

PROGRAM 6

The Role of Assessment in Curriculum Design

Overview

Having laid foundations for their own unit of study in Program 5, the Learner Teams discovered how to build formative and summative assessments into the units they were developing.

The “backward design” approach — considering assessment before lesson planning — ensures that teachers measure student understandings, knowledge, and skills throughout the instructional process.

The Assessment Design Process

The following process can be used on your own or with other teachers to follow the same steps for investigating assessment that the Learner Teams used in Workshop Program 6. It is divided into three sections:

- Understanding Assessment
- Creating Performance Tasks
- Evaluating Student Understanding through Performance Tasks

Overview

How do we know that students have learned what we taught? Focusing on this question, teachers analyze the assessment strategies experienced during the *Quidam* unit in Programs 1–4. Then they continue working on their own units by developing performance tasks that address assessment criteria and create scoring guidelines.

Objectives

- Identify and analyze assessment strategies used during the *Quidam* curriculum experience (Programs 1–4).
- Write a performance task to use as an assessment tool.
- Align the performance task with a unit objective.
- Design a set of scoring guidelines, or rubric.

Materials and Resources

- *Quidam* unit of study (Programs 1-4)
- Handout: Performance Task Worksheet (with sample)
- Handout: Evaluating Performance Tasks Worksheet (with sample)
- Handout: Performance Task Rubric Worksheet (with Art Historian Role Play sample)
- Reading: Criteria for Planning Multi-Arts Instruction

Planning and Preparation

Read through the entire process, paying particular attention to vocabulary and assessment strategies.

Background Information for Teachers

This approach to curriculum design is based on the book and workshop series *Understanding by Design* by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (www.ascd.org/readingroom/books/wiggins98toc.html).

Additional ideas were developed through the national education reform project, Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge (TETAC), which was funded by the Walter H. Annenberg Foundation and the Getty Education Institute for the Arts. (www.arts.ohio-state.edu/NAEC)

A resource on assessment specific to the arts is Donna Kay Beattie's *Assessment in the Arts*, published by Davis Publications (www.davis-art.com).

Many resources are available that help clarify the complexities of writing assessment rubrics.

National standards are published in all areas of instructional content, as well as state and local guidelines. School districts may provide benchmarks that denote developmentally appropriate knowledge and skills in most subject areas. For the arts, most states rely on *National Standards for Arts Education*, but provide a framework of criteria in a wide range of categories.

Vocabulary

- *Criteria*: the essential components that demonstrate successful accomplishment of learning objectives
- *Formative assessment*: evaluation that occurs throughout a unit of study that helps teachers modify or lets teachers know how well students are learning what has been taught so far
- *Informal observations*: teacher-conducted observations or recordings of a whole group, small group, or individual performances
- *Performance tasks*: activities that allow the learner to demonstrate his understandings through a scenario, employing a goal and a role to create a product or performance for a given audience
- *Reflection*: the opportunity for learners to think about previous learning and how it affected their understanding and decision-making; it can be expressed in verbal or written form
- *Rubric*: a scoring guide that includes all criteria for a range of levels of achievement; it is provided to learners prior to learning activities and uses clear and concise language
- *Summative assessment*: an evaluation conducted at the end of a lesson or unit of study to measure accomplishment of a completed process or product

Instruction

Warm-Up/Motivation

Engage workshop participants in a discussion of assessment planning by asking this question:

- How do we know students have learned what we taught?

Understanding Assessment

Assessment allows us to determine a student's level of understanding and should align with measurable instructional objectives.

Assessment findings also are used to inform unit design and instruction. Thorough assessment strategies include clearly defined criteria, alignment with unit objectives, and meeting state and local standards.

There were two types of assessment used throughout the *Quidam* unit of study, formative and summative:

- When assessment is used to measure student understanding of a given objective at the end of an activity or lesson, it is referred to as a *summative assessment*.
- *Formative assessments* are used during an activity or unit of study to monitor student progress and inform instructional adjustments appropriate to the needs of the students.

An illustration of formative assessment is the program music created for the vaudeville acts in Program 2. These compositions were created based on specific criteria explored in the listening lesson that preceded it. If needed, the teacher could have used this formative tool to modify or reteach concepts.

The “Art Historian Role-Play” activity in Program 3 is an example of summative assessment. Student preparation for this task was cumulative, providing several opportunities for student and teacher “check-in.” The task was their opportunity to summarize their knowledge and use presentational skills to demonstrate their understandings.

Creating Performance Tasks

Performance tasks provide the opportunity to demonstrate understanding of objectives through a scenario that has the following elements:

- a situation,
- a role,
- an audience, and
- a goal.

Students use their knowledge in a specific context to demonstrate their understanding of concepts taught. A clearly written performance task and accompanying rubric will provide the basis for developing content for the individual lessons in a unit of study.

In arts education, it is easy to assume that a student’s final performance or product is the same thing as a performance task and thus is an assessment of understanding. However, when the unit design has targeted overarching enduring ideas and has sought to explore them thoroughly, performance can be seen as a process for developing richer understandings and informing further instruction rather than as a finished product.

Whether performance tasks are developed as formative or summative tools, they are engaging to students and provide the teacher with measurable criteria from which to evaluate student understanding and progress.

Distribute the handout, Performance Task Worksheet (with sample).

Using the *Quidam* unit of study as a model, think about and discuss the performance task that culminated the Critic’s School lesson in Program 2.

Reassemble in the groups that had begun to develop units of study in the last session. Each group will write a performance task that would enable students to demonstrate their grasp of the enduring idea/understanding and essential questions previously crafted for a lesson integrating the arts. Use the handout, Performance Task Worksheet, as a guide in writing the performance task.

As you work, consider these questions:

- How will you refer to this task when giving instructions? (Title)
- What knowledge and skills will be assessed through this task? How will this task enable students to show what they know and can do? (Desired knowledge and skills)
- What is the purpose of this assessment tool? Will you use this evaluation to monitor students’ progress and inform further instruction, or will you measure the students’ completed process or product? (Formative or summative assessment)
- What is the goal of the task? How will this task help to confirm students’ achievement of the unit objectives? (Goal)

Decide on the following:

- the situation in which the performance task will take place,
- what students must do to complete the task,
- the intended audience for the task, and
- the product or process that will result from the task.

Write a scenario for the performance task that takes the following key elements into account:

- *Goal:* Why are you asking students to do this?
- *Role:* Whom will students portray as they develop the scenario?
- *Audience:* For whom is the process or product intended?
- *Situation:* What will students do to accomplish the goal?
- *Performance or product:* How will students demonstrate their understanding?

Distribute the handout, Evaluating Performance Task Worksheet (with sample). Using this worksheet to organize your thoughts, analyze your performance task to ensure that task criteria are aligned with lesson objectives. Edit your completed scenario if necessary.

When the groups have completed their performance tasks, share and discuss them with everyone.

Evaluating Student Understanding through Performance Tasks

Pose this question to the group:

- What criteria do you use to evaluate each learner's level of achievement for a performance task you have created?

Ask the teachers to think back to the "Art Historian Role-Play" activity in Program 3:

- What were the variations in different student's performances?
- Which students brought a great deal of energy or creativity to the role?
- Did anyone use costume or movement especially effectively?
- Which performances were more successful? Why?

Consider the objectives of Program 3:

- What knowledge and skills were being taught?
- What were the expected student outcomes?
- Based on these objectives, was it more important that participants in the "Art Historian Role-Play" act a role, or that they illustrate their knowledge of street performance styles present in *Quidam*?

Discuss the distinction between a performance task and a performance. Point out that this is a key challenge in all subjects but particularly in the arts. A student may possess a talent for an art form, but still not meet the objectives for the content of the lesson. This is why it is so important to have clearly established criteria to accompany assessment tools.

Distribute the handout, Performance Task Rubric Worksheet (with sample) and reassemble into groups.

Based on the performance task scenario you have written, design an assessment rubric that would enable you to effectively score students' performance. Use the Performance Task Rubric Worksheet and the sample as a guide.

Having done "backward planning," using assessment as a starting point for curriculum design, you now are prepared for the next step in the curriculum design process – development of the sequence and content for your lesson plans. Consider these key elements as you continue to develop lesson plans:

- *Content:* The knowledge and skills you intend to measure through your performance task represent what you must teach in this unit. How many lessons will it take for students to learn what they need to successfully complete the task?
- *Instruction:* As you develop content, consider various ways students could learn it, including both traditional and inquiry-based methods of instruction. If most of the instructional strategies you plan to use fall into the traditional category, consider trying methods that are more inquiry-based. What methods help your students learn most effectively? Daily lectures? Hands-on activities? A combination of approaches?
- *Integration of subjects:* Integrate a variety of subjects that play essential roles in the desired learning. If you took one of the subjects out, would students still get what they should out of the lesson or unit?

Apply what you have learned by creating a lesson plan integrating the arts based on knowledge and skills that you want to assess. Design a performance task that would enable students to show that they have achieved the relevant objective. Develop your own multi-arts unit of study. Use the reading, *Criteria for Planning Multi-Arts Instruction*, as a guide.

Handout

Performance Tasks Worksheet

Task title:

What desired knowledge and skills will be assessed through this task?

- Knowledge

- Skills

What is the purpose of this assessment task?

- Formative or summative?

Task overview:

- Goal

- Role

- Audience

- Situation

- Performance or product

Aligning unit objectives:

What student products or performances will provide evidence of desired understandings?

Performance Task Worksheet ***Sample***

Task title: Interview for *Critic's Corner*

What desired knowledge and skills will be assessed through this task?

- Knowledge — purpose and process of criticism
- Skills — communicating in character (in-role)

What is the purpose of this assessment task?

- Formative or summative? Summative

Task overview:

- Goal — The goal is to inform others about the fantastic and realistic elements in *Quidam*.
- Role — The role you will take on is that of a critic.
- Audience — The audience you are trying to reach is the general public — a television-viewing audience.
- Situation — You are a participant in a television talk show.
- Performance or product — The performance is a talk show interview.

Aligning unit objectives:

The learner will analyze and interpret elements of fantasy and reality within works of art.

What student products or performances will provide evidence of desired understandings?

The talk show will give students the opportunity to display their understanding by responding to questions about the juxtaposition of fantasy and reality in *Quidam*.

Handout

Evaluating Performance Tasks Worksheet

Task title:

Lesson objectives:

Task criteria:

Evaluating Performance Tasks Worksheet ***Sample***

Task title: *Art Historian Role-Play*

Lesson objectives:

- Learners will conduct research on the history of street performers and analyze how historical references to street performers make their way into Cirque du Soleil's *Quidam*.
- Learners will present their research findings to the whole group using in-role drama techniques.

Task criteria:

- Conduct research on a given type of street performance.

Key questions:

- Where did the performance type originate?
 - When did the performance type originate?
 - How has the performance type changed over time?
 - How has technology changed the performance type?
 - In which cultures around the world can this performance type be seen?
- Identify historical references to street performance in *Quidam*.
 - Present findings through in-role characterization.
 - Give your character a name.
 - What did you do with your body and voice to communicate your character?

Handout

Performance Task Rubric Worksheet

Knowledge & Skills Criteria	Below Expectation	Meets Expectation	Exceeds Expectation

***Art Historian Role-Play
 Performance Task Rubric***

Criteria	Below Expectation	Meets Expectation	Exceeds Expectation
<p>Research</p> <p>Knowledge Skill</p> <p>Knowledge Skill</p>	<p>Some categories within the stated criteria are present, but specific references are lacking.</p> <p>Facts are reported inaccurately.</p>	<p>Four categories within the stated criteria are present and are supported with at least two specific references.</p> <p>Some details are presented inaccurately.</p>	<p>All five categories within the stated criteria are presented with more than two specific references.</p> <p>No inaccuracies are evident.</p>
<p><i>Quidam</i> References</p> <p>Knowledge Skill</p>	<p>No references to <i>Quidam</i> were made.</p>	<p>Two specific examples of street performance were cited in <i>Quidam</i>.</p>	<p>More than two specific examples of street performance were cited in <i>Quidam</i>.</p>
<p>Characterization</p> <p>Knowledge Skill</p>	<p>In-role character is not evident.</p>	<p>Character is portrayed through appropriate gesture and dialogue, but is sometimes inconsistent.</p>	<p>Character is portrayed consistently through appropriate gesture and dialogue.</p>

Reading

Criteria for Planning Multi-Arts Instruction

Does the instruction you have planned around a particular subject include:

- enduring ideas/understandings?
- measurable learning objectives?
- correlation with national, state, and local standards?
- clearly defined formative and summative assessment strategies?
- appropriate use and introduction of arts vocabulary?
- developmentally and sequentially appropriate knowledge, skills, and materials?