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## *Lens on Learning Theory*

The nine principles for assessment described below were developed through the American Association for Higher Education. They offer a framework for thinking about assessment.

### **An effective assessment strategy...**

1. ...begins with **educational values** (philosophies of teaching and learning). It measures what's important, not just what's easy.
2. ...is **multidimensional** and **measures learning over time**. It employs a variety of methods to assess knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and habits of mind in a particular discipline.
3. ...has **clearly and explicitly stated goals** and purposes. These goals are shared with the learners in a way that's meaningful.
4. ...pays as much attention to the **experiences that lead to outcomes** as to the outcomes themselves. It **monitors student progress** towards the defined outcomes.
5. ...is **ongoing**, rather than episodic. It **monitors progress** with the goal of continuous improvement in teaching and learning.
6. ...**involves the entire educational community**. It is based on standards that are supported by employers, faculty, librarians, student services, administrative staff, and management.
7. ...connects information to **authentic, meaningful, and relevant assessment tasks**. It involves learners in questions they care about and activities that matter.
8. ...is **part of a campus wide strategy** to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Institutional planning, budgeting, decision-making, and performance measures are visible **linked to educational improvement**.
9. ...considers **education's responsibility** to continually improve individuals and society.

## *Reflection on Practice*

1. How is your philosophy of teaching and learning reflected in your assessment strategy?
2. How effectively does your assessment strategy support and measure defined outcomes?
3. What aspects of your assessment strategy are linked to essential skills (employability skills), learning strategies, and/or habits of mind for your discipline?
4. How authentic and meaningful are your assessment tasks?

## *Expanding Your Teaching Toolkit*

For each principle, we have generated ideas and strategies for putting it into practice. Consider checking off strategies you already use and highlighting one or two that you might try.

**Principle #1:** Begin with **educational values** (philosophies of teaching and learning).

- Include information about your educational philosophy and its link to assessment in your syllabus.
- Provide a rationale for all assessment activities and link them to learning outcomes.
- Have students put assessment criteria into practice (i.e. have students grade some sample assignments; have students evaluate or design test questions based on certain criteria).
- Solicit student feedback on learning and assessment experiences (i.e. stop-start-continue).

**Principle #2:** Employ a **variety of methods** to assess knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and habits of mind in your discipline.

- Include a variety of assessment strategies in the course to appeal to various learning styles and intelligences - offer choices if possible.
- Focus learners on the “need to know” information and its application.

**Principle #3: State goals** and outcomes clearly and explicitly.

- Communicate assessment criteria and rationale both verbally and in writing.
- Develop rubrics to communicate the differences between levels of performance.

**Principle #4: Plan experiences** that lead learners to the defined outcomes.

- Break learning outcomes down into building blocks and slowly “build” knowledge and skills.
- Assess at various stages/steps of the process, not just at the end
- Structure classroom activities similarly to assessment activities so students can practice.
- Use a lesson planning model to guide instruction

**Principle #5: Monitor progress** on an ongoing basis.

- Engage students in discussion about their learning and the learning process.
- Include formative assessments as part of your assessment strategy (i.e. group quiz, games, one-minute paper, 10 question review, muddiest moments).
- Assess milestones in the process instead of just the final product.
- Engage students in self-assessment; give them tools or strategies they can use to monitor learning.

**Principle #6: Incorporate standards developed throughout the educational community.**

- Develop a clear understanding of industry expectations and structure assessment accordingly.
- Identify essential skills within learning outcomes and assess them with discipline specific outcomes.
- Access resources throughout the college to facilitate teaching and learning of essential skills. (i.e. Library Commons – Information Literacy Skills; Student Services – Learning Strategies; CTL – Team Learning Skills, Critical Thinking Skills)

**Principle #7: Connect course information to authentic and relevant assessment tasks.**

- Connect your subject area to things students care about (i.e. Ask them what they hope to get out of the course, what life questions or challenges learning in your course might help them with).
- Structure assessment tasks so students have to make connections between course content (theories, concepts, and models) and their world.
- Develop assessment activities that integrate several learning outcomes (i.e. projects, portfolios).
- Design assessment tasks that reflect current problems and challenges in industry.
- Use external evaluators to assess some aspect of learning and/or performance (i.e. project, portfolio, performance, product).

**Principle #8: Advocate for campus wide strategies** to promote quality teaching and learning.

- Participate in macro curriculum committees and in program curriculum meetings.
- Get involved in campus wide initiatives that strive to improve teaching and learning.

**Principle #9: Use assessment tasks to improve individuals, the community, and society.**

- Include moral and ethical dilemmas of the industry in teaching and assessment.
- Reflect on the changes – cognitive, psychomotor, affective – that have helped you as the instructor be successful in the industry and try to build these into assessments.
- Strive to continuously improve student learning (i.e. re-evaluating teaching and assessment strategies).
- Structure assessment tasks that take students out into the community or require them to utilize community resources (i.e. interviews, field studies, directory, profiles).

## ***More Information and Ideas***

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American Association for Higher Education (n.d.) Nine principles of good practice for assessing student learning. Retrieved June 13, 2011 from [http://www.unl.edu/ous/faculty\\_resources/assessment/9Principles.pdf](http://www.unl.edu/ous/faculty_resources/assessment/9Principles.pdf)