

Assessment That Allows Teaching

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Teachers in all content areas are increasingly required to show impact on student learning. Too often this takes the form of pre- and posttests with two weaknesses: First, too much of what should be instruction and learning time is lost to testing. Second, teachers too often use the same test, so students may be learning the test, rather than learning the full complement of objectives. How can physical educators validly assess students to demonstrate that learning has occurred, without disrupting learning? The purpose of this session is to present strategies for using alternative assessments to document student learning. Participants will engage in discussion and brainstorming to develop examples of how these ideas can be used with their own classes.

Part of our task is to educate administrators to a different understanding of assessment—that there are ways of assessment that are equally valid and more conducive to learning than the classroom model they are accustomed to. We will address that, though the part of our task that is the focus of this session is developing workable assessment strategies.

Step one: What are my objectives?

If you want to grade on it or use it as a basis for showing student achievement, this is where the work happens. Whether you use a rubric that encompasses multiple factors or a checklist approach, this has to be specific.

Step two: How can I assess?

The *how* we're discussing today isn't new. Using it to show impact on student learning is new. (Formerly, we assumed that if they were successful, it was because we'd taught them successfully. Many of us now have to provide baseline data to show change, which is our focus today.)

Recommendations:

- Keep it on one page, preferably entered directly into a spreadsheet.
- Assess elements separately. This allows a finer grain not only for showing change, but for evaluating elements of particular strength/weakness in student learning (and, sometimes, in our teaching).
- Assessment scales should have enough levels to show the spectrum of student performance, but not so many as to be cumbersome and cause reliability problems.
- Assessments for the same “stuff” should change across grade levels. If students are introduced to setting a volleyball in the 7th grade, assessment should be of mechanics. In the 10th grade, assessment of setting should include outcomes in game or game-like situations.