In the classroom it is necessary, through various means, to understand where the students are at, to what extent instruction are being absorbed, and how effective the teacher is at conveying the material. In this regard then, assessment is the use of formative and summative assignments, tests, observations, and other various means to acquire that knowledge. While the National Research Council defines assessment as “assessments designed or selected by teachers and given as an integral part of classroom instruction” (National Research Council, 2014, p. 83), this is missing the fact that assessment is present in almost all moments, and all aspects of the classroom. This doesn’t necessarily mean that everything that is done is a test or assessment, but a teacher can, and should to an extent, use as many moments as possible in the classroom to perform assessments. This is because not only do assessments measure things like skills and knowledge, but they can also spread into other domains like character, disposition, and social skills.

Formative assessments are generally more casual (that is, less emphasis is put on them than that of a unit test), and happen while learning is still occurring, they are used to ensure that students are grasping lesson material as the lesson is moving on. On the other hand, summative assessments are utilized to test a student’s knowledge (among other objectives) of usually an entire unit, common examples are a unit test or a summative/cumulative final exam. Further there are formal and informal assessments with formal occupying the traditional idea of assessment while informal assessments can be things like but not limited to bell ringers and exit tickets. Assessments are incredibly important in the classroom as ways to ensure that students are absorbing the information that the teacher is teaching, but also to ensure that the teacher is doing a good job explaining the content in a way that students can absorb.

Ben’s test (I am using the chapter 7 test as I could not find the chapter 9 test), examines a lot of different skills and knowledge. Regarding skills, the quiz focusses mainly on the founding of America and period immediately following the revolutionary war. It tests whether students are familiar with the period and can recall events that happened. More specifically it tests if students can put events in order of when they occurred and identifying causes and effects. Later sections focused on which events happened out of four possible events, and some of the fundamentals to our system. This included questions on what the Virginia and New Jersey plans were, what the 3/5ths compromise was about, and what a bicameral congress exemplifies. The test also addresses which aspects were parts of the constitution, and which were parts of the articles of confederation. In this regard, the skills that Mr. Pineda was testing were skills like memorization (which I won’t talk too much on), chronology, reasoning and cause and effect. One other skill that I am not entirely sure if it counts is general test taking skill, there was one question about why the Constitutional Convention took so long, and if the student is familiar with the Articles of Confederation, they could rule out at least one of the options. Ultimately in my opinion while these are important things to test, they relate more directly to the knowledge found in the unit than they do to any broader skills that could be assessed. I don’t necessarily think any other domains were assessed in this quiz, but I think that has more to do with it being online and the formats of the questions. I think the assessed skills are far more important to the work of a historian than the work of a citizen in a democracy, however knowing what the constitution grants, and the history of its creation is rather important I would argue. However, if we are looking specifically at the era of study, then the questions asked were very important.

I think while most of the questions in and of themselves are fine, the chronological questions could create room for unforced errors wherein the student incorrectly answers one and then because they think they answered it correctly they may not want to use it again and thus are forced out of answering another question correctly. The same is true for the cause and effect wherein it is explicitly stated that all answers are used once, meaning if a student were to get one wrong, they would at least get two wrong in total. As we talked about in class the true and false questions, the constitution vs articles of confederation, and the multiple-choice questions could bring false positives wherein students correctly guess the correct answer.

The distribution of scores shows that while a lot of people got most of the questions correct, there was a fair number of students who missed a large portion of questions. I think one way to deal with this is to make the next unit a kind of combination unit where some of the questions and topics from this chapter are included in the next chapter, specifically focusing on the questions that most students missed could be helpful. This way students who did well on those questions are getting new content, while students who may have struggled have some time to review and ensure they have. A solid understanding. Another solution is the one Ben does with retake quizzes which while harder can allow students who may have struggled previously to do better overall.

I think I will likely stick to the standard way of grading until I think of something better, that way of doing grades is limited, unfortunately I just have not settled on something I like better. I do like the idea of having grades be something along the lines of meets specification and doesn’t meet specifications with the option to redo probably as many times until they get a good grade. This way students are pushed to understand the material rather than cramming it.

For this students’ project, they chose to draw a comic strip which exemplifies the fourth amendment. The fourth amendment prohibits unreasonable search and seizures of private property without a warrant from a judge. Further though I should say that I am unable to read through the first page very well due to the quality of the image, but I think I understand the general content. The purpose of the assignment is to understand a topic relating to the constitution including but not limited to the amendments. In doing so the hope is that the student is more connected to their constitutional rights, and why they may have those rights.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Category | Doesn’t meet expectations | Needs improvement | Meets expectations | Exceeds expectations |
| Relevance | The work does not relate to the constitution. | The work only partially connects to the constitution and the majority of it does not connect to the constitution in a meaningful way | The project is connected to the constitution in a meaningful way | The project is connected to multiple parts of the constitution in meaningful ways |
| Form and Structure | The project is not organized | The project is not organized in a way that easily conveys the intended message | The project is organized in a way that can convey the intended message | The project is organized in a way that is creative and conveys the intended message easily |

For the record the difference between meets and exceeds expectations in the form and structure is very blurry, and most students would get the exceeds expectations in that category. A meets expectation and an exceeds expectations would be a 100% with two meets expectations being something like a 95. One needs, and one meets would be around an 85, with one needs, and one exceeds being either a 90 or an 87, two needs would be a 70, and so on. I would have liked there to be more categories, but I couldn’t think of any that fit in a rubric as the project was very open ended.

As mentioned, the student was doing a comic strip on the fourth amendment, and it is clear to me that the student exemplifies a good artist. Careful thought clearly went into the design of the work. I will say the project is not incredibly clear as to what is happening, but I am hesitant to blame that on the student while I cannot read the first page very well. Regarding the test the student does quite well with cause-and-effect questions while struggling with chronological questions and true and false questions. The student still needs work on which branch of government does what considering they got that question wrong.

I am unsure which assessment gives me a better view of the student’s ability, as the project allows the student more time to understand the content and to better express themselves as a person (hitting those other domains that the test misses), the test of is a better assessment of the general knowledge relating to the unit. I think the test allows for better assessment of what the student needs to work on as it covers a wider breadth of subject areas. This relates to the last point as the project is much more in depth on a single topic.

I think to extend the learning of the test one could use Ben’s retake; I think those do a great job of ensuring the student understands the content, but more on their own terms. Otherwise, I think correcting the test with an explanation of why (when applicable) or maybe where the correct answer was found could help show the student is understanding the content.

The student did a great job in the project and in that regard, I would give them quite

positive feedback making sure to point out and commend their obvious artistic abilities. I would probably tell them they could be clearer, but I really for the life of me cannot read that first strip.

Using my own rubric (and giving the student the benefit of the doubt regarding that first page) I would give them a meets expectation for relevance, and an exceeds expectations for form and structure, I might be willing to go down to needs improvement for relevance, and/or meets expectations for form and structure depending on what that first page actually includes or doesn’t.

If I were to keep chronological questions, which I don’t necessarily think I would, I would make sure that that is something I am really stressing in class instruction. In general, though I would cater the teaching to what will be on the test which I think generally Ben does a good job of doing, especially given that we only see him twice a week. I think in ensuring that the content that is being taught is directly related to the test questions helps ensure that the questions being asked are valid in and of themselves. This could mean however, changing test questions around to be closer to what was taught, if for various reasons (lessons change in reaction to student need, teacher ability and the broader world around us among many other things) the content being quizzed maybe was not stressed in class.

Works Cited

National Research Council. (2014). *Read “Developing Assessments for the Next Generation Science Standards” at NAP.edu*. https://doi.org/10.17226/18409