



Jay School Department Curriculum Bulletin...

Does not meet
Partially meets
Meets Standards
Exceeds

February 30, 2006

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"Too much testing," or too much "evaluative feedback?"

Each year, educators, pundits and experts decry the "testing mania." Yet we seldom complain that there are too many of *our own* tests. Parents and the media have not united to attack the final exam, unit tests, or daily quizzes. Obviously, the issue is not simply *too many tests*. It's about who designs the tests, who says when they are given, and what is done with the results. It's about the perception that the tests from "outside" have less value than the one we create in the classroom. But that's not the only testing problem we have. Our own tests may be excessive, stress inducing and counterproductive to learning. The key seems to be whether they provide *feedback the student can use*. Dylan Wiliam is a widely recognized researcher on effective assessment, and one of the commissioner's designated experts to help improve assessment for the *Learning Results*. In a 1998 Kappan article, he summarized the kinds of assessment that actually correlate with increased learning:

- Involving students in assessment
- Increasing descriptive feedback
- Decreasing evaluative feedback, i.e. grades, scores.

It's about *formative assessment* (often referred to as assessment for learning, as opposed to assessment of learning.) It's an easy concept to throw around, but harder to establish as the predominant pattern in a classroom. That's what Wiliam, Davies, etc. say we must do if we wish to increase learning. So... the testing problem isn't just one of national and state tests; it includes the traditional evaluation environment that teachers control in every school. We can't stop all "outside" testing, and we must still test "for the grade." If we wish to improve learning however, we need to have fewer *evaluative* tests, and more *descriptive feedback*.



Involve students in assessment...

Increase descriptive feedback...

Decrease evaluative feedback...

Dylan Wiliam

Feedback Quiz: Mark each example of descriptive feedback with a D and each example of evaluative feedback with an E.

- ___ Try harder next time.
- ___ Your work has definitely improved!
- ___ You solved the equation; however, you did not include a written or visual explanation.
- ___ You made some simple mistakes in arithmetic. First go back and check all of your addition.
- ___ Your geometry homework gets better every day.
- ___ ☺
- ___ 70% = C_
- ___ What you have written is a formula. Now go back and substitute two for "x".
- ___ B+ (Super Good Work!)
- ___ Your work is consistently above average.
- ___ You made some errors when you graphed your answer. Go back and check for accuracy.
- ___ Good job of completing the homework.
- ___ You had excellent eye contact throughout the entire presentation. Now work on pronunciation.
- ___ The accuracy of your calculations is the best work I've seen in a long time.
- ___ You are so close to "meets." With a little more work, you'll be there.