Introducing Inclusive Classroom Testing and Assessment Practices

As part of the districtwide curriculum related to the study of the solar system, Ms. Rodriguez's class worked on a unit about the sun, the moon, and the planets that was aligned to statewide learning standards. Before implementing the unit, Ms. Rodriguez and her teaching team collaborated to plan it and agreed upon the curricular goals that students should achieve. The team members discussed how they would measure their students' learning and decided to use a test and a menu of various performance assessment activities linked to their instructional goals.

The team created a test that included a variety of objective and essay questions related to the solar system, which would be given to students at the end of the instructional unit. To make their test more motivating and readable, they paired visuals such as pictorials of the planets, the moon, and the sun with texts. To help students prepare for the test, Ms. Rodriguez gave them a study guide outlining important information about the content and format of the test. Ms. Rodriguez also conducted a review of key topics and vocabulary from the unit by having students play a game using active responding clickers and an interactive whiteboard. Ms. Rodriguez used the students' responses to identify those students who needed additional instruction to learn important concepts and terminology. On the day of the test, Ms. Rodriguez gave all of her students the option of taking the test on a computer. Some of her students received the testing accommodations outlined in their individualized educational programs (IEPs).

In addition to the test, Ms. Rodriguez used classroom assessments to document her students' learning. She prepared a menu of performance assessment activities that included posting a Web page, giving a PowerPoint or Keynote presentation, writing a blog or a wiki, and creating a podcast or a digital video about the unique characteristics of the sun, the moon, or a planet. Ms. Rodriguez and her students reviewed the menu before all students chose strategies from the list for sharing their learning. Ms. Rodriguez kept a record of students' choices and encouraged them to try new activities throughout the school year.

At the end of the instructional unit, Ms. Rodriguez and her colleagues met to examine students' tests and learning products to identify students who had mastered the unit's instructional goals as well as those who needed additional or modified instruction. They also used this information to reflect on the effectiveness of the instructional strategies they used and the ways they could improve their teaching.

Through the experiences of Ms. Rodriguez and the other teachers you will read about throughout this book, you will examine best practices for implementing inclusive classroom testing and assessments that support your students' learning and inform your teaching. *Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices* involve tailoring your teacher-made tests and assessments to the individual strengths and challenges of your students by examining and varying the following:

- *Content* that will be the focus of your classroom tests and assessments
- *Process* you will use to create and administer your teacher-made tests and to conduct classroom assessments
- *Tests and learning products* your students will complete to demonstrate and display their learning
- *Motivational techniques* you will use to prompt and encourage your students to perform at their optimal level on your classroom tests and assessments
- *Classroom and testing environmental features* that you will use to support and enhance student performance (Price & Nelson, 2007).

ELEMENTS OF INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM TESTING AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

As you read this book, consider the following elements of inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices, which can guide you in implementing the best practices presented in each chapter.

Element: Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices are appropriate for use with all students (Salend, 2008; Tomlinson, 2008). Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices can be used to accommodate not only the varied academic, cognitive, language, social, behavioral, and technological skill levels of your students, but also their cultural, linguistic, and experiential backgrounds. These best practices are designed to help *all* of your students access and succeed on your classroom tests and assessments. Their implementation should support and have minimal or no impact on the curriculum mastery expectations you have for your students, your teaching, and the structure or content of your educational program.

Element: Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices incorporate the principles of universal design for learning (UDL; Kurtts, Matthews, & Smallwood, 2009; Sopko, 2008). Incorporating the principles of UDL into your classroom tests and assessments can foster your development and implementation of flexible testing and assessment materials and strategies that are appropriate and accessible to *all* of your students (Sopko, 2008). These principles, which are presented in Figure 1, offer options that allow you to plan and implement your testing and assessment practices so that they are inclusive of *all* your students by providing the following:

- *Multiple means of representation,* by which you present your testing and assessment materials in varied ways so that *all* students can access and understand them. For instance, Ms. Rodriguez designed text and used graphics, symbols, and highlighting to make her test more motivating and readable so her students could understand her test's directions (see Chapter 1).
- *Multiple means of expression,* by which you offer your students a variety of ways to demonstrate their learning. For instance, just as Ms. Rodriguez did at the beginning of this introduction, you can allow your students to choose a way to showcase their learning from a menu of classroom assessment activities that you have presented to them (see Chapter 5). Also, like Ms. Rodriguez, you can provide your students with the testing accommodations they need to respond to test items (see Chapter 2) and offer them the option of taking tests via technology (see Chapter 3).

- *Multiple means of engagement*, by which you use classroom testing and assessment practices that prompt, motivate, and encourage students to perform at their optimal levels. Like Ms. Rodriguez, you can guide them in making choices about how to demonstrate their learning and help them develop the study and test-taking skills they need to succeed on your tests (see Chapter 4).

Figure 0.1   The Principles of Universal Design for Learning and Inclusive Classroom Testing and Assessment Practices

Universal Design for Learning Principles	Universal Design for Learning Principles and Inclusive Classroom Testing and Assessment Practices	Examples of the Implementation of Universal Design Principles and Inclusive Classroom Testing and Assessment Practices
Principle 1: Equitable use	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments are designed so that they are useful, appealing, and safe for all students to use. They are respectful of individual differences and are used by all students in similar or equivalent ways and in different contexts.	• Create valid and accessible tests (see Chapter 1) • Provide all students with valid and appropriate testing accommodations (see Chapter 2)
Principle 2: Flexible use	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments are designed so that they accommodate the individual preferences and abilities of all students. They are flexible in providing choices in terms of the methods and pace of use.	• Allow students to take technology-based tests (see Chapter 3) • Use a range of classroom-based assessment practices (see Chapter 5)
Principle 3: Simple and intuitive use	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments are designed so that they are easy for all students to use and understand. Their use is not dependent on students' experiences, prior knowledge, language and literacy skills, and other learning preferences and abilities.	• Make sure the test's directions are clearly presented and that test items are formatted appropriately (see Chapter 1) • Administer tests via technology (see Chapter 3)
Principle 4: Perceptible information	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments are designed so that they communicate essential information to all students. They present critical information to all students using multiple formats, backgrounds with sufficient contrasts, legible text guidelines, and compatible teaching, testing and assessment techniques, and assistive technology devices.	• Enhance the readability and legibility of testing materials (see Chapter 1) • Use a variety of classroom-based assessment techniques (see Chapter 5) • Develop and administer tests using technology (see Chapters 1 and 3)

(Continued)

Figure 0.1 (Continued)

Universal Design for Learning Principles	Universal Design for Learning Principles and Inclusive Classroom Testing and Assessment Practices	Examples of the Implementation of Universal Design Principles and Inclusive Classroom Testing and Assessment Practices
Principle 5: Tolerance for error	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments are designed to minimize errors, adverse consequences, and unintentional actions. They provide safeguards and warnings to assist all students in using them safely and efficiently.	• Teach students to use effective study and test-taking skills and strategies (see Chapter 4) • Embed feedback, motivation, and error minimization into tests (see Chapters 1 and 3) • Provide students with valid and appropriate testing accommodations (see Chapter 2) • Use effective guidelines for creating test questions (see Chapter 1)
Principle 6: Low physical effort	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments are designed to be used comfortably and without much physical effort by all students. They allow all students to use them with a range of reasonable physical actions, and do not require repetitive actions or sustained physical effort.	• Provide students with the technology and testing accommodations they need to take tests (see Chapters 2 and 3) • Teach students to use effective study and test-taking skills and strategies (see Chapter 4)
Principle 7: Size and space approach and use	Testing and assessment materials, strategies and environments are designed for use by all students regardless of their body size, posture, and mobility. They allow all students to see, reach, and activate important features and information and offer sufficient space for assistive technology devices and personal assistance.	• Provide students with the technology and testing accommodations they need to take tests (see Chapters 2 and 3) • Format tests appropriately (see Chapter 1)
Principle 8: Community of learners	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments promote socialization and communication for all students.	• Have students work in groups to study for and take tests (see Chapters 2 and 4) • Have students work in collaborative groups to complete a range of classroom assessment practices (see Chapter 5)
Principle 9: Inclusive environment	Testing and assessment materials, strategies, and environments foster acceptance and a sense of belonging for all students.	• Have students work in collaborative groups to take tests and complete a range of classroom assessment practices (see Chapters 2 and 5) • Use inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices with all students (see Chapters 1 through 5)

Because there is overlap among the UDL principles, many of the examples of their implementation presented in Figure 0.1 can used to address multiple principles.

Element: Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices can be supported by the use of technology (Boone & Higgins, 2007; Ketterlin-Geller, Yovanoff, & Tindal, 2007; King-Sears & Evmenova, 2007; Thompson, Quenemoen, & Thurlow, 2006). Technology can be an excellent way to incorporate the principles of UDL into your classroom testing and assessments. As you will see in this book (especially Chapters 3 and 5), you can use a range of low and high assistive and instructional technologies to implement the best practices presented in each chapter. Whereas *assistive technologies* such as augmentative communication systems and screen magnification programs are used by your students to increase, maintain, or improve their functional capabilities, *instructional technologies* such as interactive whiteboards (e.g., SMART Boards), clickers, blogs, and PowerPoint presentations are used by you and your students to facilitate the teaching and learning processes. *Low-tech* refers to devices that are usually inexpensive, nonelectric, readily available, homemade, and easy for students and teachers to learn to use, such as line guides, reading rulers, and index cards used to assist students who have difficulty tracking and maintaining their place when reading a line of text. *High-tech* relates to devices that tend to be electronic, commercially produced, relatively expensive, and require some training to use, such as word processing and voice recognition systems.

Element: Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices address both formative and summative assessment (Chappuis & Chappuis, 2008; Tomlinson, 2008). Effective teachers engage in both formative and summative assessment to monitor and document student learning and inform their instruction. *Formative assessment* focuses on your use of inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices during instruction to monitor the learning progress of your students and to use this information to make ongoing decisions about the effectiveness of your teaching and ways you can improve it (Tomlinson, 2008). *Summative assessment* relates to your use of inclusive classroom tests and assessment products as a culminating activity at the end of instruction to assess student mastery of specific content, topics, concepts, and skills taught, and to communicate information about students' performance to others (Chappuis & Chappuis, 2008). Figure 0.2 presents a summary of the differences between formative and summative assessment.

Figure 0.2   A Summary of the Differences Between Formative and Summative Assessment

Formative Assessment	*Summative Assessment*
• Occurs on an ongoing basis during instruction • Assessment for student learning and to examine and improve instruction • Classroom-based and nongraded learning activities (quizzes, questions, observation, assignments) • Analyzed to provide information about student learning and instruction • Used to guide and adjust daily instruction and give feedback • Used more specifically by teachers and students	• Occurs at the end of instruction • Assessment to document student learning and to assess the effectiveness of instruction • High-stakes and teacher-made tests and graded culminating assignments aligned to learning standards • Statistical analysis to show student learning, students' grades, and program effectiveness • Used more globally by teachers and schools and to communicate with others

Source: Chappuis & Chappuis, 2008; Tomlinson, 2008.

Element: Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices are integral parts of instructional planning (Childre, Sands, & Tanner Pope, 2009; Price & Nelson, 2007; Tomlinson, 2008; Yell, Busch, & Rogers, 2007). Your use of the best practices presented in this book should be an integral part of your instructional planning. Therefore, like Ms. Rodriguez, as you plan your units of instruction and individual lessons, you should first identify your instructional goals and use them to determine if you are going to evaluate your students' learning and your teaching using classroom tests or assessments or a combination of the two.

Element: Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices involve collaboration between teachers, students, and families (Byrnes, 2008; Garcia & Ortiz, 2006; Salend, 2008). Like Ms. Rodriguez, your use of inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices will be enhanced by your collaboration with colleagues as well as your students and their families. Important information and decisions to guide your use of these practices can be obtained from a team. In addition to yourself and your students and their families, the team may include

- other teachers who work with your students;
- professionals who have knowledge of the learning standards, educational assessment, curriculum, and instruction; and
- culturally sensitive professionals and community members who understand how cultural, experiential, and linguistic factors impact assessing and instructing students.

Element: Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices are consistent with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA; Byrnes, 2008; Ketterlin-Geller, Alonzo, et al., 2007; Towles-Reeves, Kleinert, & Muhomba, 2009; Yell, Katsiyannas, & Shriner, 2006). Although this book does not focus on high-stakes testing, it is important that your use of inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices be consistent with the provisions of NCLB and IDEIA. NCLB mandates the use of tests that are linked to learning standards and benchmarks tied to grade level standards in the general education curriculum for *all* of your students. IDEIA, which guides the delivery of a free and appropriate education to students with disabilities, recognizes that many of your students with disabilities will need testing accommodations to take tests (see Chapter 2) and that some of your students with more significant cognitive disabilities will need you to use alternative assessment methods to assess their learning and progress (see Chapter 5).

IDEIA calls for the use of *individuals-first* language when referring to individuals with disabilities (i.e., using the term *students with learning disabilities* rather than *learning disabled students*). Although I have used individuals-first language in this book, I also have tried to respect the preferences of some groups regarding what they like to be called. For instance, the National Association of the Deaf's Web site states that,

Overwhelmingly, deaf and hard of hearing people prefer to be called "deaf" or "hard of hearing." Nearly all organizations of the deaf use the term "deaf and hard of hearing," and the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) is no exception. The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) voted in 1991 to use "deaf and hard of hearing" as an official designation. (http://www.nad.org/)

Element: Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices should be continuously evaluated (Cox, Herner, Demczyk, & Nieberding, 2006; Ketterlin-Geller, Alonzo, et al., 2007). Your use of inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices should be continually evaluated to determine if they are effective. Therefore, it is important to examine their impact on your students and their families as well as on yourself and your colleagues. Primarily, their effectiveness should be examined based on their impact on student learning, such as increased mastery of learning standards, positive changes in student grades, and improved state, districtwide, and classroom test results.

You and your colleagues can reflect on the impact of these practices in supporting your students' learning and informing your instruction. Your students and their family members can also provide information to share their viewpoints and to identify successful and unsuccessful practices. Testing and assessment practices that are not achieving their intended outcomes should be revised to make them more effective.

Another important factor to consider when evaluating these practices is *acceptability,* the extent to which a practice is easy to use, reasonable, fair, and appropriate for you and your students (Salend, 2008). As you read and learn about the best practices presented in each chapter of this book, consider their acceptability by asking the following questions:

- Is the practice consistent with my philosophy and the philosophical beliefs of others?
- Is the practice easy to implement?
- Is the practice age-appropriate?
- Does the practice require me to make significant changes in my teaching?
- Do I have the materials, time, resources, and technology needed to implement the practice?
- Which other individuals—educators, administrators, family members—do I need to support implementation of the practice?
- What skills and education do I and my students need to implement the practice?
- How will the practice affect specific students? Classmates? My colleagues? Family members?

Element: Inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices are evolving. Since inclusive classroom testing and assessment practices are constantly being developed and refined, you need to continue to learn more about them, including new strategies, technologies, and research. You can do this by reading the references and viewing Web sites cited in this book. You can attend conferences and professional development sessions, take courses, join professional organizations, and participate in Listservs and other online information gathering and sharing activities.

SPECIAL FEATURES

This book has several features designed to foster your use of classroom testing and assessment practices with *all* of your students. These special features include the following:

Chapter Opening Vignettes and Reflective Questions: Classroom case studies or comments appearing at the beginning of each chapter that present you with an overview and examples of the best practices presented in the chapter. After you read them, you will see questions that prompt you to reflect on the issues presented and your practices.

Chapter Questions: Questions serving as advance organizers to introduce you to the content and structure of each chapter.

Keys to Best Practices: Text boxes highlighting the best practices presented in each chapter.

Examples of Best Practices: Classroom examples presenting applications of the best practices presented within each chapter.

Reflectlists: Checklists summarizing the best practices presented within each chapter and prompting you to reflect on your use of these best practices and to explore ways you can incorporate them into your teaching.

Coming Attractions: A section appearing at the end of each chapter that introduces you to the content of the upcoming chapters.