

AVG 5.1 Designing Alternative Assessments



Think About

- How can my assessments hold high expectations for all students?
- How do my assessments attend to promoting second language acquisition?
- How do my assessment practices hold both me and my students accountable for learning?
- How can I use the Gottlieb Assessment Process to guide my assessment practices?

Click on the following link to access the PowerPoint: [Gottlieb Assessment Process](#). The PowerPoint reviews assessment of ELs in terms of differentiations. Take notes on what you learn from the PowerPoint. Do not attend to the final slide.

Access [AVG 5.1](#) to take notes as you review the powerpoint.

Find this video at <https://equitypress.org/-wAi>. Select Session 6 segment 1 click on "Design Features" and scroll up to the screen and click on it to watch. The AVG for this segment is embedded in this document following the instructions.

After you watch the video, you will meet with your final project group. Each of you identify one or two informal assessment you want to use for your final project. Fill in [Conceptualizing Alternative Assessments](#) in terms of that assessment. As you work through the questions, you should solidify your initial design for one of the informal assessments. Feel free to collaborate with a colleague as you answer the questions. Post a saved copy of your worksheet to your facilitator.

Conceptual Outline

We know Inclusive Pedagogy's guiding principles can assist us in developing better teaching practices for second language learners. They also help us question our assessment practices and develop new ones.

Guiding Principles

- Multiple Perspectives

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- High Expectations

- Knowledge-Based Practice

- Accountability

We benefit from being reminded of the value of taking multiple perspectives, questioning what it means to have high expectations, and expanding our use of knowledge-based practices.

Unless we hold ourselves accountable for using appropriate assessment practices, we will not develop the skills we need to hold students accountable for their learning.

Marvin Smith (Brigham Young University)

Just as today's schools have been impacted by the knowledge explosion, they are now being impacted by an assessment explosion. In addition to traditional tests and informal assessments, there are a variety of alternative assessments you can use. As teachers, you need to select your assessment tools wisely.

Audrey Siroto (University of California, Santa Cruz)

Every human learns in a different way. You need to make different opportunities available so that you can reach all your learners.

Marvin Smith (Brigham Young University)

Most second language assessment experts argue that alternative assessments provide the greatest opportunities for teachers to identify and build on the learning strengths of language minority students. When you select assessment tools wisely, you intentionally create opportunities for students to demonstrate learning. Jay McTighe offers four features that must be considered in designing useful, meaningful, and equitable alternative assessments. Designing alternative assessments requires:

1. Learning goals linked to real-world context

2. A defined audience

3. A thoughtful application

4. Criteria for judgment

Let's consider each of these design features.

1. Alternative Assessments Require Learning Goals Linked to Real World Context

Jay McTighe (Educational Consultant)

Being clear about our teaching goals and being able to answer the straight forward question, "How do we know we got there? How do we know the kids understand what we want them to come to understand?" is crucial. Thinking like an

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assessor means matching assessment with our goals.

Richard Hill(National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment)

Teachers sometimes mistake any hands-on activity for an effective activity. They may not take a careful look to make certain the activity accomplishes learning goals and isn't just keeping them busy. Teachers need to actively engage students in activities whose performance will inform you about their ability to meet the standards. That is the kind of activity we're talking about.

Marvin Smith (Brigham Young University)

Richard Hill suggests learning activities should be based on our goals. But goals alone can't make tasks compelling. Students must be able to relate activities to real life.

Example:

Jay McTighe (Educational Consultant)

An upper elementary school teacher planning an upcoming unit on nutrition confronts the question, "What do we want students to know, do, and understand from an introductory nutrition unit?"

Healthy eating is individually based. People have different needs because of differences in age, or activity level, and so on. This has implications for what healthful eating is. Planning a balanced diet is not just a script. There are options. You have to think about variety and nutrition. From an assessment point of view, how are you going to know students understand that?

The teacher anchors the unit in an assessment task where students propose a three-day menu for meals and snacks for an upcoming outdoor experience the whole class will have.

Notice the distinction. I can give multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank quizzes on facts about nutrition, but it doesn't mean you understand healthy eating and can apply it.

We don't teach nutrition so kids can spout back the food groups. We teach nutrition so people understand what healthful eating is, can recognize and even plan healthful menus, and that's what the task calls for.

Marvin Smith (Brigham Young University)

As this nutrition example reminds us, we need to consider what real-world performance will give evidence of students' understanding. Beginning with the end in mind utilizes an assessment strategy for second language learners: Ask worthy questions. We can also refine alternative assessment tasks by specifying our audience and clarifying our purpose.

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2. Alternative Assessment Design Requires a Defined Audience and Purpose

Jay McTighe (Educational Consultant)

There should be an identified audience and purpose for what students are doing in the task. The audience may be real, hypothetical, or simulated. Our purpose can be to persuade, entertain, convince, inform.

Marvin Smith (Brigham Young University)

When students solve problems or produce products for a known audience that meet real-world purposes, they are excited about learning.

3. Alternative Assessment Design Requires Opportunity for Thoughtful Application

Jay McTighe (Educational Consultant)

A good performance task calls for the thoughtful application of knowledge and skills, not just giving back facts that you've memorized and have no understanding of. This is a simple example: a mathematics teacher gives students a task for a swimming coach. After giving them a data sheet of swim times of eight swimmers for five meets, the students decide which four of the eight swimmers the coach should use for a championship relay.

It's not so neat and clean because, when you look at the data, one swimmer is getting slower during the year. Two swimmers have erratic and fluctuating times. Students will have to do more than just average the times. They have to think. They want the four fastest and reliable swimmers for the championship relay. The swimmer that's getting slower might have an average time that's faster than one of the other swimmers, but now we're at the end of the season.

4. Alternative Assessment Design Requires Making Criteria for Judgment Visible

Marvin Smith (Brigham Young University)

A critical part of designing alternative assessments is determining how to evaluate student performances. Usually, criteria for judgment are captured in an assessment rubric. A rubric is a guide for scoring that identifies the criteria for judgment and the characteristics of quality work. A rubric should be available to students to guide their performance and their learning. Revealing criteria for judgment is a clear way to communicate high expectations.

Heidi Andrade Goodrich (Ohio University)

Rubrics have become popular because they give students informative feedback about their work (making them instructive) and they can be easily translated into grades (almost disappointingly easily). But the key is by the time my students are assigned a grade they know what it means, because they know what the criteria are. They understand gradations of quality. They have had opportunities to think about whether their work reflects the criteria on the rubric. They've gotten feedback from their peers and from me. When they get that grade, it has some meaning to them. They have actually learned from the assessment. Students don't learn much from traditional tests. They only learn whether or not they can tell you the information. And then usually, we go on, so it isn't an opportunity for a teachable moment. Rubrics sort of span the accountability learning spectrum in a way that most assessments can't. That's one reason why a lot of people use them.

Marvin Smith (Brigham Young University)

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Rubrics are a critical component of alternative assessments. They make portfolios, books talks, projects, and other alternative assessment useful, because they provide feedback to students and teachers. They make assessment more practical because they can inform students about their learning as well as evaluate it. Rubrics make it easier for teachers to focus on the quality of student work.

Heidi Andrade Goodrich (Ohio University)

In 7th and 8th grade, I have students write a persuasive essay. To promote high-level thinking through assessment, I give them a rubric with criteria. "Make a claim" and "Consider arguments in support of your claim" are standard, but the one that promotes the highest level of thinking skill is, "Consider arguments against your claim and explain why they don't undermine your stance." This is a hard thing for adults to do. Students haven't typically been taught how to consider things from another perspective. It's a sophisticated thinking skill that we all want students to do. I put it on this rubric. Predictably, the students who got the rubric tended to consider other sides of the argument in their essay, students who didn't get the rubric with that criteria in it didn't look at things from the other side. But all I had to do was cue the students and let them know that it counted and they could do it. It's not a matter of ability. Rubrics can help them think this way.

Marvin Smith (Brigham Young University)

In addition to responding to our assessments, students can also participate in the design of our assessments. This makes assessment more open.

Heidi Andrade Goodrich (Ohio University)

I involve students in rubric development by showing them models of the work I want them to do. Whatever they're going to do, I present a model. I like to present two really good models and then say, "These are good models. What's good about them?"

Heidi Andrade Goodrich (Ohio University)

If you show them quality work, they can tell you what makes it good. This deepens their processing about what makes the work good, orients them towards quality, and teaches them how to do what I'm asking them to do.

The students produce a list of criteria often as many as 20 items, and I take their list and chunk it into about five or six items. (Some teachers have the students do the chunking.) Next I describe gradations of quality from good to poor. In my rubrics, I like to reflect the kinds of mistakes I have seen in student work so that they can recognize it and say, "Oh, I just did that and this is how I avoid that." I bring this rubric back to them and say, "Is this what we agree on?" Some of them tweak a couple of words here and there. Some of them have great ideas I never thought of before. I revise my rubric if they come up with something, but usually that only takes one class period. They are involved in this kind of analysis. This is also leverage. It teaches them what good work looks like, so it's well worth the time.

Design Features for Alternative Assessments:

1. Learning goals linked to real-world context
2. A defined audience and purpose
3. A thoughtful application

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4. Criteria for judgment

Marvin Smith (Brigham Young University)

The design features we've highlighted can support you in designing useful, meaningful, and equitable alternative assessments. Use learning goals linked to authentic performances, define audience, require application not just recall of information, and provide students with criteria for judgment.

Alternative Assessments allow for:

- Context for language development
 - Self-directed work
 - Longer time frames
 - Increased student motivation
 - Development of high-order thinking skills
 - Integrated learning
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Annala Teemant (Brigham Young University)

Obviously, there are many advantages to using alternative assessments. They allow instruction and assessment to be woven together in ways that are difficult to achieve with traditional tests.

Alternative assessments provide a richer context for language development. They allow for self-directed work and longer time frames for development. They also provide for greater student interest and motivation and promote development of higher cognitive skills. Finally, alternative assessments integrate learning while traditional tests often focus simply on the recall of tidbits of information.

The use of alternative assessments also poses challenges to teachers. For example, the use of portfolios or any multistage authentic task requires a substantial investment of time.

Challenges Posed by Alternative Assessments:

- Substantial investment of time
 - Cultural bias
 - Language demands
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1. Substantial Investment of Time

Dennie Palmer Wolf (Harvard University, Clark University)

Assessments that build upon and are tightly interwoven with instruction are both difficult and challenging to design. In my first enthusiasm for performance or curriculum-embedded assessment, I broadcasted a message that every chapter, every unit, and teachers should have curriculum-embedded assessments. The only way to be an upstanding

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and decent teacher was if you did that. However, those kinds of assessments are very hard to design. If teachers can do three or four of them during a year, that would be enough to shift toward an assessment culture.

Annela Teemant (Brigham Young University)

The use of alternative assessments means that students must accept responsibility for their learning. In many classes, this means a renegotiation of the teacher-student relationship. The very culture of the classroom may need to change and that takes time.

2. Cultural Bias

Annela Teemant (Brigham Young University)

Avoiding cultural bias can be another challenge. In assessing students, we need to ask about the cultural appropriateness of the assessment.

Norma Garcia Bowman (Secondary Teacher)

ESL kids can do a lot of the work that teachers ask them to do, but they just can't always complete them in the same way that language majority students can. Their language skills may not be up to par. And sometimes the tasks we ask them to do have a cultural basis that is not connected to the requirements of the task. And may require real-world skills ELs still need to develop. For example, when we ask students to write this huge term paper using index cards, that is all cultural- all the little cards you have to turn in.

You can ask a student to participate in another way. Give them some options, some options of hope. If you give a kid options, you're giving them hope.

3. Language Demands

Annela Teemant (Brigham Young University)

Language use in alternative assessment can be an advantage and a challenge. Good teachers provide enough language and context to support second language learners without overwhelming them. But this is a complex issue.

Dennie Palmer Wolf (Harvard University/Clark University)

Performance assessments are often very language dependent. They have longer, often multiple-part, questions. If they're actually based on curriculum, they may involve special language (like: balance scale, weight, ounces), so they're also vocabulary intense. They may assume that an individual student can carry out a large number of inter-connected tasks without support. Students really have to have very deep mastery to be able to do that. For children who are still learning a language, their hold on the information, concepts, and strategies, may be less.

Dennie Palmer Wolf (Harvard University/Clark University)

The language of traditional teacher tests can also be a challenge because it's not supported by social cues, physical cues, gestures, or facial expressions and body language. It's not only the academic language, but also the isolation of the questions from any surrounding context. This means that second language learners will not be able to use a range of contextual cues to gauge their understanding. Context can't be brought to bear.

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Annela Teemant (Brigham Young University)

While alternative assessment does present some challenges, you can use the concepts and principles of assessment literacy and the assessment strategies for working with second language learners to help meet these challenges. The irony that language is both an advantage and disadvantage of alternative assessments simply reminds you to always attend to issues of language.

How can I use Inclusive Pedagogy to guide my assessment?

On a final note, Judith Johnson, from the U.S. Department of Education, reminds us that effective assessment for language minority students must be guided by theoretical and moral principles.

Judith Johnson (Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education for the U.S. Department of Education)

This is not easy work. I know the students come into the classroom with different levels of achievement. I know that they come into the classroom with different strokes and strikes for them or against them. I know some come in with a very limited literacy background. Some come in with very limited economic backgrounds. But here's the belief system: Schools are not limited by that. School systems can't use that as an excuse to fail to educate children.



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