Arts. In the interest of maintaining consistency (and teaching to mastery), I will follow my CT's instructional framework for Mathematics (i.e., explicit instruction followed by student practice and daily formative feedback, followed by a low-stakes quiz). Monday, I will introduce a topic from the *Math Makes Sense* textbook, assign in-class practice questions, and then *mark* before the next day's lesson so that I know where students are in their learning. This will help me decide what I need to revisit and/or re-teach. On Tuesday, I will hand back student work and review and/or re-teach before assigning more practice questions from the *Math Makes Sense Student Homework* book. Students will have time to do corrections, ask clarifying questions, and do extra practice (to be handed in and marked). On Wednesday, I will review and re-teach where needed. On Thursday, a review lesson will be provided along with more practice (i.e., Math games, white-board practice, and/or a Math-Aid worksheet). On Friday, I will provide review as needed before giving students a low-stakes (summative) quiz. The following week, I will introduce the next concept (i.e., move from 3.1 to 3.2). My assessment concern is how I will adjust my lessons to account for students that do not understand the concept at the end of each week, despite explicit instruction, ample practice opportunities, and feedback? Teaching to mastery is tricky, especially in a short practicum where lessons are cumbersome and complex to plan!

In English Language Arts, I will be doing a unit on “Persuasion.” My lessons will cover: (1) Editorials; (2) Reading Editorials; (3) Writing Editorials; and (4) Debating. Students will participate in several discussions, pair and shares, and group tasks, where I will formally observe their levels of understanding. Students will also have the chance to communicate their levels of understanding more directly, in formative assessments (i.e., in thumbs up/down, on exit tickets, and in “React and Respond” answers). At the end of the unit, students will participate in a debate, and I will assess their understanding of persuasion and communication skills against a co-designed “Debate Rubric.” Students will also turn in their own written editorial and self-assessment (using a co-designed “Written Editorial Rubric”). I will assess their editorial using the same rubric. The debate and the written editorial will serve as summative assessments of learning. My concern, here, is co-creating and using rubrics (with the little rubric-creating experience I have) that will be effective and valuable in moving student learning forward.

Pause and Ponder: Reflect on the assessment practices you carried out in your practicum.

During my experiential practicum, I embraced assessment and took the opportunity to practice and experiment with many of the assessment and motivation strategies discussed in our class lectures and in our course text (*Essential Assessment: Six Tenets for Bringing Hope, Efficacy, and Achievement to the Classroom*, Erkens et. al., 2017). As teacher candidates, we were encouraged to approach this practicum with a sense of “playfulness”—to take chances; to experiment and try new things without fear of failure. Paraphrasing the words of Dr. Christina Younghusband: “This is your time to play! You can’t fail this practicum so try the idea, the tactic, or the lesson you’ve been wanting to try!” Hearing this and knowing this practicum was just that—experiential, a chance for teacher candidates to gain experience and become more familiar with the role of the classroom teacher—relieved pressure and allowed us to experiment with some formative and summative assessment strategies we may not have tried otherwise.

Personally, I tried several “new to me” assessment strategies, including exit tickets for formative assessment and rubrics for summative assessment (one I made myself and one I adopted from an online source). Before joining this teacher education program, I had never heard of the “exit ticket” (never mind incorporated one into my teaching) and what I knew of rubrics was limited to the on-call marking that I did for Quesnel’s Distance Learning program (they use rubrics heavily and I spent several days assessing student work against them) but I had never orchestrated a lesson or assigned a task that would be assessed by a rubric. Teaching on call and in part-time/short-term teaching vacancies limits the assessment decisions one has to make. But here, in this experiential practicum, I was given “free reign” to assess however I liked! It was both liberating and intimidating to be the sole decider of how to assess student learning.

There were so many important decisions to make! How would I get students to demonstrate their learning or achieve the learning intention(s)? What would I assess and how would I assess it? Would my assessments be formative, summative, or both? What evidence would I gather? What tools would I use to help gather and assess? What type of feedback would I give (verbal, written, formal, informal)? How would I document and share assessment results? Would I incorporate opportunities for self-assessment, peer assessment or rely solely on teacher assessment? So many questions—questions I had not considered when assessment was the after-thought of a “fly-by-the-seat-of-my-pants/plan a day’s worth of lessons in the thirty minutes I have between the time I walk into the classroom and the time the morning bell rings” scenario, or when the lessons and assessments had been pre-ordained by the regular classroom teacher.

Initially, all the planning was challenging and the questions overwhelming. But, as the days went by, planning for assessment of learning became easier. Included below are excerpts from my lesson plans, each highlighting an assessment practice and/or strategy I planned and utilized during my practicum:

*ELA Lesson 1: Introduction to Editorials - Students will achieve the learning intention by participating in a class discussion and watching the informational video. To invoke thinking and reflection, I will engage students with queries and prompts, and will provide **formative feedback** on their thoughts and ideas. At the end of the lesson, students will do an **Exit Slip** to demonstrate understanding. Students will be asked to write, on a sticky note or small piece of paper, something they envision seeing in an editorial that is of interest to them (i.e., basically any idea that involves an opinion or point of view that can be argued using facts/data/sources of information to persuade an audience toward an opinion or point of view). These exit slips will be discussed at the beginning of the next lesson.*

*ELA Lesson 2: Reading Editorials - Students will achieve the learning intentions by participating in class and group discussions. To invoke thinking and reflection, the teacher will engage students with queries and prompts, and will provide **formative feedback** on their thoughts and ideas. Students will work in small groups, where they will read,*

discuss, and answer questions about an editorial. Each group will share their answers with the rest of the class. During the sharing process, I will formatively assess student/group understanding and provide formative feedback in situ.

ELA Lesson 5: Reading Editorials Like a Writer - Students will achieve the learning intention by reading, discussing, and answering a selection of questions about an editorial (in pairs or small groups). The teacher will circulate the room during the read/respond portion of the lesson and provide **formative feedback** to students on their thoughts and ideas. Each pair/small group will turn in their written responses, which I will assess against a simple rubric (attached) and return with **summative feedback**, meant to guide further learning.

ELA Lesson 6: Introduction to Debate - Students will achieve the learning intention by participating in a class discussion and by planning and participating in a debate. I will circulate the room during the collaboration and planning process, providing **formative feedback** to students (i.e., on their opinions/points of view, arguments, evidence, opening statements, rebuttals, and closing statements). Students will then take turns debating. The audience will decide the winner of each debate by majority vote; that is, after each debate, I will ask the class which individual or team was the most convincing/persuasive? The audience will raise a hand for Individual/Team A or Individual/Team B. Then, we will give individuals/teams constructive feedback (2 strengths & 1 stretch), aimed at helping students improve for tomorrow's debate.

ELA Lesson 7: Debating Issues That Matter to Us - Students will achieve the learning intention by planning and participating in a second, more serious, debate. I will circulate the room during the collaboration and planning process, providing **formative feedback** to students on their opinions/points of view, arguments, evidence, opening statements, rebuttals, and closing statements. Students will then take turns debating. The audience will decide the winner of each debate (majority vote). After each debate, I will ask the class which individual, or team, was the most convincing/compelling/persuasive? The audience will raise a hand for Individual/Team A or Individual/Team B. I will also assess students' debate skills against a simple rubric which will be returned to them with **summative feedback** (meant to guide future debates).

Math Lesson 1: Equivalent Fractions - Students will demonstrate their learning and understanding of Equivalent Fractions and Fractions in Simplest Form in several ways: (1) in the responses they provide during "Discussion Time"; (2) in the responses they provide on individual whiteboards during "Show Me What You Know"; (3) in the responses they provide during a self-assessed thumbs up/down "Rate Your Understanding" poll; and (4) in their responses to questions during "Time to Practice." Students will receive **formative feedback at each of these four stages of learning**. Student responses to the practice questions will be handed in at the end of the lesson/block so that I can review and provide feedback to students on where they are at in their learning (vs. where they need to be) before the next lesson. This way, I can adjust my instruction, reviewing and/or re-teaching when necessary. I can also arrange additional support and go over corrections (working toward mastery of the concept). Throughout the week (in lessons to follow), students will have ample opportunity to practice, gain teacher feedback, and receive extra support. **At the end of the week (see Friday's lesson plan), students will have a low-stakes, summative quiz to assess understanding of the concepts. Quiz results will help me determine if students need further instruction and review of the concepts, or if they are ready to move to new concepts (of increasing difficulty).**

The lesson planning for this practicum was extensive, but all the planning paid off when I knew exactly what I was assessing before my lessons began! Teaching is so much easier when you know what you are assessing and why. Having an assessment plan and knowing how my assessment criteria connected to the curriculum, allowed me to tailor my lessons and adjust and adapt my instruction to meet the needs of the students—it helped me be instructionally agile.

During my practicum, my coaching teacher (CT) commended me on my ability to adjust my lessons and tasks as needed, based on the feedback I received from her and the students directly (in our conversations and discussions, in thumbs up/down polls, in their exit ticket responses and responses to assigned questions and practice problems, and on their quizzes) and indirectly (students' ability to focus and engage with the instruction and assigned tasks). She was equally pleased with my ability to provide students with clear and concise feedback (verbally/formatively and written/summatively) that would guide their learning (taking them from where they were to where they needed to be) and with my ability to track and record evidence of student learning (below).

Week 1 (Feb 22-25)

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Student 1																									
Student 2																									
Student 3																									
Student 4																									
Student 5																									
Student 6																									
Student 7																									
Student 8																									
Student 9																									
Student 10																									

X = Didn't do/participate
 ✓ = Did/participated
 * = Excellent Participation
 D = Developing
 E = Emerging
 P = Proficient
 Ext = Extending
 A = Away

* Could show conversations using some d.o.p. based on to get extending marks next
 D = Developing
 E = Emerging
 P = Proficient
 Ext = Extending
 A = Away

Week 2 (Feb 26-Mar 4)

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Student 1																									
Student 2																									
Student 3																									
Student 4																									
Student 5																									
Student 6																									
Student 7																									
Student 8																									
Student 9																									
Student 10																									

✓ = participated
 X = didn't participate
 * = Excellent participation
 A = Away
 L = late/missed lesson

D = Developing
 E = Emerging
 P = Proficient
 Ext = Extending

* Could show conversations using some d.o.p. based on to get extending marks next
 D = Developing
 E = Emerging
 P = Proficient
 Ext = Extending
 A = Away

Week 3 (March 7-11)

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Student 1																									
Student 2																									
Student 3																									
Student 4																									
Student 5																									
Student 6																									
Student 7																									
Student 8																									
Student 9																									
Student 10																									

P = Sick Day
 H = Sick Day
 ✓ = participated
 X = didn't participate
 * = Excellent participation
 A = Away
 L = late/missed lesson

D = Developing
 E = Emerging
 P = Proficient
 Ext = Extending

* Could show conversations using some d.o.p. based on to get extending marks next
 D = Developing
 E = Emerging
 P = Proficient
 Ext = Extending
 A = Away

My assessment efforts helped me recognize early on that I needed to offer students levelled math options so that all had "good-fit" problems that were challenging but not too difficult. Students were given the opportunity to reach proficiency and show extending knowledge on low-stake summative quizzes (based on what they practiced each week), working toward mastery of varying levels. During my second week, I postponed adding a new concept as originally planned, choosing to spend more time working toward mastery before adding another, more challenging step. This decision paid off: students were successful having had the extra time and were ready for the new material when I introduced it at the beginning of my third week. My planned assessment efforts also enabled me to ensure students understood the criteria and knew what they were being assessed on prior to starting each task. Rubrics were shared during explicit instruction so there were no assessment surprises for anyone involved. I also paid attention to student feedback and showed flexibility when students required longer than expected to complete learning tasks (i.e., reading comprehension questions, group work, debating tasks, etc.). Formative feedback was provided to students verbally during every lesson and in writing on preliminary/practice questions. Summative feedback was provided on summative tasks (i.e., quizzes and end-of-unit tasks; see ELA rubrics below).

Reading and Understanding Editorials – Rubric

Name: _____

Criteria	4	3	2	1	0
Question #1 – The Table (We filled in every square of the table. Points are awarded for clear understanding of the issue of interest, only the possible clear the issue they should find their steps in tackling the issue, the abstract they had to overcome, and their final results.)	✓				
Question #2 (We clearly state our chosen issue. We provide at least 2 possible activities that we could do as a way to "stand up for change.")	✓				
Question #3 (We answer the question (i.e., what is perseverance?) in a complete sentence for extending. (We also give an example of when I've showed perseverance.)		✓			
Effort and Engagement (We put in effort to connect with the editorial, using the reading strategies learned in this unit to accomplish the task.)	✓				

Comments: Excellent work! The detail you provided on your table was impressive – your "reading for understanding" and "reading like a writer" skills are highly developed! Thank you for your thoughts and ideas for discussion – some really great ideas to help "stand up for change" here at your school to raise awareness, food and clothing for people in need in our community! Well done!

Overall: 4

Debate Assessment Rubric

BLM 6-15

Debating Team Name and Position: _____ (Opposition)

Name of Assessor: Hs.H. Date: March 10th

Resolution: Honour Roll + Principal should be brought back!

Note: This form can be used by both the teacher and student peers.

1. The speakers' statements clearly supported their position in the debate.	5	4	3	2	1
2. The speakers' statements appeared to be well researched and documented.	5	4	3	2	1
3. The speakers addressed the opposing team and made appropriate eye contact.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Arguments were presented with clarity and appropriate volume.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Speakers were well rehearsed with minimal reliance on notes.	5	4	3	2	1
6. Rebuttals were specific to opposing arguments and expressed with clarity.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Rebuttals showed evidence of good listening skills.	5	4	3	2	1
8. Concluding arguments and statements were effective and convincing.	5	4	3	2	1
9. Speakers adhered to the rules of the debate.	5	4	3	2	1
10. The overall collective effort of the debate team was effective.	5	4	3	2	1

Additional Comments:

Clear voice, well rehearsed, excellent links to opponent's rebuttal. It was evident that you practiced and put effort into researching your side of the debate! Well done!!

Upon reflection, I am proud of my assessment practices and the assessment and motivation strategies I utilized in my experiential practicum. And, I must say, after all of this planning and attention to detail, it is going to be hard to transition back to my TIOC role and not knowing my lessons and assessment plans in advance!!

Pause and Ponder: What systems and structures need to be in place to guarantee that instructional agility does not grant teachers license to use instructional freedom to roam or slow completely to the pace of the most struggling learner?

This is a paradoxical question. Asking what systems and structures need to be placed **on teachers** to ensure that they do not **use** (i.e., abuse) their instructional freedom to “roam” or “slow completely” the pace of the curriculum implies that teachers want to slow the pace of learning and are using instructional agility as an excuse to roam freely, intentionally evading their duty to cover what needs to be covered—as if this is something teachers want for their students and their classrooms! This question also implies that teaching to the struggling learner is not a teacher's responsibility. Both implications are inaccurate. It is our job, as teachers, to meet the needs of **all learners** and, from what I have seen and experienced, teachers are trying their best (sometimes desperately) to do just that—cover the entire curriculum (Big Ideas, Competencies, and Content) AND reach all learners—but it is just too much to manage given the current system, the structures in place, and the lack of supports available.

We must reframe the question and ask: what systems and structures need to be placed **on education** to guarantee that teachers, armed with instructional agility, have the support, training, and resources they need to keep pace with learning while meeting the needs of ALL learners? Teachers need better support in a better system with better structures. Given the current status quo, and the gaps it has created in student learning, it is impossible (even for the most instructionally agile teacher) to get every student in a classroom to mastery. There is so much to do, with so few resources, in so little of time. Teachers are constantly faced with the dilemma of “when do I continue to re-teach (in an effort to bring every student to mastery) and when do I make the call to move on (even if some/many students have not reached a sufficient level of mastery)? What is the correct path? How does a teacher make these decisions? Are we doing the right thing?

Tough questions. Questions I have pondered in the past and questions my Coaching Teacher and I pondered during my recent experiential practicum. In designing, facilitating, and adjusting my lessons, I constantly contemplated how I could meet the needs of my diverse learners—those who were struggling (my developing and emerging learners), those who were “right on track” (my proficient learners), and those who were already masters (my extending learners). The pressing question at the back of my mind—before, during, and after lessons —was: how do I ensure that those who are not “getting it” receive the time and support they need to “get it” without slowing the pace of my instruction to a rate where the proficient and extending learners become bored and disengaged?!?

MY CT and I agreed that the best approach/solution was to provide as explicit instruction as possible at the outset, approaching content as if students had never heard of it before. I broke concepts down to their most basic parts and then worked at putting them back together. I ensured that my instruction was engaging too all learners. I invoked students' prior knowledge and connected it to the new content. I ensured that my lessons were universally designed with all learners in mind and involved oral, visual, and written components. I drew upon technology (using the Smart Board to display visuals and audio-visuals) and gave students choice when it came to how they wanted to work and complete tasks (individually, in pairs, in small groups, or as a class). In most activities—whether during brainstorming and discussion tasks, reading comprehension tasks, written tasks, debate tasks, or math tasks—there was a reasonable level of choice. If a student (or students) struggled, I made sure to take a step back and re-teach and review before moving on. I offered levelled work, so students had opportunities to self-assess their knowledge and skills before choosing “good fit” options that were challenging but not too difficult or frustrating. I took all my cues from my students and adjusted instruction, lessons, and tasks accordingly.

During practicum, I practiced, fostered, and honed my instructional agility—the “iterative process of understanding what you want students to learn, recognizing and interpreting student words and action, and responding in ways that build on students' strengths, clear up misconceptions, and promote the next steps in their learning” (Erkens et. al., 2017, pg. 110). It is difficult to “juggle” all of the diverse learners in a single classroom, but master teachers do it every day! So, although I believe this chapter's question was framed incorrectly, I do agree with the chapter's main message: “Instructional agility is critical if teachers are to guarantee learning” (pg. 95). Most teachers are out there doing the best they can with what they have, and those making it look easier than the rest have mastered instructional agility—the sharpest, toughest tool in a teacher's arsenal.

Pause and Ponder: What are the key characteristics that ground student investment?

The key characteristics that ground student investment are assessment and self-regulation, including the four phases of self-regulation: (1) forethought, planning, and activation, (2) monitoring, (3) control, and (4) reaction and reflection. According to Erkens et. al. (2017):

Student investment occurs when assessment and self-regulation have a symbiotic relationship. This means that teachers help students use their assessment information to understand their learning strengths and what they need to work on to achieve more. It means they reflect on what helps them learn and what gets in the way as well as when they shut down and when they get inspired, or their motives for doing what they do (or don't do) (pg. 112).

They go on to say that student investment is “about developing students' ability to reflect on their learning in light of a clear learning progression, track their progress, and develop a process for persisting through struggle and growing to achieve more” (pg. 113).

These statements definitely hold truth; from what I have seen and experienced in classrooms, the students who are engaged and invested in their own learning are those who are able to self-regulate and reflect on what they know, do, and understand. These learners view failures as opportunities to grow and are always looking for ways to improve upon their learning (finding out what they need to do to take themselves from where they are to where they need to be). As Erkens et. al. attest, these students are “identifying what they are learning (or taking cues and direction from their teachers about what to learn); learning the criteria that guide quality work; and using feedback and information from their informal and formal assessments to choose strategies and monitor their progress, motivation, and behavior to learn more” (pg. 113).

Students cannot do this alone. Teachers must: (1) “provide feedback to students in this process so they learn to understand what helps them, what gets in the way, and how they can begin to close their learning gaps”; (2) “intentionally refocus students on their learning process and progress, deflecting their attention away from the traditional assessment outcomes of accumulating points, getting grades, or receiving a mark; and (3) “pique curiosity, activate metacognition and reflection, and focus learning on the value of learning itself” (pg. 114). As a teacher candidate, it is my goal to become a teacher that fosters student investment. I want my students to be engaged and invested in their learning, and so I will take the advice from this chapter and design student investment by developing high levels of engagement and reflection: consistently and intentionally make learning goals and the pathway to learning transparent for my students; asking and requiring my students to generate challenging questions; responding to observations of students' understanding, misconceptions, and confidence (or lack of it); monitoring the impact of my instructional practices, my assessments, and the culture of my classroom; and seeking feedback from my students on their perceptions of the impact of my instructional practices, my assessments, and the culture of my classroom (pg. 111).

These practices foster student investment and lead to improved student engagement, performance, and achievement. Last semester, my third EDUC 393 Cross-Curricular Reflexive Writing assignment focused on “Student Engagement & Performance” (Hesselgrave, November 2021) and outlined grave concerns over their decline. Clearly, from the information provided in this chapter, I should have focused on, and titled that piece, “Student Investment” as it roots both student engagement and student performance.