

Teachers speak out on assessment practices essay sample

[Education](#)



The No Child Left Behind law which came into being in 2002 and the difficulties it caused for teachers sparked these authors to embark on this investigation. The emphasis on testing has led teachers to teach more towards passing tests than for general learning. The effects on teacher preparation and on their teaching approaches were investigated by McNair et al (2003). This study is part two of a three-part study. In this second part 157 elementary school teachers in southeastern Michigan, US, were interviewed either in person or by telephone for 30-45 minutes. These interviews were to follow-up on the survey conducted in the first part of the study. This study was to examine the types and frequency of assessment techniques used by these teachers.

The main theoretical principle of the study, as clearly stated, was the difference between summative assessment which is used mainly for ranking and quantifying students, and formative assessment which is more on-going and involves checking with the students about what they know and what they are interested in. The authors' main concern is that because of the emphasis on testing by the NCLB law teachers do not have a deep enough understanding of the value of formative assessment and are not making enough use of it.

The results of the study were simply laid out in titled paragraphs and showed that the following types of assessment were most used by the teachers- pencil and paper tests, observations, checklists and portfolios. All but pencil and paper tests were used to the same extent by both the lower class, preK-grade 2 and upper grades 3-4. The portfolios were most often used by all.

The authors concluded that teachers need assistance to supplement information from standardized tests with more individualized assessments. Though teachers learn about various forms of assessment while training, they are using a limited number of strategies and mostly for reporting rather than for planning and instructional strategies. The results of the study suggest that teacher preparation and in-service professional development programs should include more to help teachers develop a deeper understanding of the role of assessment in teaching and learning and more specifically the value of formative assessment. Teachers also need more training and support to develop their skills of assessment. The authors do a good job of raising the interest in the issue of assessment and the importance of not only assessing for reporting but also to include more complete measures of the child's ability and performance.

Reference

McNair, S., Bhargava, A., Adams, L., Sally Edgerton, S. & Bess Kypros, B. (2003). Teachers speak out on assessment practices. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 31, 1. 23-31

The fourth r in education- relationships.

Witman (2005) believes that one of the foundations of effective education is relationships, along with reading, writing and arithmetic. Many relationships are important to student achievement, including teacher-parent relationships and school- home relationships. Even though research has shown the need

for parents to be actively involved in their children's education, parents at middle and high school levels are not as involved as they should be.

The author therefore provides suggestions that each stakeholder in the child's education can implement to foster good relationships in the school. The presentation of these suggestions is clear and well organized according to the stakeholder and the role that he or she can play.

Teacher educators should include building healthy teacher-student relationships in their training of teachers. As the author points out, "teachers who can connect with their students are generally more engaging in the classroom and can make learning more meaningful for their students". To do this they should stress the connection between how the brain functions and emotions. Teacher educators also need to train teachers in parental involvement through practical tasks.

Teachers can build good teacher-student relationships by getting to know each student by name and something unique about each student, and by sharing something about themselves with the students. This helps the students to see the teachers as more human and connect better with them. Fostering an emotionally-safe environment is also important. Teachers must also find ways to make positive contact with the parents early in the school year and continue to foster the relationship.

School administrators also have a role to play in building relationships in the school. They can organize special programs for the school. Some examples offered were inviting guest speakers to give talks to the teachers and

parents on building their relationships; organizing home visits for teachers and teacher volunteers at the beginning of the year to welcome the new students and get to know the parents.

Another strategy discussed is the Teacher Advisement Program. Teacher advisors meet with groups of students regularly. Through these meetings the school personnel get to understand the needs of the students and their families.

The account of the role of each stakeholder is very thorough and the suggestions offered are very practical and useful.

The author concludes by restating how important it is for all involved-educators, administrators, parents and students to work collaboratively and that educational psychology courses are therefore needed in training educators.

Reference

Witmer, M. M. (2005). The Fourth R in Education-Relationships. *The Clearing House*. 78, 5. 224-228.