

# Chapter 5 - Kinds of Assessments

## I. Performance-Based Assessments

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Performance tasks, presentations, products, investigations, projects, and original creations are important ways in which students demonstrate their abilities to make connections and to apply their skills and understandings. These assessments may take several days or even weeks to complete. They are often referred to as "authentic assessments" because they mirror expectations that students will encounter as adults. Sometimes classified as complex applications and other times separated into different assessment categories, these assessments share the similar aspect of students making connections and integrating their learning.

Proponents of these methods point out that the assignments mirror and measure what we say we value in education. They involve higher-order thinking and require that students be active workers not passive tests takers. They are said to be accessible to students with different learning styles, different backgrounds and experiences, and varying abilities. These assessments are more like learning activities than traditional tests. However, according to Lewin and Shoemaker, they differ from activities in two critical ways:

1. Tasks must clearly assess the targets being measured; that is, they must be valid.
2. Tasks must have clear scoring criteria, so that teachers can fairly, objectively, and, most important, consistently evaluate them; that is, tasks must have reliability."

Great Performances,

p. 28.

Performance assessments range from tasks that can be completed in short periods of time to involved projects which take a number of days to complete.

Often students are able to become part of the process of clarifying the performance criteria and defining scoring rubrics. These attributes, which are viewed as advantages by some teachers, may be disadvantages in the eyes of others. Performance assessments do require a large amount of time to create and administer. Likewise, scoring of performance tasks can become very subjective if teachers are not explicit about the standards and careful in determining appropriate criteria for different levels of achievement.

The preceding section is reproduced from Classroom Assessment: Linking Instruction and Assessment, p. 52-54.

Determining the criteria in advance will impact onto the effectiveness of the performance. Clear criteria communicate to students what is expected of them and allow them to become self-regulated learners.

“Because these assessments have multiple dimensions, analytic rubrics are likely to be helpful in communicating expectations for quality work and successful achievement of the assignment as well as scoring the final results” (Classroom Assessment: Linking Instruction and Assessment, 1999, p. 54).

**Figure 79 - Performance-Based Assessments**

<b>Constructed Responses</b>	<b>Products</b>	<b>Performances</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Short Answer Sentences or Paragraphs</li> <li>o Diagram</li> <li>o Web</li> <li>o Concept Map</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Essay</li> <li>o Research Paper</li> <li>o Log/Journal</li> <li>o Lab Report</li> <li>o Story/Play</li> <li>o Poem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Oral Presentation</li> <li>o Dance/Movement</li> <li>o Demonstration</li> <li>o Athletic Competition</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Flow Chart</li> <li>o Graph/Table</li> <li>o Matrix</li> <li>o Illustration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Portfolio</li> <li>o Art Exhibit</li> <li>o Project</li> <li>o Model</li> <li>o Video/Audio Tape</li> <li>o Spreadsheet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Dramatic Reading</li> <li>o Enactment</li> <li>o Debate</li> <li>o Musical Recital</li> <li>o Panel Discussion</li> </ul>
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Source: Creating 'Effective' Student Assessments. p. 17.

## Characteristics of Good Performance Tasks

A good performance assessment task exemplifies the following characteristics:

- ☆ It has a meaningful context.
- ☆ It asks learners to create, perform, or produce something.
- ☆ It rewards skills development, creativity and linguistic accuracy.
- ☆ It assesses practical use of authentic items.
- ☆ It involves tasks that are communicative, not mechanical.
- ☆ It taps higher level thinking skills and problem-solving skills.
- ☆ It is ongoing throughout the year.
- ☆ It involves changes in instructional techniques which must be linked to changes in assessment.
- ☆ It explains the task, required elements and scoring criteria to the students before they begin the activity.
- ☆ It provides meaningful feedback to learners.
- ☆ It may involve self-and/or peer-assessment.

Source: A.S.A.P., Fairfax County Public Schools, August 1996.

## **Steps in Creating Authentic and Performance-Based Assessment Tasks**

According to the Fairfax County Public Schools Publication A.S.A.P. Alternative Strategies for Assessing Performance, there are several essential steps in creating an authentic and/or performance-based assessment task.

1. Determine the purpose for the assessment. If the purpose is to place students at the right level of instruction, the assessment will be different than if the purpose is to diagnose the instructional needs of individual students.
2. Select the objectives of the assessment. Decide what you want your students to know or to be able to do. Choose whether you want to concentrate on one skill (writing, listening, etc.) or if you want to assess several skills at the same time.

Selection of the objectives should always precede selection of the activity. It is easier to decide the specific task and to establish the scoring criteria once the objectives are clearly defined.

3. Design the task you want to use to have your students show their attainment of the skill(s) and appropriate content. Pay attention to creating an authentic task that students would actually do if they were living or traveling in the foreign country.

Select a task that can be accomplished at many levels, so that it will be accessible to the full range of students in the classroom. Furthermore, tailor the assessment to show what you expect students to know. If you want to know that students have gotten facts, you can ask simple questions. However, if you want to know that students can infer, you will

need to provide opportunities for students to elaborate in some way.

4. Think about the administration. Select materials, determine if items are to be done individually or in small group and for how long, determine how to collect responses - tapes, written responses, observations, etc. Provide an opportunity for students to be familiar with format (CALLA Handbook, p. 105).
5. Establish the scoring criteria for assessing student achievement. Think about the kind of performance you want to observe to see if it meets the objective. You may create your own scoring criteria. Also, you may want to have a self-and/or peer-assessment be part of your overall assessment.
6. Determine point values or grading scales for your scoring criteria. This may involve giving different weights to different criteria.
7. Interpret the results of the assessment activity according to the purpose of the assessment. Results can be used by students and parents to focus on areas for improvement. Since the assessment is broken down into specific criteria, students can see more clearly where improvements could be made. Also teachers can use the results to determine the focus of future activities.

## **Projects**

Projects have always been part of the foreign language classroom. They enhance learning and are one way to accommodate the students' various learning styles and preferences. Projects can involve individual students, pairs, groups, as well as whole classes. They can be student-selected or

teacher-prescribed and can include a wide variety of delivery ranging from scenarios, newspapers, audiotapes, news broadcasts, mock interviews, speeches, comedy sketches, dioramas, displays, songs, models, advertisements, brochures, bulletin boards, charts, illustrations, cartoons, and videos to the more traditional reports, essays, presentations.

Through projects students can present "complex information and engage in productive thinking, moving students beyond mere recitation of items learned by rote" (Curry-Samara Model for Developing Middle School Units, 1993). Projects are a kind of performance assessment in that they allow students to demonstrate what they are able to do with the target language.

Burke (1994) recommends introducing projects by providing samples of completed projects and by discussing why some samples are excellent and others not as good. After an examination of the projects, students can be asked to list the characteristics of each. This list of characteristics gives students the foundation for creating their own project rubric alone or under teacher guidance. In the beginning, students are not very sophisticated in their description of the characteristics; however, they do improve as they are exposed to additional models.

The characteristics (criteria) and their detailed description can guide the students as they evaluate their own projects or their peers'. Scoring criteria usually outline what is to be evaluated and how it is to be judged.

In Wake County, a parent complained about an assigned project and her child's grade on the project. The high school teacher sent home the project guidelines and the rubric which had been shared with the students at the beginning of the assignment and which had been developed specifically for that project. Once the parent was

able to see the student's expectations and her child's performance in meeting these expectations, she could no longer make excuses for him.

### **Guidelines for Projects**

Classroom projects can be more authentic with the following guidelines:

1. A variety of meaningful, long-term projects are used throughout the year.
2. Students are given some choices on the projects.
3. Students can use their multiple intelligences.
4. Learner outcomes are listed and monitored.
5. Students are provided opportunities to engage in problem solving, decision making, and other high-order thinking skills.
6. Specific criteria for the assignment are developed by the students and the teacher. Criteria for projects may include some of the following: timeliness, appearance, originality, quality, evidence of understanding, reflection, artistic presentation, transfer of skills, organization, richness of ideas, and presentation.
7. Due dates are listed (it might be better to assign due dates for parts of the assignment rather than just for the final due date for the entire assignment).
8. Students are given a chance to think about how they approach learning tasks and to communicate how they plan, monitor, and evaluate their thinking (reflection and metacognition).
9. Specific indicators under each criterion are used by students, peers, and teachers to assess the final project.
10. Teachers and student feedback is prompt, positive, and specific.

11. Students have a chance to share their work with others.

12. The student has an opportunity for self-evaluation.

Source: The Mindful School: How to Assess Authentic Learning, Revised Edition, by Kay Burke. Copyrighted 1994 by IRI/SkyLight Training and Publishing, Inc. Reprinted by permission of SkyLight Professional Development, Arlington Heights, IL. Web site: <http://www.skylightedu.com>

### **Sample Performance-Based Tasks**

1. Given a French menu and 100 Francs, two students order two well-balanced meals, they demonstrate the proper way to eat in France, they ask for the bill and they estimate the amount of money included for the tip.
2. Following an introduction to televised news media. Students in groups of 4-5 are responsible for presenting a ten-minute news broadcast including the following: name of station, motto, logo, music, world news, local and regional news, commercials, weather, and sports. Newscast can be recorded or presented live.
3. Given a series of commands, the student performs the appropriate actions.
4. Given a map of a city (or of the subway), student A tells student B how to arrive at a specific location. Student B listens to the directions and indicates the directions by drawing arrows on the map.
5. Students create and illustrate their own pattern books to reinforce a special concept. They include an audiotape of themselves reading the story. Finally, they visit another school/class, read their story, and donate their book to the school/class.
6. Students prepare and present a *HyperStudio* or a *PowerPoint* presentation detailing how-to-do something. They present their information to the

class which follows the instructions step by step.

7. Students are asked to show their comprehension of a reading passage (or of a concept) by illustrating that passage (or concept).
8. Students, alone or in pairs, create a pictograph or a graphic organizer to show important information and present it to the rest of the class along with an explanation of the information.
9. Following a study of a specific country, individual students choose one aspect of that country, research it, and present their findings to the class in a brochure, video, report, rap, or any other mode which has been agreed upon by student and teacher.
10. Students create a brochure about their town/school to share with pen pals and/or new students in the school. (Students may want to share the finished brochure with the ESL students in their school.)
11. Students create, illustrate, and display the jacket for a book of their choice.
12. Students compare two concepts or two stories and draw graphic representations of the comparison.
13. During a primary social studies unit, students learn about Japanese culture by comparing it with their own culture. They look at food, holiday customs, dress, and education. After that activity, pairs of students select another country and another characteristic to expand their cultural matrices. Learning centers on various countries are set up around the room for students to use while gathering the information to fill in their matrices (Dimensions of Learning, p. 94).

14. To celebrate earth day, Spanish students in an elementary school devised a series of sentences describing that particular day. Then, they decorated brown bags obtained from a local grocery store. Finally, they returned their completed products to the local grocery store which used them in bagging groceries.
15. Students are asked to draw conclusions about languages they have learned or they are familiar with. They use an induction matrix to display their conclusions.