

Writing Assessment K-12: Frameworks for Evaluating Students' Writing Development

Part 1

Assessment K-6

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When they assess *for learning*, teachers use classroom assessment process and the continuous flow of information about student achievement that it provided in order to advance, not merely check on, student learning (Stiggins, 2002:761).

Teachers do this by implementing a range of actions but in particular by:

...translating classroom assessment results in to frequent *descriptive feedback* (versus judgmental feedback) for students, providing them with specific insights as to how to improve; continuously *adjusting instruction* based on the results of classroom assessments; engaging children in *regular self-assessment*, with standards held constant so that students can watch themselves grow over time and thus feel in charge of their own success (Stiggins, 2002:61)

Defining assessment *of, for and as learning*

Quality assessment and reporting are linked to syllabus and performance standards, ensuring that learning, teaching, assessment and reporting are clearly aligned. Assessment should reflect, encourage and become an integral part of instruction. All assessment should result in optimal learning for all learners.

Assessment is the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about student learning.

Assessment *for Learning* informs future learning and teaching. It is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning and where they need to go.

Assessment *of learning* is assessment for accountability purposes, to determine a student's level of performance on a specific task or at the conclusion of a unit of teaching and learning. The information gained from this kind of assessment is often used in reporting.

Assessment *as Learning* emphasises the role of the student.

Reporting is the process of communicating information about student achievement and progress gained from the assessment process (from Principles for Assessment and Reporting in NSW Government Schools, 1996).

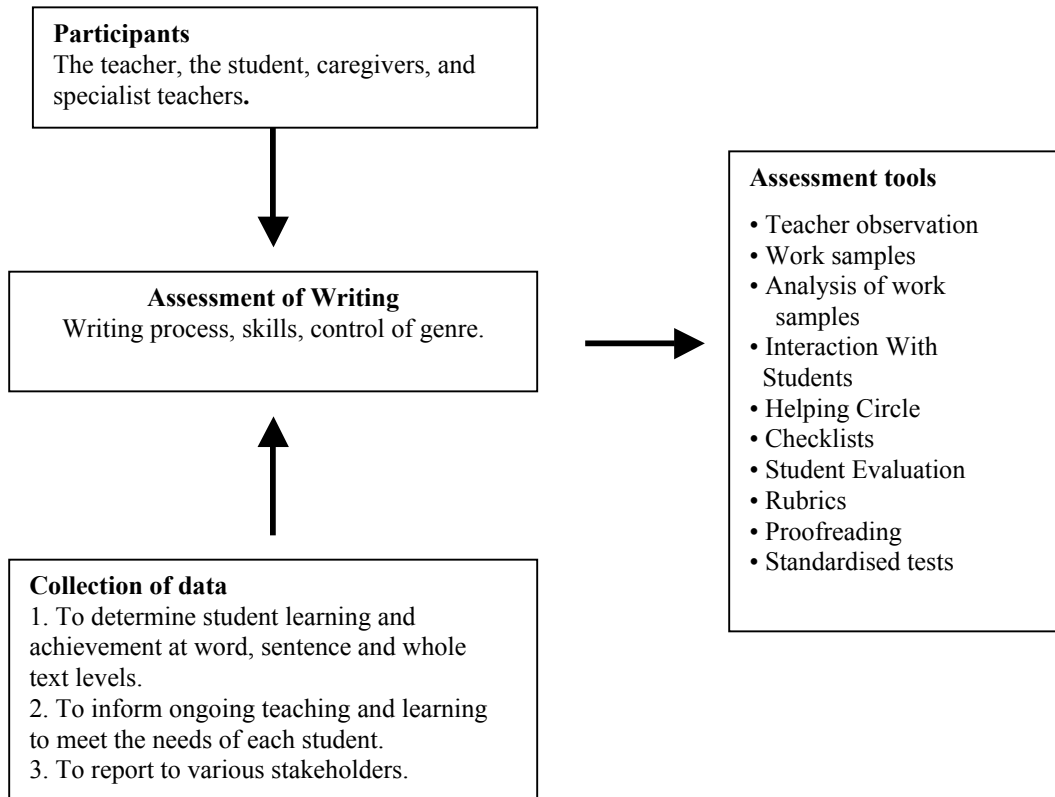
Features of Assessment <i>of, for, and as Learning</i>			
<i>Approach</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Reference Points</i>	<i>Key Assessor</i>
Assessment <i>of Learning</i>	Judgements about placement, promotion, credentials, etc	Other students	Teacher
Assessment <i>for Learning</i>	Information for teachers' instructional decisions	External standards or expectations	Teacher
Assessment <i>as Learning</i>	Self-monitoring and self-correction or adjustment	Personal goals and external standards	Students

Earl, Lorna (2003) Assessment as Learning: Using Classroom Assessment to Maximise Student Learning

Key Element of Effective Assessment
1. Effective assessment evolves from a whole school approach to assessment
<p>2. Effective assessment informs teaching and learning</p> <p>Will this assessment improve the effectiveness of my teaching practice? - I respond by engineering appropriate learning tasks</p> <p>Does this assessment identify and clarify students' understandings and misconceptions? How will I modify teaching and learning activities in response to information collected from formal and informal assessment?</p>
<p>3. Effective assessment provides accurate information to all stakeholders</p> <p>Have I used multiple sources of data to check judgements? Can I provide a rich and varied source of written materials to support findings? Do I engage in clear, honest communication to all stakeholders that reflects respect for the student Do I communicate learning using quality feedback, annotated work samples, informal and formal interviews and written reports?</p>
<p>4. Effective assessment enhances capacity to learn</p> <p>Do I use assessment tasks that do not compromise learning needs of the students? Do I use assessment information to monitor individual student progress? Do I use assessment information to re-evaluate short and long-term teaching goals? Do I select strategies that allow for demonstration of learning outcomes?</p>
<p>5. Effective assessment utilises a range of strategies</p> <p>Do I provide assessment opportunities for students to demonstrate what they can do Do I select assessment experiences integral to the learning and teaching program Do I ensure assessment tasks are relevant, valid and fair? Do I ensure assessment tasks relate to teaching and learning?</p>
<p>6. Effective assessment provides meaningful feedback to students</p> <p>Do I provide individual students with accurate feedback on achievement and directions for improvement? Do I respond to student work indicating level of achievement? Do I provide frequent, specific and descriptive feedback that motivates the learner? Do I provide feedback related to achievement rather than comparison?</p>
<p>7. Effective assessment involves students</p> <p>Do I share with students the reasons behind judgements made concerning their learning? Do I listen and respond to students' opinions? Do I provide opportunities for students to actively participate in the assessment process in ways appropriate to development? Do I involve students in reflecting on learning related to participation, process and product?</p>
<p>8. Effective assessment clarifies learning intentions and success criteria</p> <p>Do I share learning goals with students? Do I provide clear transparent guidelines for students? Do I provide explicit criteria about the quality of work students are expected to produce?</p>
<p>9. Effective assessment acknowledges the individuality of all students</p> <p>Am I aware of students' diverse sociocultural, language and ethnic heritage? Do I have knowledge of each student's preferred learning style? Do I recognise and affirm each student's potential and achievements? Do I use assessment practices that are inclusive and free of bias? Do I monitor students' emotional well being as well as academic progress?</p>

Example: Writing

WRITING ASSESSMENT MODEL



From: *Writing Instruction K-6: Process, Purpose, Audience*, Turbill & Bean, 2006

Assessment *of* Learning (about Writing)

- Text related activities that the teacher assigns a grade or score
- rubrics that the teacher assigns a grade or score
- Teacher made units and assessment tasks
- State and national tests eg BST

Assessment *for* Learning (about Writing)

- Anecdotal comments from classroom observation and reflection
- Analysis of work samples, published and draft
- Interactions with students such as interviews/conferences with students, parents and other professionals who may teach the students
- Responses to reading: written retellings, text reconstruction
- Checklists

Assessment *as* Learning (about Writing)

Student evaluation

Rubrics and Learning Journals

Analysis of Writing Samples

Analysis of writing samples offers a reliable way to assess aspects of a student's writing at word, sentence and whole text levels. When analysing writing, attention should be given to skills and strategies, control of the process, meeting the needs of audience and purpose, control of the genre, in addition to the general quality of the piece of writing. In brief the teacher assesses the process and the product. The information collected should form the basis of future planning and teaching.

Recount : Trip to the Zoo

(Note: the parentheses – brackets – indicate words crossed out or written over by Matt)

On Tuesday I went to (the) Taronga Zoo with all of the year ones. First we had moning tea then after that we went to the toilet. After that we saw some anamels. We saw the spider (moh) monkes and the seals. (a) The person that was the boss of my group was Mrs Brynt. After the anamels I saw I went to the Bird Show. My favret bird was the Black cokatoo. I liked it because I liked the noise. I had lunch while I watched it. It was alot of fun.

After the Bird Show I saw some more anamels. I saw the giraffes and the zebrars and the (gril) chimpanzees. Then we went to the Education Center. (and) We had a leson there. I got to hold a fasmid and while we were there we saw a Shingle back lazed. It was (colud) cold because it's a reptile. This mite (sona) sound a bit funny becuse we needed help (get in) getting to the Education Centre. When we got there I saw a pekoks (tale) tail fethers. It looked a bit funny. After that we went Backyad to Bush. First I saw a bee hive I only had a short go becuse there was a long line. Then I saw some bugs. Then I went into another room and I saw a red back in a (c) jar. Then I went outside and I saw a red back in a twolit it was full of web. We made (or) our way back to the bus and we got on and went back to school. I had lots and lots and lots and lots of fun.

Recount of a visit to the zoo by Matt

Whole text level	Can write a recount	Retells his outing to the zoo in great detail
	Begins with an orientation	On Tuesday I went to (the) Taronga Zoo with all of the year ones
	Keeps to topic all through piece	Clear to reader what Matt did, who he met and what he saw.
	Sequence of events clear	It is clear what happened first, second and so on
	Rereads writing to maintain meaning and edit	On Tuesday I went to (the) Taronga Zoo with all of the year ones. Crossed out 'the' because it didn't make sense.
	Comments on events at appropriate places	My favret bird was the Black cokatoo This mite (sona) sound a bit funny
	Knows to have an 'ending'	We made (or) our way back to the bus and we got on and went back to school. I had lots and lots and lots and lots of fun
Sentence level	Writes in past tense and maintains this throughout	Went, had, saw etc
	Uses connectives	Then, after that, first, and while
	Has the concept of a sentence	All sentences have a verb and begin capital letter.

	Subject, verb agreement evident	We saw, I had
Word level	Has control over many spelling patterns and attempts are close	Becose, mite, there,
	Spells high frequency words correctly	We, were, saw
	Uses references (wall charts, dictionary) to check words	Shingle back lizard, Education Centred

While this student is achieving well with his writing, an important part of the process of annotating writing is for the teacher to ask, ‘*Where to next?*’ In this case a Guided Writing session with a focus on adding detail would be a good place to start in order to continue Matt’s writing development. It would also be appropriate to engage Matt in further editing and this could be achieved partly by provided a clearer audience and purpose for the writing. It could also be done by selecting one or two students also writing at a similar level and teach the group the skills of participating in a Helping Circle. All of these strategies should be conducted in a way that affirms the success of this young writer but also moves him forward with his learning about writing. Guiding Writing and teacher conference should not be reserved for those students having difficulty, we need to move every student forward in their learning.

Writing strategies from: *Writing Instruction K-6: Process, Purpose, Audience*, Turbill & Bean, 2006

Focused Observation and Using Checklists

A checklist must respond to the teaching and learning that is taking place in the classroom so it is unlikely that a published checklist would suit you without modifications. With this in mind we have included a range of checklists below for you to consider. You will need to make alterations to suit your particular group of students.

Writing Checklist - The Process Name _____ Grade _____ Date _____

The Writing Process	Comment
Focusing Has the student identified an audience and purpose for the writing? Has the student selected an appropriate genre? Has the student engaged in any planning before commencing to write? Has the student collected and organized information? Has the student maintained the focus?	
Composing Is the student willing to write? Does the student have spelling strategies to create a text? Does the student have knowledge of text structure to create a text?	
Editing Is the student willing to edit? Can the student adopt the stance of a reader to identify points where meaning is lost or information is incomplete? Can the student refine meaning and make choices between different ways of saying the same thing?	
Proofreading Can the student identify non-standard spelling and grammar? Can the student correct identified errors? Is the student applying a range of spelling strategies? Is the student using punctuation, sentence and paragraph conventions used appropriately?	
Publishing Can the student think back to the audience and purpose and determine the form of publishing that is appropriate?	

Teacher Checklist: *Writing Instruction K-6: Process, Purpose, Audience*, Turbill & Bean, 2006

Writing Product	Comment
<p>Topic Is the topic appropriate to the audience? Is there sufficient information or are there things the reader still needs to know? Are the ideas or events properly sequenced? Is there coherence? (Related to the genre) Are the ideas original?</p>	
<p>Audience Who is the audience? Is the subject matter appropriate to the audience? Is the language appropriate to the audience? Is the presentation appropriate to the audience? • spelling • punctuation • grammar • handwriting • layout Has the writing been edited and proofread? (Are spelling, punctuation and grammar appropriate.)</p>	
<p>Purpose What was the purpose of the writing? Was it achieved? Did the writing entertain, inform, persuade, make comparisons, record observations, clarify thinking, predict or hypothesise, etc depending on the genre?</p>	
<p>Genre Is the student in control of the text form? Is the control full or partial? Can the student structure and sustain a narrative, report, letter or play? Does the structure break down? • poor beginning, gives the reader no sense of direction • story or argument not developed • lacks conclusion Which genre has the student made use of?</p>	

Example of Teacher Checklist: *Writing Instruction K-6: Process, Purpose, Audience*, Turbill & Bean, 2006

Rubrics

Features of well-designed rubrics include:

- a focus on and definition of a quality performance
- a description of measurable criteria
- being provided or developed ‘up front’ when the writing assignment is given.
- involvement of the students in construction.
- provision of an opportunity to plan and set goals

The example following is designed to support and assess learners in the writing of an exposition. This rubric is designed to involve the student and teacher in the assessment of the writing. Further it involves the student in reflecting on their ‘score’ and deciding on some actions for their next piece of writing in order to learn from this experience. The teacher’s role is to support or clarify what the student has written in the goal-setting phase of the rubric. The completed rubric needs to be made available to the student when they next engage in a similar writing experience. Without the follow up stage, a rubric can become a simple scoring mechanism that does little to engage the student in deeply reflecting on their efforts.

Writing strategies from: *Writing Instruction K-6: Process, Purpose, Audience*, Turbill & Bean, 2006

The checklist below might be more appropriate for some students. While similar to the rubric, the checklist requires the student to show examples of the features in their writing.

My Exposition	Yes/No	Example from my writing
My exposition has a statement of position		
I have stated my arguments clearly.		
I concluded by reinforcing my position statement		
I have used complex sentences.		
I have used some technical language.		
Next time I write an exposition I will:		

Student Self –Assessment

Assisting learners to keep their own checklists, rubrics, learning journals and writing logs will encourage self-assessment. The aim is to develop a meta language for them to reflect on and respond to their own learning. This will develop over time through teacher modelling and the use of these tools. Eventually the goal is to jointly construct rubrics and checklists with the class once they have knowledge of these tools, their purpose and the language to talk about their learning.

<p>Name: A Visit to the Zoo by Matt</p> <p>Date:</p> <p>Purpose of my writing: To recount my zoo trip</p> <p>Audience for my writing: My Mum and Dad who didn't go</p> <p>Genre selected: Recount</p> <p>My writing makes sense.</p> <p>I have read my writing out loud. ✓</p> <p>I have checked if there is anything I need to add or to take out. ✓</p> <p>Spelling</p> <p>I have circled the words that I need to check for correct spelling.</p> <p>I changed some spelling</p> <p>I have looked for the correct spelling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ on the word walls ✓ ○ in a dictionary ○ in my word list. ✓ <p>Punctuation</p> <p>I have checked I have used capital letters and full stops. ✓</p> <p>I have checked I have used commas, question marks and speech marks correctly. ✓</p> <p>I am ready for a conference. Yes</p>
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Student Writing Checklist to Guide Self-Assessment

Writing Checklist

<p>1. Does your writing make sense? Hints: •Who is the audience for this piece of writing? • What was the purpose of the writing? • Do the events or facts follow each other in proper order or are some parts jumbled? • Are there any parts you need to add or to cut?</p>	
<p>2. Is your spelling correct? Proofread your writing and circle the words that you think may be spelt incorrectly. Hint: • To check your spelling use a ruler to uncover your text and read line-by-line paying attention to each word. To find the correct spelling refer to a dictionary, word lists in the room or a book where you remember seeing the word.</p>	
<p>3. Is each sentence a complete thought that begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop? <u>Hint:</u> • Go back and read your writing quietly out loud to check that the whole piece sounds right. You will be able to hear where the sentence begins and ends.</p>	
<p>4. Is your punctuation correct? Check you have used capital letters and that commas, full stops, question marks, speech marks are in the correct place. Hints: • Have you used a capital letter for people’s names or places? • Are there sentences that ask a question? Do they end with a question mark? • Do you have characters talking in your writing? Have you used speech marks? • Is the paragraphing correct?</p>	
<p>5. Is your use of grammar correct? Hint: • Are nouns, pronouns and verbs in agreement? • Is your use of tense correct and consistent?</p>	
<p>6. Is your handwriting clear and are your letters well formed? Hint: • Neat handwriting will help whoever reads your writing to enjoy and understand what you have written.</p>	

Student Writing Checklist (Adapted from Bean 2000, 8)

Assessing Teaching Strategies

The other place where assessment must take place is reflection on what *we* do as teachers. The grid summarises the key teaching strategies suggested for the teaching of writing and suggests assessment strategies that could be employed. Further it offers a set of reflective questions for the teacher. These are suggestions as to the things teachers need to keep in mind as they go about their day-to-day teaching of writing. The quality of the questions we ask ourselves will improve as we become more reflective. Critical reflection that leads to ‘intelligent action’ (Dewey in Rodgers, 2002) will be one of the key strategies for the teacher of writing. The big question might be:

Is what I am currently doing in Modelled Writing/Shared Writing/Guided Writing impacting positively on all students’ learning? The grid below offers reflective questions to guide a response to the ‘big’ questions.

Assessment of Key Teaching Strategies for Writing			
Strategy	Description of strategy	Opportunities for Assessment	Reflective Questions
Modelled Writing	The teacher writes and 'thinks aloud'. The short, focused lesson is based on observed needs.	Teacher observation. Interaction with students. Analysis of written response (when appropriate).	Were the students engaged? Was the lesson focussed on observed needs? Did I achieve my purpose for the lesson?
Shared Writing	Also referred to as Joint Construction. Teacher plans the writing and holds the pen but unlike Modelled Writing involves the students in construction.	Observation of student involvement. Observation of contributions and suggestions made by the students. Interaction with students.	Were the students engaged? Did I involve all the students? Did the lesson meet the students' needs? Which students have the understanding to move to independent writing? What was the application of skills demonstrated?
Guided writing	Carefully planned small group instruction to meet observed needs or to extend. Involves student conferencing.	Anecdotal records. Teacher checklist. Analysis of writing samples. Peer assessment and self-evaluation.	Are the sessions meeting the observed needs? What level of support is required? Am I extending the students? What spelling strategies are the students using?
Independent Writing	Writing for a clearly identified audience and purpose.	Analysis of writing (at word, sentence and text levels). Observation of Helping Circle (editing). Rubrics and student self-evaluation. Teacher and/or student checklists.	Are the students enjoying writing? Do they perceive audience and purpose for their writing and write for that audience and purpose? Can they use this knowledge and select the correct genre for their writing? Do the students follow up suggestions made in the Helping Circle? Are they applying the skills taught in modelled and shared writing? What skills are they using (spelling, proofreading, etc)? What scaffolds and resources are the students using when writing?

Assessing Teacher Writing Strategies Bean 2008

"It is only when facts (data) are processed by the human mind that information becomes possible. This process of turning data into information is what is meant by interpretation"

(Cambourne *et al* 1994, p 104)

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