



2022 FALL ISSUE ♦ CURRENT RESEARCH ♦ FEATURED ♦ MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Standardized Testing vs Teachers' Classroom Assessment Pra

Standardized tests are becoming increasingly influential across OECD countries, including Canada and the U (Mons, 2013). While large-scale tests provide important information on system performance, many studies ha their potential negative impact on teachers' practice (e. g., Koretz, 2017). Indeed, when teachers are confronte recurrent external assessments, they can question their own skills and priorities in assessing students' learnin 2015; Osborn, 2006). Concerningly, an overemphasis on large-scale, standardized tests can result in assessm understood as a purely technical process rather than one in which teachers have professional autonomy and leverage their assessment literacy to effectively support and assess student learning. It is necessary to highlig promote the essential role of teachers' classroom assessment practices, in order to provide assessment infor is responsive to local classroom learning and student diversity. One approach to supporting teachers' classro assessment practices is to invite teachers to reconsider fundamental questions about their assessment pract

Back to Fundamental Questions

In 2005, Gauthier, Mellouki, Bissonnette, and Richard published a review of research on effective schools and academic achievement of at-risk students in North America. They showed that "curriculum alignment has gre to improve the quality of teaching and school effectiveness" (p. 28). In short, increasing alignment between th enacted, and assessed curriculum leads to greater gains in teaching quality and school outcomes.

In practical terms, revisiting the importance of alignment requires teachers to reconsider essential questions classroom assessments (Anderson, 2002).

1. Do assessments map onto the objectives of the intended and enacted curriculum? Is there over- or u

representation of certain objectives?

2. To what extent—and how—are curriculum objectives assessed?
3. How closely aligned are classroom assessments to students' learning experiences?
4. Are students sufficiently prepared for assessments?
5. How do the learning environment and assessments respond to students' diverse ways of knowing and learning?

Significant Effects on Practices

Substantial research confirms that considering curricular and assessment alignment is often neglected in practice. Research shows that a lack of alignment creates assessment biases that disrupt students' learning (Biggs, 2003; Bateman, Tayler, and Logan, 2009). Fortunately, by using these questions, teachers can begin to consider alignment and gain practical benefits to their practice:

- Fewer normative assessment practices;
- Close links between what has been learned and what is being assessed;
- Assessment practices more oriented toward the certification of learning than towards behavioural aspects;
- Greater ability for teachers to justify their assessment decisions;
- Increased acuity in understanding standardized test models; and
- Decreased "teaching to the test" effects.

Our own research confirms these results. However, when presented to teachers, curriculum alignment seems simple to understand.

Yet, through a training-based study, it became evident that purposefully considering alignment led to profound reflections and changes to teacher practice. In particular, teachers reconsidered the role of assessment in the classroom and, importantly, challenged habits of assessment practice to reposition assessment in response to student learning. Moreover, their professional judgements were grounded in evidence of learning that explicitly connected to curriculum expectations (Pasquini, 2019).

Setting a New Challenge

The challenge before us is to empower teachers to take control of their assessment practices in the face of standardized testing effects. To do this, we suggest supporting teachers' reflective professional learning about the alignment of assessment, teaching, and learning. Responding to this challenge is essential as promoting student success is best achieved through teachers' classroom practices including their approach to assessment. Pairing a reflective approach to professional development and practice with collaborative learning, including collaborative inquiry, has been shown to be effective.

have a positive impact on teachers' practices and to empower professional learning communities (Harris & Jones, Stall & Yarbrough, 2013). Given the rise of the standardized testing movement and the increased emphasis on assessment in schools, supporting effective and responsive classroom assessment practices has never been more important.

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This article is featured in the Fall 2022 issue of Canadian Teacher Magazine.

2022 FALL ISSUE

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