Striving to Thrive: Meaningful Assessment Practices for All

Nicole Dimich Vagle

Solution Tree
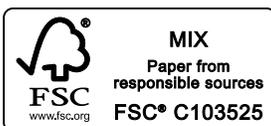
Striving to Thrive: Meaningful Assessment Practices for All

A balanced assessment practice is essential for students, teachers, teams, schools and districts to create the conditions where all students strive to thrive. When used well for intentional purposes, all types of assessments provide important information to describe and promote learning. This keynote will address the critical assessment beliefs & practices that foster a culture of learning, where teachers feel empowered and students are invested.

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Essential Questions:

- Why does motivation matter when talking about assessment?
- What design and use principles are key to meaningful and engaging assessment practices?
- What are the best uses and biggest challenges of various types of assessments in a balanced system?
- How do we align our assessment types, purposes and practices?
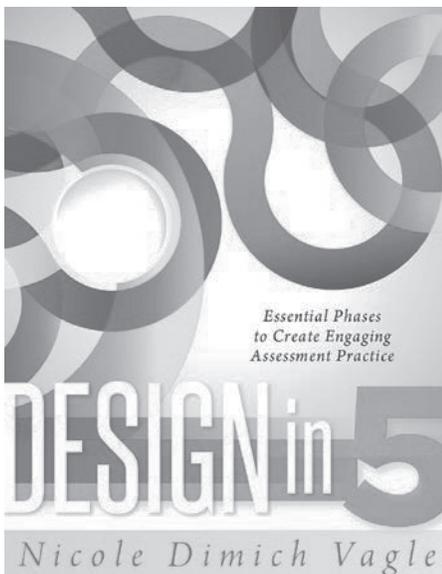
Defining Assessment

"Assessment is about gathering information, both formal and informal, to understand a student's learning and performance in order to facilitate and communicate achievement and levels of proficiency.

Assessment is an intentional process of gathering information. The Latin root of *assessment*, *assidere*, means to "sit beside." The notion of "sitting beside" a student in order to gather information to inform and inspire action is different than evaluation, when the information is used to make a judgment about a level of proficiency to communicate achievement as of a moment in time or determine the effectiveness of a program."

> **High quality assessment practices motivate and engage students and generate confidence and success.**

Assessment Design and Use

Assessment, when designed well, <u>raises expectations</u> and creates <u>engaging</u> experiences for students.

Assessment, <u>when used well</u>, creates a <u>culture of learning</u> where <u>students invest</u>.

Beliefs: High Quality Assessments…	Supporting Practices
Align to and reflect high standards	Create and revise assessment tasks to reflect the rigor of the Common Core Standards. Create engaging assessment tasks – interesting and important work.
Communicate learning	Provide quality information from assessments to students about their learning -- not just points, symbols or marks
Build on student strengths	Provide feedback that identifies learning strengths based on the assessment (student work) Ask students to consider their learning strengths -- what their assessments tell them about what they understand
Reveal and require action on student's next steps to grow and improve.	Analyze student work and plan instruction based on the next steps needed for individual students to grow Provide intentional opportunities for students to learn from mistakes and failure Require action and reflection by students on their next steps Emphasize quality over quantity through revision

adapted from *Design in 5: Essential Phases to Create Engaging Assessment Practice, N. Vagle, 2014, Solution Tree Press*
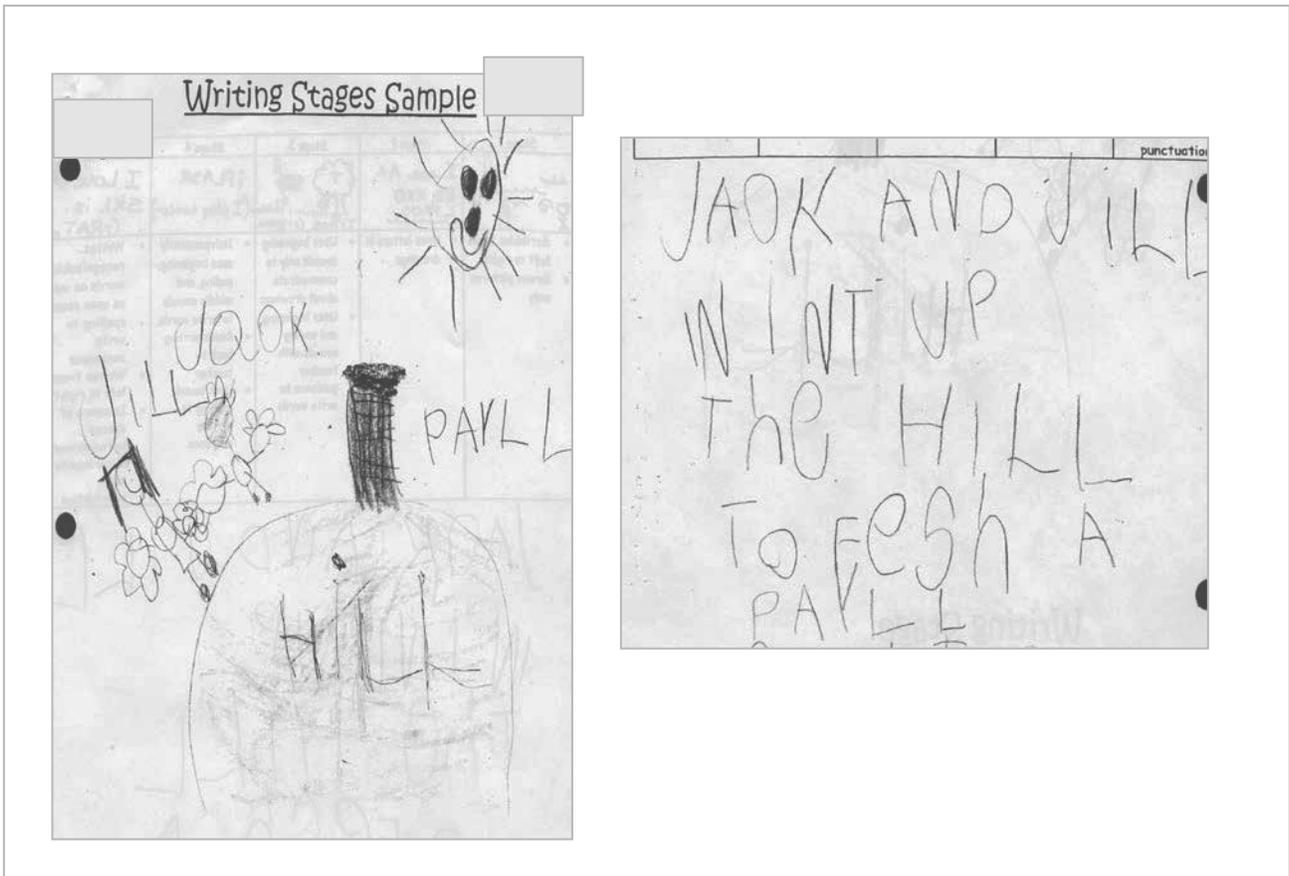
Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.

This is a Kindergarten assignment given in the middle of the year. Students were to write the story of Jack and Jill.
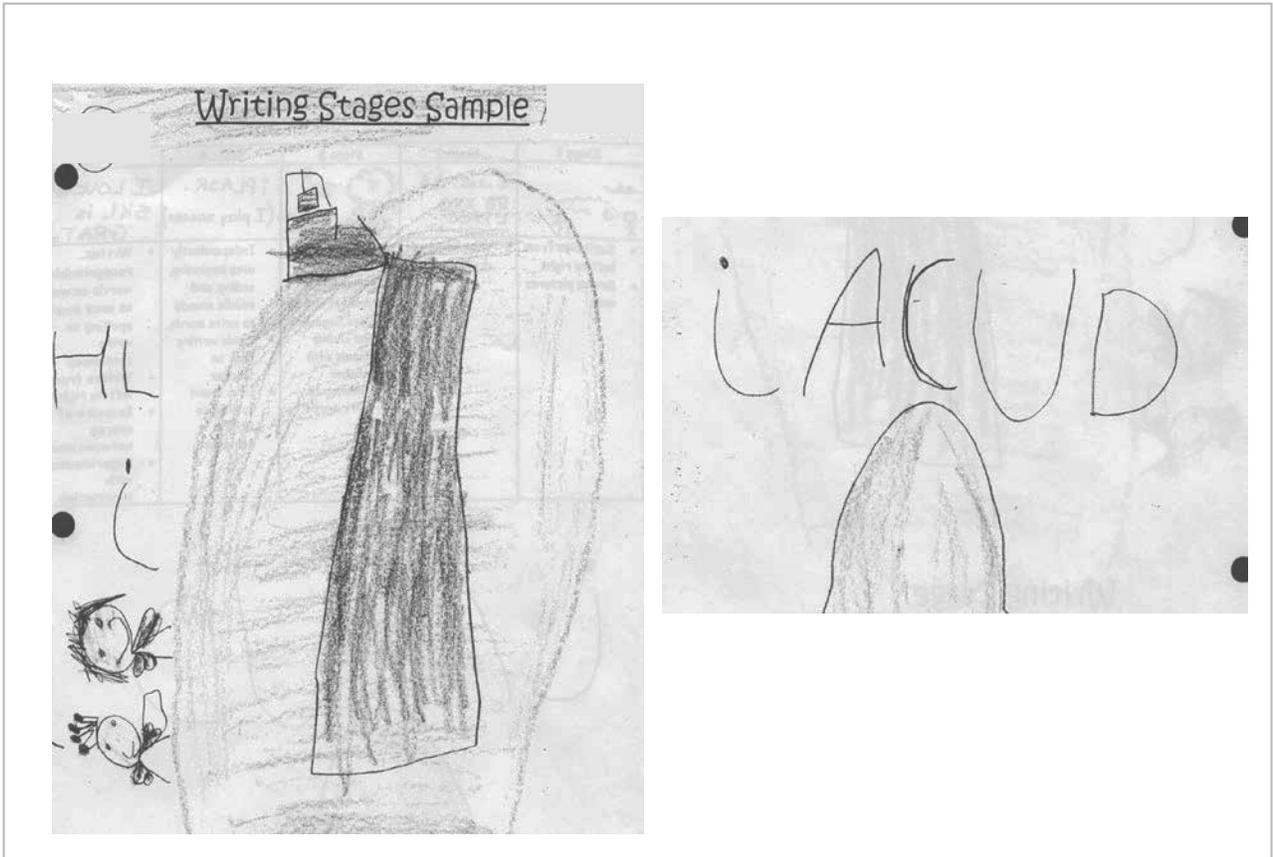
Student Work Sample A

Strength:

Next Step:

Student Work Sample B

Strength:

Next Step:

Learning from Our Mistakes: 3rd Grade Math Assessment

Vagle (2009) in *Teacher as Assessment* Leader, Solution Tree

*I know what each number in a fraction means. This means I can represent a situation using a fraction.

Directions: Read the problem, select an answer, and then explain how you got your answer (Students would have already responded to this question if they took the quiz.)

1. In a group of 8 people, 5 are wearing hats. What fractional part of the group is wearing hats?

        A. 2/8
        B. 3/5
        C. 5/8
        D. 8/5

Explain.

In pairs, discuss how you might get each possible answer:

Letter	Explain how someone may have arrived at each answer
A	
B	
C	
D	

3. Which is the right answer? _____

4. What <u>two</u> (2) tips would you offer your classmates in order to help them solve this problem correctly?

_____

_____

Balanced Assessment: Purpose and Type

adapted from *Design in 5: Essential Phases to Create Engaging Assessment Practice, N. Vagle, 2014, Solution Tree Press & Finding the Meaning in Numbers, Vagle, 2009,* in Principal as Assessment Leader Anthology, edited by Thomas Guskey

What % of your time do you spend focused on this type of assessment?	Assessment Format	Type of Data Dialogue: Who Uses the Information and How?	What is the best use of this data?	How Often Is the Assessment Given?	Timeframe for Analysis	Timeframe for Response
	Standardized Tests	*Policy Conversations, District, Whole School, Department, or Grade-Level Team Conversations*				
	Benchmark Assessments	*District/System, Whole School, Department, Grade-Level Team, or Individual Teacher Analysis*				
	End-of-Course Assessments	*Whole School, Department, Grade-Level Team, or Individual Teacher Analysis*				
	Summative Assessments (Common or Individual)	*Department, Grade-Level Team, or Individual Teacher Analysis*				
	Common Formative Assessments	Department, Grade-Level Team, Individual Teacher, and/or Student Analysis		Determined by how often teams meet		
	Formative Assessments	Individual Teacher and Student Analysis				

10ᵗʰ Grade Writing Benchmark Assessment

Standard
Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1)

> CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1.A: Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
>
> CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1.B: Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a discipline-appropriate form and in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.
>
> CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1.C: Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
>
> CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1.D: Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
>
> CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1.E: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from or supports the argument presented.

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.R1.9-10.1)

Context
Is conspiracy ever justified? In the last few years, there have been multiple coups around the world. Individuals and groups for many reasons conspire against a power (government, an ideology, religion, money, etc.). Haide argues that evil and good are more complicated than bad people taking over a country.

Task
Consider the following text in making an argument for or against justifiable conspiracy. Use examples from Julius Caesar and at least two other outside texts that explain global coups to support your argument. (Students were provided two other texts).

Criteria
This essay will be scored using the Grades 9-12 Writing Rubric (Focus, Development, Organization, and Language Use)

Include the following in your essay (at least one paragraph):
- Introduction with a focused thesis
- Develops claims: Uses valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient support from the texts
- Addresses counter claims
- Appropriate and cohesive transitions
- Conclusion
- Uses clear language and accurate sentence structure (i.e. no fragments or run ons)

10ᵗʰ Grade Writing Assessment Data

Count of Students at Each Level	Focus	Development	Organization	Language
1	22	46	66	17
2	59	110	99	65
3	130	61	55	124
4	13	8	6	19
5	2	1	0	1
Total Students	335	335	335	335

% of Students at Each Level	Focus	Development	Organization	Language
1	6.6%	13.7%	19.7%	5.1%
2	17.6%	32.8%	29.6%	19.4%
3	38.8%	18.2%	16.4%	37.0%
4	3.9%	2.4%	1.8%	5.7%
5	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%
Total Students	335	335	335	335

Data by Teacher

Count of Focus	Focus					
Teacher	1	2	3	4	5	Grand Total
Teacher A	3	13	24			40
Teacher B	7	20	44	3	1	75
Teacher C	12	24	57	10	1	104
Grand Total	22	57	125	13	2	219

Count of Development	Development					
Teacher	1	2	3	4	5	Grand Total
Teacher A	13	19	7	1		40
Teacher B	15	32	25	2	1	75
Teacher C	18	52	29	5		104
Grand Total	46	103	61	8	1	219

Data by Teacher and Student

Teacher	Students	Focus	Development	Organization	Language
Teacher A	Student 4	1	1	1	2
Teacher A	Student 34	1	1	2	2
Teacher A	Student 35	1	2	2	2
Teacher A	Student 2	2	1	1	3

Pause & Ponder:
- ✓ How do the assessment beliefs and practices align with your current practice? Where do they differ?
- ✓ What is the best use and biggest challenge of each type of assessment?
- ✓ How much time do educators (teachers, administrators) spend on each of these types of assessment?
- ✓ How much time do students spend engaged in each type of assessment?
- ✓ What are the implications? What should a balanced system of assessment look like and feel like?
- ✓ How balanced is our system? Where do we spend too much time? Just enough? What gives us the best information in supporting students learning? How do we know?
- ✓ What might be your first "next" step in moving your assessment practice forward?

The Purpose & Types of Assessment

adapted from *Finding the Meaning in Numbers*, Vagle, 2009, in Principal as Assessment Leader Anthology, edited by Thomas Guskey

Assessment Format	Questions to Consider During Analysis
Standardized Tests	Consider these questions when examining whole school and subgroup data: • What strengths do the data reflect? • What are the patterns of learning that need improvement? • Why do you think these patterns emerged? • How will we address the area of improvement? • Given this data, what goals might we set as a school, team, or teacher? • How do our goals align to our curriculum and standards? • How do the goals inform any district benchmark data or school common assessment work?
District Benchmark Assessments	Consider these questions when examining whole school, subgroup, team, and classroom data: • What strengths do the data reflect? • What are the patterns of learning that need improvement? • How could we instructionally respond to the learning needs of individual students as a school? As a team? As individual teachers?

End-of-Course Assessments	Individual teachers, teams, departments, or grade levels may address the following questions for both end-of-course assessments and summative assessments (whether common or individual).
Summative Assessments (Common or Individual)	For an item analysis of a more objective test, ask: • What were the patterns of strengths in student performance? • What were the patterns of learning that need improvement? • Were there items that a large number of students missed? Why? Was there a gap in the curriculum, a gap in understanding, a problematic question, or some other reason? • How might we revise our curriculum next year to meet the learning needs suggested by this data? • How might we revise the assessment to more accurately measure our intended learning? When examining samples of student work from assessments: • Interdisciplinary team members take turns bringing an assessment and six to ten pieces of student work to examine to plan for learning needs and improvements on the assessment. • Departments or grade levels take turns bringing in an assessment and the accompanying student work. • Teams each bring samples of work from their common assessment and examine it for gaps in learning or to more accurately score the assessment. (See figure 7.3, page 162 in *The Principal as Assessment Leader,* for a protocol to guide this conversation.) Also visit the Looking at Student Work website (www.lasw.org) for numerous protocols that lead to rich discussion regarding student work.
Common Formative Assessments	Students and Teachers consider: • What are the strengths of the assessment information? What do students understand? • What are students' next steps in learning more or growing?
Formative Assessments	• What action will students and teachers take to use this assessment information to grow? • What instructional plans will individual or teams of teachers make to address students' next steps?