



## *Building Roads for Students' Success*

### Reflection Sheet: Student Assessment in Today's Classrooms

#### Key Points

- The key purpose of classroom assessment in Ontario is to support students' learning.
- Our current conceptions of assessment recognize the importance of using assessment information to engage students in the learning process.
- Effective assessment practices help students to monitor and direct their own learning needs.
- The School Effectiveness Framework encourages the use of classroom assessment information to support school improvement efforts.

While there has been a lot of attention directed towards the EQAO provincial assessments in Ontario, there is also a recognition of the real importance of teachers' classroom assessment practices. Our conceptions of assessment have evolved over the years, reflecting the findings from research and practice, to include notions of formative and summative assessment, assessment literacy and currently, Assessment—For, As and Of Learning. Traditionally, teachers' assessment practices were used primarily to determine students' achievement and secondarily guide subsequent teaching practices and focus. However, in today's Ontario's classrooms, the primary purpose of teachers' assessment practices must be to support students' learning.

Our current conceptions of classroom assessment explore the various ways that teachers' classroom assessment practices can support student learning. Perhaps, most importantly, are those assessment practices that promote student engagement in their learning, and develop students' abilities to better identify their own learning needs. Commonly framed within the phrases Assessment "For" and "As" Learning, these concepts represent a real change from our traditional classroom assessment practices. "Assessment for Learning" differs from traditional conceptions of formative assessment in its reliance on active student engagement in the assessment process (e.g., self and peer assessment, student generated assessment criteria, goal setting and progress monitoring). And "Assessment as Learning" makes explicit the need to teach students to self-monitor and evaluate their progress so that they can begin to identify strategies that best fit their learning needs. Ongoing research has suggested that teachers who successfully implement these assessment practices are able to increase their students' levels of achievement.

It is also clear from the current research that affective assessment practices that successfully support students' learning are difficult to implement and take time and practice for both teachers and students to master. The Assessment Reform Group (1999) lists five principles to guide assessment during learning. These principles include: (a) the provision of effective feedback to students from teachers and peers, (b) the active involvement of students in their own learning through self-assessment, (c) the use of self-, peer-, and teacher feedback and assessment results to (cont'd)

guide learning and instruction, (d) a recognition that assessment has a profound influence on motivation and self-esteem, and (e) the understanding that self-assessment is a key factor in promoting students' understanding of learning. Certainly, these principles of teachers' classroom assessment practices are reflected in recent Ontario Ministry of Education documents and policies.

Most recently, the importance and purposes of teachers' classroom assessment practices have also been highlighted in Ontario's School Effectiveness Framework (SEF). A review of the SEF for the eastern region of Ontario explored the manner in which the SEF incorporates current conceptions of classroom assessment. The SEF describes a model in which teachers' classroom assessment information can be used to support and guide school improvement efforts, communicate student achievement and differentiate instructional practice. According to the SEF document, continuous assessment is integral to the teaching learning process, and the potential for assessment to support and enhance student learning. The SEF lists four indicators that reflect effective assessment that are aligned with current conceptions of classroom assessment: (1) a variety of valid and reliable assessment data is collected, disaggregated and used to inform planning. (2) Common assessment tasks are collaboratively crafted and the resulting student work is analyzed to ensure consistency of standards within and across grade levels, with the goal of equity of outcomes for all students. (3) Assessment practices that allow teachers and students to share responsibility for learning are in place. (4) communication practices are in place to ensure parents are informed in a timely and meaningful manner about student learning and progress.

For more information see: *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010); *The Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada* (Joint Advisory Committee, 1993); the *Student Evaluation Standards* (Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 2003); and *Inside the Black Box* (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

## Questions Raised

- What is your current understanding of Assessment Of, For & As Learning?
- Are your students able to use the assessment information you provide to direct their learning?
- Have you been able to take advantage of professional development opportunities to explore current conceptions of classroom assessment?
- What student assessment information do you have that can inform the improvement efforts in your school?

*“...in today’s Ontario’s classrooms, the primary purpose of teachers’ assessment practices must be to support students’ learning.”*



*This Reflection Sheet was prepared by Christopher De Luca & Don Klinger of Queen’s University based on portions of the 2010 Building Roads for Students’ Success research paper produced as part of a MISA Professional Network Project with funding assistance from The Ministry of Education of Ontario. (Contact: Marilyn Kasian: [marilyn.kasian@ottawacatholicschools.ca](mailto:marilyn.kasian@ottawacatholicschools.ca))*