

INSTRUCTIONALModule

Assessment

WHY IS ASSESSMENT IMPORTANT?

Assessment is an integral part of instruction determining whether or not the goals of education are being met. It is used to measure the current knowledge that a student has. It meets many needs for many individuals. Through assessments we continually ask the questions: "Are we teaching what we think we are teaching?" "Are students learning what they are supposed to be learning?" "Is there a way to teach the subject better, therefore promoting better learning?" Assessment affects decisions about grades, placement, advancement, instructional needs, curriculum, and, in some cases, funding.

Today's students need to know not only the basic reading and arithmetic skills, but also skills that will allow them to face a world that is continually changing. They must be able to think critically, to analyze, and to make inferences. Changes in the skills base and knowledge our students need require new learning goals. These new learning goals change the relationship between assessment and instruction. Teachers need to take an active role in making decisions about the purpose of assessment and the content that is being assessed.

Read Grant Wiggins' response to the question "What distinction do you make between 'testing' and 'assessment?'"

Reflect: Think about what he has said. What are your reflections? Do you agree with his statement? Why or Why not? Discuss with your peers your opinions.

Read Grant Wiggins' response to the question "Why is it important that teachers consider assessment before they begin planning lessons or projects?"

Reflect: What are your reflections? Do you agree with his statement? Why or Why not? Discuss with your peers your opinions.

Read Grant Wiggins' response to the question "Standardized tests, such as the SAT, are used by schools as a predictor of a student's future success. Is this a valid use of these tests?"

Reflect: What are your reflections? Do you agree with his statement? Why or Why not? Discuss with your peers your opinions.

For Grant Wiggins' entire interview, visit www.glef.org/assessment/wiggins.html

Assessment should ...

provide diagnostic feedback.

- What is the student's knowledge base?
- What is the student's performance base?
- What are the student's needs?
- What has to be taught?

help educators set standards.

- What performance demonstrates understanding?
- What performance demonstrates knowledge?
- What performance demonstrates mastery?

evaluate progress.

- How is the student doing?
- What teaching methods or approaches are most effective?
- What changes or modifications to a lesson are needed to help the student?

relate to a student's progress.

- What has the student learned?
- Can the student talk about the new knowledge?
- Can the student demonstrate and use the new skills in other projects?

motivate performance.

For student self-evaluation:

- Now that I'm in charge of my learning, how am I doing?
- Now that I know how I'm doing, how can I do better?
- What else would I like to learn?

For teacher self-evaluation:

- What is working for the students?
- What can I do to help the students more?
- What direction should we go next?

The following Web site(s) appear on this page:

Grant Wiggins interview: www.glef.org/assessment/wiggins.html