Workshop 7
Assessing Students’ Learning

Session Summary
This session addresses two questions that are central to social studies assessment: How do we know students are learning? and How do we know our teaching is effective? Because assessment often provides only a snapshot of learning, social studies teachers need a variety of tools and strategies to gauge students’ knowledge. To help you refine your assessment skills, in this session you will:

• Explore the meaning, types, and uses of assessment.
• Learn how assessment strategies can be used effectively in different learning contexts.
• Apply criteria to analyze assessment strategies.
• Apply session content and strategies to your own teaching.

Learning Goals
At the end of this session, you will be able to:

• Define assessment strategies.
• Identify criteria for designing assessments.
• Apply a variety of assessment strategies to social studies instruction.

FACILITATOR’S NOTE: You will need to make copies of the following materials for all participants (pages 127–136).

Concept Chart  •  Viewing Chart  •  Rubric and Student Letters
Analyzing Assessments  •  Final Concept Chart  •  Summary
Explore

Key Concepts

• Assessment
• Ongoing assessment
• Authentic assessment

• Formal assessment
• Culminating assessment
• Portfolio assessment

• Informal assessment
• Performance assessment
• Rubric

Readings

Before arriving for this session, read each of the articles listed below to gain an understanding of key concepts related to assessment. As you read, look for these concepts, their definitions, and examples of each.

After you read the articles, write answers to the following questions. Copy the Reading Questions form on page 126.

1. What factors should be considered in planning for assessment?
2. How are goals, instruction, and assessment related?
3. What is the relationship between standards and assessment?
4. What should you consider as you develop criteria for rubrics?
5. What are the strengths of the following approaches?
   • Performance assessment
   • Authentic assessment
   • Authentic instruction
   • Portfolio assessment

Assignment: Bring your written work to the session, and save it to submit as an assignment.
Articles

“Performance Assessment”
Explains performance, portfolio, and authentic assessments.
http://www.weac.org/resource/may96/perform.htm

“Teaching for Understanding: Ongoing Assessment”
Outlines key features of ongoing assessment, examples of performances of understanding, and criteria for ongoing assessments.
http://learnweb.harvard.edu/alps/TFU/info3f.cfm

“Current Trends and Practices in Social Studies Assessment for the Early Grades”
Explores the relationship among goals, instruction, and assessment.
http://ncss.org/members/archives/1104/110403.html

“Understanding Rubrics”
Examines rubrics, their uses, and examples.
http://learnweb.harvard.edu/alps/thinking/docs/rubricar.htm

**FACILITATOR’S NOTE:** Be sure that everyone has access to these readings.
You may want to have a few copies available for those without Internet access.
Engage

FACILITATOR’S NOTE: When the workshop session begins, you may want to spend a few minutes reviewing the Reading Questions and key concepts.

Activity 1: Getting Started

Watch the video introduction to familiarize yourself with the session, instructor, and participants.

View Video Segment: Introduction and Gallery Walk: Go to this segment in the video by matching the image (to the left) on your TV screen. You’ll find this segment at the beginning of the video. Watch for about 10 minutes.

In this segment, workshop participants review classroom strategies they use to assess students’ learning.

Activity 2: What Do You Know?

FACILITATOR’S NOTE: Distribute the Concept Chart.

A concept chart can help you identify the assessment methods you currently use in the classroom. To begin, think of the last time you taught one of the following social studies units:

- Community
- Geography
- U.S. History
- Culture

Next, choose a unit of your own or from the list above. Recall the lessons and assignments you used to teach the unit, and think about the assessment methods you used to measure student learning.

Use the Concept Chart to begin listing assessment strategies you already use. Here is an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Studies Unit</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Assessment Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Learn how a bill becomes a law.</td>
<td>Define process in an illustrated chart or flip book.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity 3: Reflect on Your Work

When you have completed your chart, review the strategies you use and consider the following questions:

- Why have some assessment methods been more successful than others?
- What strategies from the video would you add to your list?
- In general, what are your goals for assessment?
FACILITATOR’S NOTE: Distribute the Viewing Chart.

The following video segment illustrates a range of assessment methods in social studies classrooms. Use the Viewing Chart to analyze the teachers’ goals and to connect their strategies to your practice. Complete the Viewing Chart as you watch, then compare your answers to those of the workshop participants in the video.

**View Video Segment: Identifying Assessment Strategies in Classroom**

**Examples:** Go to this segment in the video by matching the image (to the left) on your TV screen. You’ll find this segment approximately 11 minutes into the video. Watch for about 20 minutes.

In the first classroom segment, Meylin Gonzalez’s kindergarten class is studying economic concepts in a lesson that defines “needs” and “wants,” modeling an assignment that each student will complete. In the second classroom segment, Osvaldo Rubio’s class is studying the California Missions in a lesson that culminates in final presentations on each mission. In this segment, Mr. Rubio asks students to develop research questions they will use to guide their projects.

Now that you’ve read about and watched a variety of assessment methods and strategies, consider your goals in the classroom and answer the following questions:

- Which of the methods and strategies you’ve read about or observed are most relevant to your work? Why?
- What are some ways you can begin to incorporate these strategies into your practice?

**Assignment:** Save your written work to submit as an assignment.
Apply what you’ve learned about assessment to complete the following activities.

**View Video Segment: Understanding Stereotypes:** Go to this segment in the video by matching the image (to the left) on your TV screen. You’ll find this segment approximately 33 minutes into the video. Watch for about five minutes.

Libby Sinclair’s fifth-grade class is studying the history of the Negro baseball leagues within U.S. history. Not finding information they need in reference books about African American history, Ms. Sinclair has her students write a persuasive letter to the publisher. In this segment, Ms. Sinclair works with students to develop criteria for their letters.

**Activity 1: Assess Student Work**

**Facilitator’s Note:** Distribute the Rubric and Student Letters.

In this activity, you will use a version of Ms. Sinclair’s criteria, presented in a four-point-scale rubric, to assess two drafts of her students’ letters. Follow the instructions on the Assessing Student Letters Rubric.

**Visit the Web Site:** This activity is also available online as an Interactive Activity at:

www.learner.org/channel/workshops/socialstudies

Go to session 7 and select Apply.

After you have assessed the student letters, think about the questions below:

- What did you learn from assessing the letters?
- What advice would you give each student for next steps?
Activity 2: Designing and Analyzing Assessments

**FACILITATOR’S NOTE:** Distribute the Analyzing Assessments form.

Assessments can be used in several ways. They can help to gauge student learning, uncover misconceptions, extend learning, and reveal the effectiveness of instruction.

Develop two assessments that you can use in your own teaching. The assessments you design may be focused on a lesson or take the form of a culminating activity at the end of the unit. The list below provides suggestions:

- a series of questions or a summary paragraph identifying the most important concepts or processes covered in a lesson
- white-board responses during a lesson
- a drawing, illustration, graph, chart, or map
- using a rubric to assess a culminating project or presentation

If you are taking all eight sessions for credit, use one of these assessments for your ongoing unit.

Using the Analyzing Assessments form, answer the following questions for each of the two assessments:

1. What is being assessed?
2. What is the purpose?
3. Are there criteria? If so, when are students given these criteria?
4. How will students know they have learned?
5. Will they receive feedback and from whom?
6. How will feedback help them improve their work?
7. What clues about instruction might assessment results provide for you?

**Assignment:** Save your written work to submit as an assignment.
Evaluate

What Did You Learn?

**FACILITATOR’S NOTE:** Distribute the Final Concept Chart and Summary form.

As the session began, you developed a concept chart that defined learning objectives and listed strategies you use to assess students’ knowledge about a particular unit. Now complete a Final Concept Chart that includes all the assessment strategies you have studied. Classify each as formal, informal, ongoing, and/or culminating; then choose the strategies that you plan to use. Follow the instructions on the Final Concept Chart.

Once you have finished your new concept chart, revisit your initial concept chart to see how your knowledge of assessment has expanded.

Next, write a brief summary. Describe three of the assessment strategies you now plan to use. Explain how you plan to use them and how they relate to your assessment goals, illustrate good practice, and extend your thinking about assessment.

**Assignment:** Save your written work to submit as an assignment.

**View Video Segment: Mini-Lesson:** Go to this segment in the video by matching the image (to the left) on your TV screen. You’ll find this segment approximately 39 minutes into the video. Watch for about 20 minutes.

Watch the final segment of the video, in which the workshop participants reflect on what they learned and participate in a mini-lesson on the most important people in American history. The mini-lesson illustrates how criteria can guide group work, students’ learning, and final presentations.

**Assignment:** Check the Assignments list that follows to be sure you’ve completed all assignments for this session.
Assignments

Submit Your Work

If you are taking this workshop for credit or professional development, submit the following assignments for session 7: Assessing Students’ Learning.

1. **Explore**: Read the articles and respond to the questions that follow using the Reading Questions form.
2. **Explain**: Watch the video segments, complete the Viewing Chart, and answer the questions that follow.
3. **Apply**: Develop two assessments and answer the questions on the Analyzing Assessments form.
4. **Evaluate**: Complete the Final Concept Chart and summarize what you've learned.

For Next Week

See Explore: Readings for session 8 for next week’s reading assignment.

Resources

Print


Web

Educational Resources Information Center
http://www.ericae.net/main.htm
Provides educational resources on assessment and evaluation.

Authentic Pedagogy: Standards that Boost Student Performance
http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/archives/completed/cors/Issues_in_Restructuring_Schools/
Outlines examples of assessment within the framework of authentic pedagogy, published by the University of Wisconsin.

CRESST Research on Assessment
http://cresst96.cse.ucla.edu/index.htm
Offers data-driven reports on the relationship between strategies and student performance.
After you read the articles, write answers to the following questions:

1. What factors should be considered in planning for assessment?

2. How are goals, instruction, and assessment related?

3. What is the relationship between standards and assessment?

4. What should you consider as you develop criteria for rubrics?

5. What are the strengths of the following approaches: Performance Assessment, Authentic Assessment, Authentic Instruction, and Portfolio Assessment?
### Social Studies Unit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective:</th>
<th>Assessment Strategies:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you have completed your chart, review the strategies you use and write your answers to the following questions:

- Why have some assessment methods been more successful than others?
- What strategies from the video would you add to your list?
- In general, what are your goals for assessment?
As you watch, look for evidence of each teacher's assessment goals and the strategies they use to measure their students' understanding. Write down the strategies you observe, consider how your class is different, and add any strategies you might use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Learning Objectives</th>
<th>Assessment Strategies Observed</th>
<th>What I Would Add</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video 1: Ms. Gonzalez</td>
<td>Ms. Gonzalez wanted her students to be able to define needs and wants, understand the difference, and identify examples of these basic economic concepts in their own lives.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video 2: Mr. Rubio</td>
<td>Mr. Rubio wanted his students to be able to generate basic research questions that guide projects and later become criteria for evaluating their presentations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now that you've read about and watched a variety of assessment methods and strategies, consider your goals in the classroom and answer the following questions:

1. Which of the methods and strategies you've read about or observed are most relevant to your work? Why?

2. What are some ways you can begin to incorporate these strategies into your practice?
Review the criteria outlined in the rubric. Then read one of the letters and write down any comments related to the quality of the letter. Finally, circle the boxes on the rubric that match the quality level for each criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Does not persuade publisher to provide more information</td>
<td>Attempts to persuade publisher, but indirectly</td>
<td>Persuades publisher to provide more information</td>
<td>Makes a clear, strong, and persuasive argument to publisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone</td>
<td>Tone is negative and not appropriate for a publisher</td>
<td>Tone is positive but too informal for a publisher</td>
<td>Tone is positive and appropriate for a publisher</td>
<td>Tone is positive, appropriate, and particularly thoughtful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Introduction does not frame the issue</td>
<td>Introduction frames the issue but indirectly</td>
<td>Introduction frames the issue</td>
<td>Introduction frames the issue in an interesting way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Writer does not support argument with reasons</td>
<td>Writer’s reasons are either insufficient or not specific</td>
<td>Writer gives three good reasons for argument</td>
<td>Writer includes at least three specific and compelling reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End</td>
<td>Conclusion to letter is missing</td>
<td>Conclusion does not support main argument</td>
<td>Conclusion supports argument</td>
<td>Conclusion clearly states argument and invites specific action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>No evidence of revision or careful editing</td>
<td>Letter has been edited or revised quickly</td>
<td>Sentences flow naturally, very few mistakes</td>
<td>No errors found, shows careful editing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After you have assessed the student letters, think about the questions below.

1. What did you learn from assessing the letters?
2. What advice would you give each student for next steps?
Dear Publisher,

My class has been studying the Negro Leagues. We have been using books to find our info about the thing that we have been doing. We want to know why you don’t have anything about the Negro Leagues but you have a lot on the Major League players like Babe Ruth and Lou Gerig, and no Satchel Paige and Josh Gipson. And we want you to put them in and not just the white players. One other reason is that little kids don’t know about the Negro League but ofcourse they know about the Major Leagues and all the players, you guy need to exgacat at the children. We hop that you chang your thoughts about not just putting the white players in. Thanks for reading my litter from Nathan a student at AEII
Dear Publisher

I read your book about African American History and it was very good but our class is studying the Negro Leagues and some of my classmates didn’t seem to find anything on the Negro Leagues. Now our class is wondering if you could put some information on the Negro Leagues. There are some good reasons. Because there are 60 years missing in history, to educate others and to let other people know there were separate leagues back then. Thanks you for taking your time to read this letter.

Sincerely, Alison of Seattle
Washington.
Dear 

My class has been studying the Negro Leagues. We have been using books to find our information about the players that we have been studying. We want to know why there isn’t any information on the Negro Leagues in Amazing African-American History and ask if you would consider adding some to your book.

You have a lot of African-American History. But, no Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson from the Negro Leagues. I want to ask you to put them in, and along with the other African-American History. I am African-American and this is part of my History and I care about it.

One other reason that I am writing about this is that little kids don’t know about the Negro Leagues. I think it is important for your book to educate children of all ages, so they will know the whole story of our history.

I hope that you change your book and about including the Negro Leagues and the player in the next edition. Thanks for reading my letter.

Sincerely

Nathan
Answer the following questions for each of the two assessments you develop.

1. What is being assessed?
2. What is the purpose?
3. Are there criteria? If so, when are students given these criteria?
4. How will students know they have learned?
5. Will they receive feedback and from whom?
6. How will feedback help them improve their work?
7. What clues about instruction might assessment results provide for you?
Complete a new concept chart that includes all the assessment strategies you have studied. Classify each as formal, informal, ongoing, and/or culminating. Then choose the strategies that you plan to use.

Note: Some assessments may fit more than one category.
Write a brief summary. Revise your goals for assessment as needed. Describe three of the assessment strategies you now plan to use. Explain how you plan to use them, how they relate to your assessment goals, illustrate good practice, and extend your thinking about assessment.