

Follow-up Discussion

Professional Development Monthly Advisor and Planner (PDMAP)

Alternative Assessment of Adult Learners

August 2010

Discussion Questions:

1. Of all of the resources in the PD MAP on Alternative Assessment, what **one resource** was the most helpful or interesting to you?
2. There is a lot of terminology relating to alternative assessments. Does anyone have any questions about the different terms they encountered when reading articles in the PD MAP?
3. The article *Performance-Based Assessment: Promoting Achievement for English Language Learners* mentions three types of PBAs: *product*, *performance*, and *process-oriented assessments*.
 - Which of these types of assessments have you used with your adult learners?
 - Did you design the assessments yourself or get them from another source?
 - What were your purposes in using the performance-based assessments?
 - Did the assessments accomplish your purposes?
4. Several of the articles mention the benefit of including learners in the assessment evaluation process. For example, learners can help design the rubric that will be used to evaluate their performance, learners can be peer reviewers of classmates' performance, or learners as individuals or in groups can do self-evaluation. How have you included learners in the assessment evaluation process? If you have, what did you observe and/or learn by including learners in this way? If you haven't, what do you see as the challenges to including learners?
5. When describing formative assessment, the CASLT website states ". . . formative evaluation serves as a mechanism to regulate teaching. It allows the teacher to evaluate the impact of instructional strategies and to take the necessary corrective measures in order to achieve the expected outcomes. . . the main aim of formative evaluation is to ensure quality teaching . . ." How does this apply to your experience using alternative assessments?
6. Are you familiar with the performance assessments that were part of the Colorado Certificates of Achievement in the 1990's? Although CDE is no longer evaluating portfolios and issuing certificates, do you still find the assessments useful in the classroom? Are there any other resources for alternative assessments that you would recommend?

7. There are many websites devoted to rubrics that teachers can use to evaluate performance assessments. What is your experience with using and/or designing rubrics?
8. Imagine an assessment continuum--On one end is the statement: Teacher uses no in-class assessment of learners' knowledge or skills. On the other end is the statement: Teacher (with help from learners) develops and implements a unique formative assessment for each lesson, complete with a 5 x 5 rubric (5 criteria x rating scale of 1 – 5). In your opinion, what position on this continuum is realistic for adult education teachers?
9. Most of the resources found on the topic of alternative assessments were targeted to ESL learners. How can alternative assessments be equally effective with ABE/ASE learners?
10. Of all the ideas that we have discussed today, what is the most important idea you can take with you to your classroom or your program?

Features of Alternative Assessment

- Alternative assessment tasks often take place over an extended period of time, are challenging for students, and can involve creativity, strategic thinking, and problem-solving
- Alternative assessment tasks may take place in a real-world context or simulate such a context and thus allow students to see the connections between what they are learning and real-world applications of learning
- Alternative assessment tasks are closely integrated with instructional activities and students learn from the assessment experience
- Students know in advance how their performance on the task will be evaluated and can self-assess and monitor their own performance both within and beyond the task.¹

Stites, Regie. *Assessing Results that Matter: Equipped for the Future's Approach to Assessment for Adult Basic Education Accountability and Improvement*. 2003.

¹ This list is an adaptation of a list of features of alternative assessments found in Wilson and Adams 1996, p. 43. Wilson and Adams cite the work of CRESST Researcher Pamela Aschbacher (1991) as the basis for their list of features.