

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

Theses and Dissertations

4-29-1999

The use of performance assessment in the middle school resource room

Kimberly Ann Powell
Rowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Powell, Kimberly Ann, "The use of performance assessment in the middle school resource room" (1999).
Theses and Dissertations. 1870.
<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/1870>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact graduateresearch@rowan.edu.

THE USE OF PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT
IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL RESOURCE ROOM

by
Kimberly Ann Powell

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 1, 1999

Approved by

Professor

Date Approved 4/29/99

ABSTRACT

Kimberly Ann Powell
The Use of Performance Assessment
in the Middle School Resource Room
A Thesis
Master of Arts Degree
of
Special Education

This study focused on the use of performance assessment in the middle school resource room. I hypothesized that formally stating criteria used for evaluation would increase student performance and positively affect students' finished products. The size of the subject sample was ten students, ranging in age from 10 to 15 years and enrolled in grades four through eight. The students were all designated as Eligible for Special Education. Methods included observation, creation of materials, data collection, and formal evaluation through the use of rubrics. There were two phases of research throughout this study with results compiled for each term. Students showed an increase in performance through the second phase of the study. Major findings of the study included the need for instruction at higher levels of the thought processes and the addition of teaching strategies for learning.

ABSTRACT

Kimberly Ann Powell
The Use of Performance Assessment
in the Middle School Resource Room
A Thesis
Master of Arts Degree
of
Special Education

This study focused on the use of performance assessment in the middle school resource room. I hypothesized that formally stating criteria used for evaluation would increase student performance and would positively affect students' finished products. My methods included observation, data collection, creation of materials, and formal evaluation. The results of the study, however, disclosed the need for instruction at higher levels of the thought process. It also emphasized the necessity for strategy instruction at all grade levels to generate effective teaching techniques.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGES
CHAPTER ONE	1 - 4
CHAPTER TWO	5 - 14
CHAPTER THREE	15 - 19
CHAPTER FOUR	20 - 23
CHAPTER FIVE	24 - 27
APPENDIX	28

TABLES

TABLE 1

PAGE 17

TABLE 2

PAGE 21

Chapter One

Introduction

The assessment of students' academic performance has always been a controversial issue in education. Whether it is in special education or regular education, assessment must be uniform and equitable. Students are now being tested on and exposed to higher order processing activities. It is no longer appropriate to assess a student's ability utilizing only "yes/ no," multiple choice, or simple answer questions. A teacher must draw out the higher order thinking and problem solving skills that students possess, which includes evaluation of how a particular answer was derived. Students in turn are being asked to become further involved with their education and begin self and peer evaluations.

With the introduction of open-ended, thought-provoking questions comes the concern of how to evaluate and assess a student's performance. "Performance Assessment" proclaims that by furnishing a student with the exact criteria required by which an assignment will be assessed (rubric), and by providing examples of previously assessed assignments, that students will increase their academic performance. It is also envisioned that self evaluation will begin to emerge. While providing students with rubrics, sharing and discussing criteria, and guiding student progress in all areas of the curriculum, it is believed that an elevation of student awareness of their academic performance and achievement will occur.

Being in the field of special education, many activities and assignments that students are faced with depend on the creativity and thinking processes of the individual. Various tasks involve cooperative learning settings. With the evolution of teaching toward the evaluation and synthesis stages of Bloom's Taxonomy, comes the need for updated assessment techniques. It is with this concern that I have chosen to research and review performance assessment.

The assessment of students in the classroom has always been of pertinent interest. As standardized tests are changing format to encompass all areas of the curriculum and including essay and open-ended questions, the classroom teacher must incorporate appropriate activities in the learning process. The fundamental problem lies in the evaluation of these activities. Unless certain criteria are first identified and then applied to the analysis of student composition, the measurement procedure cannot be objective. Other areas of concern include student achievement and self evaluation.

If the student is invited to actively participate in the evaluation process, either by reviewing and creating evaluation criteria for a particular assignment or self evaluating, it is anticipated that the student's awareness and concern for that assignment will be heightened.

It is with these assumptions that I ask the question; will incorporating performance assessment into the classroom increase student awareness of their own academic performance and academic achievement? Does formally stating expected criteria have an effect on a student's finished product?

Hypothesis

Through the creation of materials, observations, and data collection, I hope to demonstrate that the use of performance assessment, formally stating the expected criteria used for evaluation and providing specific examples of previously evaluated assignments, will increase student performance and will affect positively on the student's finished product. It is hoped that these efforts will also increase student motivation and promote self evaluation.

The specific population that will be studied includes fourth through eighth grade students in a Resource Room setting. The areas of the curriculum that will be focused upon will include Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics. The span of the research will be two months, beginning the first month with assignments being assessed according to the performance assessment requirements, but having the students unaware of the process. The second month will launch the formal introduction of performance assessment enabling the students to become involved with the evaluation process.

Activities will be created to include numerous areas of New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards and will stimulate the higher level thinking skills that are required on new standardized tests. Specific criteria or rubrics for individual assignments, will first be created by myself, but will eventually become a component of the student's responsibility. Through these methods, I aspire to prove that a student's awareness and academic achievement can be elevated and that self evaluation will emerge.

I believe that when allowing students to view expected evaluation criteria for specific activities that their attitudes toward school will improve and in turn will improve their

participation and output in graded assignments. I also believe that self evaluation will emerge and that more emphasis will be placed on the finished products.

While much attention is now being focused on problem solving skills and higher order thinking applications, modernized assessment techniques must also be utilized. Standardized tests are being redesigned with many thought-provoking questions that also examine how a particular answer was achieved. It is the responsibility of teachers to assess their own classroom habits and behaviors and proceed forward with innovative activities and assessments that engage students in their education. Measurement of student achievement is a complex endeavor, however, more than likely is completed on a daily basis. Assessment practices must evolve as educational practices continue to change.

Through the review of studies and readings and from data compiled from the classroom, I hope to find that performance assessment executes reliably and is readily serviceable. The remainder of my analysis will include a literature review, statistical information, and direct outcomes from classroom observations and data collections.

My focus of study will be the utilization of performance assessment in the classroom affecting students with disabilities. The remaining chapters will include the review of professional journals and studies, observation of students in the classroom, analysis of results, and discussion of further possibilities of alternative assessment. I intend to explore the various problem areas of assessment in the classroom involving students with disabilities and incorporate performance assessment into my classroom.

Chapter Two

Defining Performance Assessment

Assessment takes place in the classroom in many ways. It may be accomplished through written tests, observations and data collections, oral examinations, and through many of newly developed forms and procedures. One important or relevant part of teaching in the classroom associated with education of these times is that the information taught needs to hold relevance to the students being taught. The marriage of relevant activities, whether instructional or assessment procedures, now are focusing more on what is important to the student and is suitable to “real life” occurrences.

Social, economic, and learning trends tell us yesterday’s education aimed at knowledge acquisition is insufficient to meet the challenges of today’s world. In addition to specifics of what they know, what is important for today’s students is their ability to access and organize information, apply knowledge wisely in current situations, learn and relearn as needed, and use their knowledge to understand and solve the real world problems they face (Herman, 1997, 196-197).

Some of the evaluative assessment strategies being utilized in the classroom include: Portfolio Assessment; Alternative Assessment; Peer Assessment; and Performance Assessment. These strategies all claim to involve the student more in the

assessment process and engage students further in their educational endeavors.

Performance assessment, however, also claims that in order to appropriately educate our students of these times, the information and subject taught must hold relevance to the students and be associated with “real life” events. The proponents for performance assessment proclaim that performance assessment is supposed to focus on tasks calling for complex thinking, deep understanding of subject matter , and open-ended responses, in contrast to assessment by multiple-choice measures (Baker, 1994).

As the standardized tests are being reinvented to include critical thinking and open-ended questions, Performance assessment tasks would fit right in line with the new assessment procedures. It has been shown in research that students learn best when asked to construct their solution, rather than when they merely choose a solution from a set of provided options (Mayer, 1996). As schools are being forced to “teach to the test” to improve scores on the standardized exams being administered, their ways of instruction and assessment must change to align with the standardized testing measures. Advocates of performance assessment voice the positive aspects and outcomes of performance assessment towards meeting these goals.

Assessment has been defined as the planned process of gathering and synthesizing information relevant to the purposes of (a) discovering and documenting students’ strengths and weaknesses, (b) planning and enhancing instruction, or, (c) evaluating and making decisions about students (Cizek, 1997, 10). Evaluation means assigning merit or worth to something. The most common form of educational evaluation is assigning grades. Grades provide information about students to students, parents, administrators,

and the public. Assigning grades fairly and equitably has always been of concern for educators. Holistic scoring and portfolio assessment are two popular methods used in schools today, however, holistic scoring rubrics do not provide adequate and meaningful diagnostic information to individual students (Cizek, 1998). The search for a more appropriate means of assessment has led some schools and educators to performance assessment.

Performance assessment is a dynamic process calling for students to be active participants, who are learning while they are being assessed. Performance assessment is a continuum of assessment formats which allow teachers to observe student behavior ranging from simple responses to demonstrations of work collected over time (Rudner & Boston, 1997). The four assumptions that performance assessment is built upon include: 1) When knowledge is constructed students show greater interest and perform at higher levels of learning when they are required to organize facts around major concepts and then actively construct their own understanding of those concepts. Retention of knowledge is also better and the active participation is the key to all performance assessments (Sweet & Zimmermann, 1992); 2) The task is worthwhile and is inherently instructional, engaging students in learning activities. These tasks are open-ended and assess an array of knowledge and skills related to the curriculum (Sweet & Zimmerman, 1992); 3) Better assessments improve teaching requiring teachers to describe the standards and the task that will be used to evaluate performance. When teachers are informed of the learning progress and difficulties of their students, they can then make better decisions about content and instruction (Fuchs, 1995); 4) Meeting criteria improves

learning and allows students to be active participants in their own learning. When students have the opportunity to examine models of excellence and when they understand how their own performance compares to a set of established criteria, they perform better (McTighe, 1997).

The main goals of performance assessment are to gather data on students that focus on growth over time rather than comparing them with each other; to focus on what they know rather than on what they don't; and to meet the needs of diverse learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and proficiency levels (Tannenbaum, 1996).

The basic components of a performance assessment may be described in three parts (Stiggins, 1984): 1) the specification of a performance to be evaluated, 2) the development of exercises or tasks used to elicit that performance and 3) the design of a scoring and recording scheme for results.

Designing or defining a performance assessment task begins with the identification of outcomes. Herman, Aschbacher, and Winters, (1992), suggest there are ten steps in the design process. These tasks can relate to real-life experiences, make connections to personal experiences, and require demonstrations of competency and mastery. After the task is created, which may evolve from current events, books, text, or curriculum, the criteria is then developed. The purpose of the criteria is to link the curriculum to the assessment task. Rubrics can be developed to meet both the needs of the teachers and students. The assessment criteria are designed to be either product related which could be an oral presentation or creation of a poster; content specific such as a research project; or task specific such as writing an essay. The assessment criteria

focus attention on particular student behaviors that are measurable and observable and reveal teacher expectations to students (Fuchs, 1995).

The two ways of formatting criteria include rubrics or analytical criteria assessment lists. The rubric, which is sometimes referred to as checklist, is the most familiar. The assessment list should only be introduced when students possess a certain level of understanding of assessment (Fuchs, 1995). To develop quality performance criteria, certain guidelines should be adhered to as offered by Quellmalz, (1991). The criteria must reflect important aspects of skill demonstration; they must be devised through thoughtful analysis of samples of high quality performance and comparison to samples of lesser performance; it must specify important performance components and represent standards that would apply naturally to determine the quality of the performance; be applicable to a class or tasks; and communicate clearly to be understood by all involved.

Upon the completion of the assessment criteria, the task and the criteria are presented to the students along with examples of previously assessed tasks. Students are shown exactly what is expected of them and how they can achieve a particular grade for a particular assignment.

Students with Disabilities

Performance assessment can be used not only in the regular classroom, but also in classrooms comprised of students with disabilities. Performance assessment can offer a number of benefits over the use of traditional assessments for students with disabilities. The most important being the potential for linking instruction and assessment: as the

student completes the assessment task, the teacher uses the data to improve instruction (McLaughlin & Warren, 1994).

The following issues must be addressed to ensure success of performance assessment for students with disabilities: 1) Defining the outcomes must be constructed to measure progress toward valued educational goals. The frameworks must not be defined too narrowly or they will not reflect all of the skills that are valued for students with disabilities. The assessment task needs to be relevant to the students' program goals. 2) Developing performance standards that are benchmarks against which student performance may be compared. Many students with disabilities cannot meet absolute standards. 3) Assessment accommodations that are geared to a particular assessment. Additional accommodations may include additional time to complete a task or alternative supplies or equipment. 4) Scoring results must be rigorous as in traditional assessments (McLaughlin & Warren, 1994).

When including performance assessment in the classroom for students with disabilities there are considerations that must be addressed. It can be difficult for the special educator to pivot from believing that each student with a disability should have individualized outcomes to accepting the notion of a common set of outcomes across students. There is still ambiguity among assessment experts regarding how much accommodation should be provided within an assessment program. Also, when one set of scoring standards is defined for all students, with no modifications made for students with disabilities, and the students with disabilities may be penalized (McLaughlin & Warren, 1994).

Strategies to support using performance assessment in the classroom of students with disabilities can increase the potential for success of students with disabilities by considering the following: identifying meaningful outcomes; defining performance standards in sufficiently broad terms or in ways that emphasize growth; creating enough flexibility in the assessment process to accommodate individual student needs; utilizing multiple data-gathering strategies including examples of student work and teacher evaluations (McLaughlin & Warren, 1994).

Other areas of concern, when dealing with students with disabilities include: Focusing on authentic skills and assessing experiences in community/read life environments; measuring integrated skills across domains as education for students with moderate to severe cognitive disabilities requires integration of skills; using continuous documentation methods if at all possible along with multiple measures over time will result in more accurate and reliable information, including the extent to which the system provides the needed supports and adaptations and trains students to use them (Ysseldyke & Olsen, 1997).

When considering all of these aspects of performance assessment, students become workers concerned with the quality of their performance, and are not content with simple responses to challenging problems and tasks. There begins a self-assessment in that students become active learners not solely dependent on the teacher for reinforcement on their completed assignments (Hess, 1994).

The idea of using assessment to motivate improvement and changes in teaching and learning evolved from the understanding that assessments can communicate

meaningful standards to which all involved with the school can strive. These standards can provide focus and direction for teaching and learning so educators and students can use the feedback to understand and direct their attention to improving relevant facets of student learning. The results from the assessment will unveil important insights on the nature, strengths, and weaknesses of student progress relative to the standards. When introduced with appropriate incentives, self-motivated and directed assessment will motivate students to learn better, teachers to teach better, and schools to be more educationally effective (Herman, 1997, 197).

Numerous concerns have been raised about performance assessment including: 1) Performance assessments are difficult and expensive to develop; 2) Performance assessments are open-ended, require trained judges to evaluate students' efforts, and cost far more than other approaches; 3) Many teachers are not prepared to teach in the way performance assessments imply; 4) Many parents believe that performance assessment is a less rigorous method to evaluate students than more familiar multiple-choice tests (Baker, 1994). It has also been noted that using performance assessment in large-scale accountability purposes would lead toward negative results and that accountability at large-scale levels can be better served by multiple-choice tests (Strange, 1997). One of the problems of performance assessment is the lack of dependability. Early studies have shown teacher subjectivity in assigning grades and poor reliability in their grades for classroom projects (Starch & Elliot 1912;1913). A second problem is in the area of "grade inflation" which is defined as increases in average grades without corresponding increases in performance (Quick, 1997). Evidence of such has been found in data from

the American College Testing and Scholastic Assessment Test in that scores on the exams fell six to fifteen points while high school students receiving “A’s” increased from 28 to 32 percent (Ziomek and Svec 1997). Teachers also have raised questions as to the amount of preparation that is necessary for students to succeed on performance assessments tests and the amount of time required to get the standardized performance assessments back from scoring. Consequently, teachers can’t use one year’s results to gauge preparation for the upcoming test (Givens, 1997).

The amount of students in a classroom and the lack of time to prepare the performance assessments along with the use of various rubrics (scoring guides) which tend to be confusing to those untrained in their use brings about fear in the educational staff. Parents also feel that performance assessment is too subjective.

However, performance assessment has become increasingly popular within the past few years. Most like it because it is fair to students and offers valuable information about exactly what students know and can do. Parents appreciate that students can’t just guess the correct answer when they must demonstrate how they conducted research or solved a problem. Administrators like it because growing evidence reveals these assessments can help diagnose students’ learning needs, help students learn better, and help them do better on standardized tests (Reeves, 1998).

Using performance assessments throughout the year will reduce students’ anxiety about assessment, increase their ability to reason through problems and explain their answers, and improve their written and oral skills. With these achievements, improvement on a variety of tests will also occur (Reeves, 1998).

In conclusion, it seems that performance assessment, while not a newly devised procedure, may need some fine tuning in its application in the classroom. It is extremely evident that assessment procedures along with classroom teaching techniques need to be updated to meet the demands of our student populations. What was appropriate ten years ago, may not be in today's classroom. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that adequate instructional strategies are being implemented in the classroom to assure maximum learning potential of all students. Alternative assessments lead to the use of higher order thinking skills and develop problem solving capabilities that are important for students of today to be adept in employing.

Performance assessment, while having obvious imperfections, is a form of assessment that can be used in the regular classroom and in the classroom of students with disabilities. There are many positive aspects of performance assessment, which allow for numerous uses in the classroom. They help teachers to diagnose student need, determine the effectiveness of instructional strategies, serve as teaching tools, and bring students into the performance assessment process as evaluators of their own and other's achievements (Stiggins, 1994).

Chapter Three

Procedure

The subjects of concern in this study of the feasibility and reliability of performance assessment in the classroom are Salem Middle School students in grades four through eight. There were ten students, with the ages of the students ranging from 10 to 15 years. All participants have been determined to be eligible for special education. The abilities of the students vary in each subject, however, each student is placed in the resource room with an Individualized Educational Program and is expected to progress through the curriculum and the New Jersey Core State Standards. Students attend the resource room daily for math and/or language arts which will encompass the activities of this research. The student's reading levels ranged from a fourth grade student reading on a 1.5 grade level to an eighth grade student reading on a 6.0 grade level. There are, however, students that are functioning on grade level, but present more of a behavioral challenge and are not progressing properly in the regular classroom (Table 1).

As per Chapter 28, New Jersey Administrative Code, section 6:28-4.3, a, 8,1, the elementary resource room that provides replacement instruction in an approved separate resource center will be limited to six pupils with no assistant and eight pupils with the addition of a classroom aide and the approval of the department of education through the county office.

The students used in the study were instructed with cooperative and individual projects and include five fourth grade students that work on both math and reading/language arts content, one fifth grade student that attends for math only, two sixth grade students attending for math only, a seventh grade student that attends for both math and reading/language art and one eighth grade student attending resource for math only (Refer to Table 1). The content area was limited to one area at a session.

The students involved in this study are from Salem City, New Jersey. They come from an extremely low socioeconomic community with a very small rate of parental contact. Motivation is a problem as the students deal with external factors that overpower the instructional strategies of school.

Rubrics created to coordinate with performance assessments were used to evaluate student output for each assignment. Each performance assessment included the following and was presented to the students to examine before the start of each activity during the second half of the research: exact criteria to obtain particular scores; examples of previously graded activities; explicit instructions/directions to complete each assignment. The research lasted eleven weeks, with one assignment being evaluated each week.

For the first phase of the research which lasted four weeks, the students were not formally introduced to performance assessment. The assignments were created according to performance assessment guidelines, along with rubrics to evaluate, but the students were only given an objective and directions to complete each assignment. The assignments involved in-depth thinking and open-ended responses. An example of a language arts assignment was the creation of an imaginable product, and writing a

TABLE 1		STUDENTS INVOLVED IN STUDY					
SUBJECTS	AGE IN MONTHS	GRADE	DISABILITY	AREAS OF STUDY	READING LEVEL	MATH LEVEL	
1	128	4	1	3	1.5	2.5	
2	135	4	2	3	2.0	4.0	
3	127	4	1	3	2.5	3.5	
4	133	4	3	3	1.5	2.0	
5	126	4	2	1	2.5	4.0	
6	132	5	2	2	3.5	4.0	
7	163	6	1	2	5.0	5.0	
8	152	6	2	2	4.0	4.5	
9	181	7	2	3	5.0	5.0	
10	190	8	2	2	6.0	6.0	

Disability Code

1= ED

2= LD

3=EMR

Areas of Study Code

1= Language Arts

2= Math

3= Language Arts + Math

proposal to a manufacturer. A math assignment involved the creation of a bridge using craft sticks, estimations of the weight it would hold, and expanding on how the bridge could be made stronger or why it did not work properly. Assignments also had extensions that were to be completed at home as well as additional homework activities.

The first half of the research was implemented with the students unaware of the formal process of performance assessment. The activities were assigned to the students, but a formal explanation of the evaluation process was not designated. The students completed activities with no formal announcement or explanation of evaluation criteria. They were not involved with the grading procedure and were not exposed to previously graded activities. There were four assignments during the first phase of research.

Assessment during the first phase of research was made through observation of work habits and finished products from given directions evaluated by rubrics (Appendix).

The second half of the research involved the full presentation of performance assessment and the exact criteria required for each assignment. The assignments included objectives, directions, samples of previously graded assignments, thorough review of the rubric to be used to evaluate, and exact criteria required for each assignment. There were seven assignments directly related to the second phase of research and eleven weeks total were spent on data collection and assignment evaluation. One formal assignment was prepared for evaluation each week.

The assignments that were created included open-ended thinking activities, research and writing activities, speaking and oral presentations, and cooperative learning situations. Rubrics were created and borrowed from a professional publisher.

Statistical analysis in chapter four will focus on the evaluation or grade attained for students' finished products during both phases of research. Observational data are also utilized in the areas of student behavior, interest, individual evaluation techniques, and direct usability by the teacher in the classroom.

Chapter Four

Results

My topic of study was the review and use of performance assessment in the middle school resource room. I hypothesized that formally stating criteria used for evaluation would increase student performance and would positively affect students' finished products. The use of performance assessment also included providing examples of previously evaluated assignments to act as a model for students. I also was hoping that an increase in student motivation and self evaluation would occur.

During the first phase of research which lasted four weeks, students enjoyed the hands on activities, however, writing and the open-ended nature of the research questions were cause for much concern. The extension activities and homework assignments were rarely completed, which fell right in line with the regular homework assignments. Motivation was high in the classroom, however, content of finished products was not as I had hoped (Refer to Table 2).

During the pre-intervention phase of the study, students averaged 16 points per assignment of a total of 40. The total points available to each student during the four-week phase were 16. Home work assignments were completed on 15% of the required dates. The average points earned per student were 6.4. Assignments were evaluated at 40% (Table 2).

The second phase of research involved a full presentation of performance

TABLE 2		ASSIGNMENT EVALUATION											
WEEKS	11/6	20	25	12/4	11	18	23	1/8	15	22	29	T	
STUDENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	T	
1	0	1	0	1	0	2	3	1	3	2	3	16	
2	2	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	9	
3	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	27	
4	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	19	
5	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20	
6	3	1	1	3	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	20	
7	2	3	3	1	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	31	
8	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	23	
9	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	16	
10	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	9	
TOTAL	16	16	16	16	17	18	19	18	17	16	21		

PRE INTERVENTION - WEEKS 11/6/98-12/4/98 (1-4)

TOTAL POINTS AVAILABLE PER ASSIGNMENT - 40

AVERAGE OF POINTS EARNED - 16

TOTAL POINTS AVAILABLE FOR EACH STUDENT DURING PRE INTERVENTION PHASE-16

AVERAGE OF POINTS EARNED BY EACH STUDENT - 6.4

INTERVENTION - WEEKS 12/11/98- 1/29/99 (5-11)

TOTAL POINTS AVAILABLE PER ASSIGNMENT - 40

AVERAGE OF POINTS EARNED - 18

TOTAL POINTS AVAILABLE FOR EACH STUDENT DURING INTERVENTION PHASE - 28

AVERAGE OF POINTS EARNED BY EACH STUDENT - 12.6

assessment and how each student was expected to participate or complete assignments. Students were interested in reviewing previously graded assignments and learning how they could achieve the same grade. The students were less defensive and participated very well in the classroom. As with the first phase, however, homework was rarely completed. This in turn led to a lowering of attainable points for each assignment. The results of the second phase were slightly greater than that of the first. (Table 2).

The intervention phase of the study revealed similar results with a slight increase in the total points earned by each student and the total of points earned for each assignment. Students averaged 18 points per assignment of a total of 40. The total points available to each student during the seven-week period were 28 with students averaging 12.6 points. The homework assignments were completed at a rate of 17% during this phase. Assignments were evaluated at 45% (Table 2).

It was evident that the more difficult performance assessments introduced to the students created a level of frustration and defiance. It was difficult for these students to engage in activities that were not specifically explained and were different from usual classroom assignments. Some students completed the activities and scored well on the rubrics that were developed to match each assignment, however, others became defensive and unwilling to participate in the activities. The lower level readers were most likely to balk at the performance assessment activities. The open ended, individual nature of the performance assessments seemed to cause concern for all of the students. Asking them to expand or explore topics or to provide their own insights was difficult for them to grasp. Homework or extensions of assignments were rarely completed, which also lowered the

percentage of grades. It seems that the consistent use of true/false, multiple choice, and short answer questions have stunted the abilities of the students. It was difficult for them to see the need to augment the information provided and to include their own results or conclusions.

The average number of points attained by each of the students over the eleven-week period was 16. The percentage rate of points earned was 40%. The total number of points earned each week averaged 17.3. The total points available to each student over the eleven-week period were forth four. The percentage of points earned by all was 43.2%.

Chapter 5

Discussion

My topic of study was the review and use of performance assessment in the middle school resource room. I hypothesized that formally stating criteria used for evaluation would increase student performance and would positively affect students' finished products. Results of the study showed a 5% increase from the pre-intervention phase to the intervention phase with the majority of students increasing their points earned per assignment. All but one student increased their points earned with an increase average of 6.2 points. Homework assignment completion increased by 2% during the intervention phase of the study.

Knowing that my students were particularly defensive to any type of change in the classroom, I went forward with this research in hopes of finding alternative teaching methods to regular book and paper. My other intentions were to discover a way in which to educate students to increase scores on the changing standardized testing methods which require more in-depth thought and higher ability writing skills. Since nearly all students are soon to be responsible for passing the standardized tests, leaving only a few individuals exempt from passing or taking the exams, it is extremely important that students in the resource setting are taught on grade level and are exposed to the same exercises as are the regular education students. My individual findings from this research have neither deterred nor increased my thoughts toward the performance assessment

approach, but have exposed the need for the teaching of higher level thinking skills.

Students must be taught how to learn. Specific strategies for individual achievement are necessary to increase student performance. My results have shown that the students were not quite prepared for this type of instruction. A few of the students performed according to their abilities and enjoyed participating in the hands on experiments and activities. Most, however, were caught off-guard from the security of their text books and individual assignments during the first phase of the study.

Another twist that I had hoped would induce self monitoring and evaluation was the daily printout of students' objectives and a check off a list of assignments and activities to be completed. These lists were given to the students daily and were to be completed and handed in before leaving the classroom. Again, very few of the students completed these lists without much constant reminding.

While these numbers are not extremely favorable, the five percent increase from the first phase to the second gives reason for a closer look. More emphasis needs to be placed on the completion of assignments both in the classroom and at home. Students need to become responsible for their education. It is important that they understand the entirety of the lesson to be completed and are given guidelines and examples to construct their product. In previous research, an important benefit of performance assessment is the potential for linking instruction and assessment for students with disabilities (McLaughlin & Warren, 1994). Giving students the background information such as this enables them to move forward more quickly than when starting with no set information. They become active learners (Hess, 1994).

While the creation of assignments and criteria was considerably time consuming, it gave valid information about the ways students learn and what needs to be changed to instruct more effectively. Limitations that I faced during the research included suspensions of students, absences of students, lack of materials, smallness of sample size, and the time in which to complete the research. There were also environmental factors such as having no heat in the building, which left the students irritable, fire drills, and everyday classroom interruptions.

Future research should involve a much larger sample in many different school districts and should be conducted over a longer time period. The use of performance assessment in any school system in any class could be an asset to students if conducted in the appropriate manner.

In this study, I focused on the use of performance assessment in the middle school resource room. I had projected that the declaration of expected criteria used for evaluation would positively affect students' finished products and would also lead to increased motivation and self evaluation. My results showed few differences, however, many limitations were in existence. The results of the study disclosed the need for instruction at higher levels of the thought process. It also emphasized the need for strategy instruction at all grade levels to generate effective teaching techniques.

As the formats for standardized testing are changing, so should the instructional techniques in the classroom. Districts are being forced to "teach to the tests" in order to receive monies and public support. Teachers must become more creative and adopt alternative methods to remain in line with current and expanding standards. While the

creation of performance assessments can be costly and time consuming, the end results may place many students ahead of or in line with the open ended, thought-provoking criteria of the newly evolving standardized exams.

To conclude, performance assessment deserves some consideration when teaching students with disabilities. The exposure to creative activities and higher level thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation, enables students to participate in relevant, usable activities outside of the classroom, which, to begin with, is the basis of teaching.

REFERENCES

- Baker, E. (1994). Learning based assessments of history understanding. *Educational Psychologist*, 29(2), 97-106.
- Cizek, G. J. (1998). The assessment revolution's unfinished business. *Kappa-Delta-Pi-Record*, 34(4), 144-9.
- Cizek, G. J. (1997). Learning, achievement, and assessment: Constructs at a crossroads. *Handbook of classroom assessment*, ed. G. D. Phye, 1-32. San Diego, Calif.: Academic Press.
- Fuchs, L. S. (1995). Connecting performance assessment to instruction: A comparison of behavioral assessment, mastery learning, curriculum-based measurement, and performance. *ERIC Digest E530*.
- Givens, Kate. (1997). Performance assessment tests: A problematic panacea. *Contemporary Education*, 69(Fall), 27-9.
- Herman, Joan. (1997). Assessing new assessments: How do they measure up? *Theory Into Practice*, 36(4), 196-203.
- Herman, J. L., Aschbacher, P. R., and Winters, L. (1992). Aligning instruction and assessment: Implications from cognitive learning theory. In *A Practical Guide to Alternative Assessment*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Hess, Stephen. (1994). Overview of performance assessment. *Maryland Assessment Consortium*.
- Mayer, R. E. (1996). Learners as information processors: Legacies and limitations of educational psychology's second metaphor. *Educational Psychologist*, 3, 151-161.
- McLaughlin, M. J., & Warren, S. H. (1994). *Performance assessment and students with disabilities: Usage in outcomes-based accountability systems*. Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children.
- McTighe, J. (1996-97). What happens between assessment? *Educational Leadership*, 54(4), 6-12.

- Quick, C. (1997). An average essay. *English Journal*, 86(1), 13-14.
- Quellmalz, E. S. (1991). Developing criteria for performance assessments: The missing link. *Applied Measurement in Education*, 4(4), 319-332.
- Reeves, Douglas. (1998). Performance assessment for busy teachers. *Learning*, January, February, 58-60.
- Rudner, L. M. & Boston, C. (1994). Performance based assessment. *ERIC Review*, 3(1), 2-12.
- Starch, D. & Elliot, E. C. (1912-1913). Reliability of grading work in mathematics. *School Review*, 21, 254-59.
- Stiggins, R. J. (1994). *Student-centered classroom assessment*. Columbus, OH: Macmillan.
- Sweet, D. & Zimmerman, J., Ed. (1992). *Performance assessment*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Washington, DC, ERIC.
- Tannenbaum, Jo-Ellen. (1996). Practical ideas on alternative assessment for ESL students. ERIC.
- Ysseldyke, J. E., Olsen, K., & Thurlow, M.L. (1997). *Issues and considerations in alternate assessments*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.
- Ziomek, R. L., and Svec, J. C. (1997). High school grades and achievement: Evidence of grade inflation. *NASSP Bulletin* 81(587), 105-13.

APPENDIX

Fourth Grade Writing Rubric

Name	Highly Skilled	Moderately Skilled	Skilled	Poorly Skilled	Unskilled
	4	3	2	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States the main ideas of a paragraph in one sentence. • Fully explains the main ideas with a logical sequence of ideas and details. • Uses cause and effect as an organizational pattern and writes fact and opinion paragraphs. • Writes clear, correct, organized, and brief one paragraph summaries, descriptions, and narratives. • Writes complete and correct one paragraph descriptions with sensory details. • Revises and edits writing independently. • Communicates ideas and feelings in poems which use sensory or imaginative details and have poetic form. • Uses vocabulary words from all subjects in writing and can talk about writing. • Final draft uses correct usage, spelling, format, and sentences. • Final draft uses correct capital letters, end punctuation, and words which communicate clearly. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing goes above and beyond what was required (creativity, extra effort, etc.). 					
Specify: _____					

Kitchen Sink Rubric (2)

Student's Name _____ Date _____

	4	3	2	1
	Professional	Quality	Acceptable	Not Acceptable
Format	Professionally laid out	Follows prescribed format	Format acceptable	Does not follow format
Mechanics	Sentences are complete and without flaw; mechanics are without flaw	Sentences are complete; capitalization, punctuation, and spelling are quality	Occasional errors, but not enough to distract	Sentences fragmented; too many errors
Word usage	Word choice is professional	Word choice makes piece interesting	Word choice acceptable	Word choice inadequate or inappropriate
Organization	Professionally organized; progression is effective	Organization is logical; gets point across well	Presentation is ordered in an acceptable manner	Random, disorganized, and/or poorly organized
Neat and orderly	Professional appearance	Quality appearance	Neat and orderly	Lacks neatness and order
Creativity	Very clever; creatively designed	Displays creative thinking	Shows some creative thinking	Lacks creativity
Message	Message flows and is pleasurable	Message is clear and easy to understand	Message can be understood	Message is not easy to understand
Demonstrates learning and understanding	Applies or integrates concepts; gives good examples	Uses examples to make understanding clear	Uses performance indicators to justify thinking	Thinking not justified; no evidence that knowledge was learned

Six-Point Writing Rubric

Name _____ Class _____

<p>• The Paper is Clear, Interesting, and Original</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> written from writer's experience <input type="checkbox"/> written with good insight (sense of the world, people, situations) <input type="checkbox"/> writing is enlivened, spontaneous, from a fresh perspective <input type="checkbox"/> writing is supported with details, research, concrete examples <input type="checkbox"/> primary and secondary ideas are developed </p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">0</td> </tr> </table>	4	3	2	1	0
4	3	2	1	0		
<p>• Organization Helps to Clearly Convey the Message</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> details fit where they belong <input type="checkbox"/> clear sense of beginning and ending <input type="checkbox"/> transitions work well (with paragraphs, as a whole) <input type="checkbox"/> organization flows smoothly </p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">0</td> </tr> </table>	4	3	2	1	0
4	3	2	1	0		
<p>• Voice of the Writer Accomplishes the Purpose</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> reader feels an interaction with the writer <input type="checkbox"/> paper is honest, sincere <input type="checkbox"/> writing is natural and compelling <input type="checkbox"/> tone is appropriate and consistently controlled <input type="checkbox"/> writer's enthusiasm is evident </p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">0</td> </tr> </table>	4	3	2	1	0
4	3	2	1	0		
<p>• Word Choice is Consistent With the Purpose</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> words are specific, accurate, and suited to the subject <input type="checkbox"/> words are lively, powerful, give energy <input type="checkbox"/> vocabulary is appropriate for the purpose and audience <input type="checkbox"/> figurative language is used when appropriate </p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">0</td> </tr> </table>	4	3	2	1	0
4	3	2	1	0		
<p>• Sentence Structure Helps the Paper Read Smoothly</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> sentence structure clearly conveys meaning <input type="checkbox"/> writing sounds natural and fluent <input type="checkbox"/> sentences are appropriately concise <input type="checkbox"/> varied sentence structure and length </p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">0</td> </tr> </table>	4	3	2	1	0
4	3	2	1	0		
<p>• The Writer Displays Skillful Writing Conventions</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> grammar is appropriate (noun-verb and noun-pronoun agreement) <input type="checkbox"/> punctuation is appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> spelling is generally correct <input type="checkbox"/> usage is generally correct <input type="checkbox"/> paragraphing is appropriate </p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">0</td> </tr> </table>	4	3	2	1	0
4	3	2	1	0		

Overall Grade for Paper	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">0</td> </tr> </table>	4	3	2	1	0
4	3	2	1	0		