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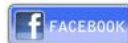
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Nitko, Anthony J. & Brookhart, Susan M. (2010). *Educational Assessment of Students*, 6th ed., Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall

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Teachers and other education professionals use assessments in different context: in classrooms, subject-matter departments, committees, and informal learning groups; in schools; in district, state and federal education offices; on school boards, commissions, and legislatures; and so on. For the majority of the time, educators use assessment for informing (1) decisions about policy, (2) decisions about curricula, programs and schools, and (3) decisions about students.

For the most part, assessment methods can be classified as traditional or alternative based on the extent to which they simulate performance in the real world (i.e., realism of assessment tasks), the extent to which they measure higher learning outcomes and requires demonstration of multiple

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skills (i.e., complexity of tasks), the amount of time needed for the assessment, and the amount of judgment involved in scoring (Gronlund, 2006).

Traditional assessments such as multiple-choice, true-false, matching, completion, and short-answer items are often lower in realism and complexity of the tasks assessed, but require little time to administer and can be scored quickly and objectively (Gronlund, 2006).

Alternative assessments such as portfolios, student self assessment, observations, and other performance-based assessments are higher in both realism and complexity of the tasks assessed, but require large amounts of time to use, and that scoring is judgmental and less objective than traditional assessments (Gronlund, 2006).

Over the past years, a considerable amount of qualitative and quantitative research has examined classroom assessment practices of teachers across different subject areas and school levels. Aiming to describe the nature of classroom assessment and grading practices, McMillan, Myran and Workman (2002) found that teachers were mostly interested in assessing students' mastery or achievement and that performance assessment was used frequently. Morgan and Watson (2002) reported that most middle and high school teachers use teacher-constructed tests to assess students' achievement. In addition, Morgan and Watson found that most teachers view classroom assessment as an added requirement to their teaching job and not as a tool to improve their teaching.

There is enough evidence suggesting that in schools assessment mainly refers to tests, examinations and grading (Bezuk et al., 2001; Lissitz and Schafer, 2002; Van de Walle, 2001). School leaders have reached a point of believing that one cannot assess without assigning grades (Lissitz and Schafer, 2002). Although tests seem to be popular in schools, teachers seem to have different skills and views about tests. A study by Morgan and Watson (2002) revealed that different teachers interpreted similar students' work differently. McMillan (2001) studied the actual classroom assessment and grading practices of secondary school teachers in relation to specific class and determined whether meaningful relationships existed between teacher's assessment practices, grade level, subject matter, and ability levels of

students. McMillan found that there was no meaningful relationship between teacher's assessment practices, grade level, subject matter and ability level.

Educational Assessment of Students, (6th edition) is written to help teachers and those in training to teach to improve their skills through better assessment of students. It focuses directly on the professional practices of elementary and secondary school teachers.

This book covers basic concepts as well as a complete treatment of educational assessment—from developing plans that integrate teaching and assessment; to crafting objective, performance, and portfolio assessments; to evaluating students and discussing evaluations with parents; to interpreting state-mandated tests and standardized achievement tests.

The organization of *Educational Assessment of Students* is well thought out and is divided into three parts with a total 18 chapters and an additional 13 appendices. Each chapter begins with a list of learning targets that the reader should attain. Each learning target is keyed to the Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students. Following the body of each chapter is a summary in list form to help the reader recall information. Each chapter concludes with a list of important concepts and terms, a set of exercises and discussion questions, and a brief annotated list of additional readings. Many of the exercises at the end of the chapters are performance tasks. These require applying and extending the principles taught in the chapter.

Part I offers extensive information about the fundamentals of classroom assessment. This part includes five chapters and provides literature on the definition of assessment, how assessment is used for classroom decision making, the importance of describing the goals and learning targets of instruction, and validity and reliability of assessment results. Part II with nine chapters is completely focused on teaching readers how to plan and implement different assessment techniques (traditional and alternative), and use them in classrooms. It provides detailed information on advantages and disadvantages of each assessment technique and makes suggestions on when to use which. It also explains how several different methods of assessment

can be integrated into lesson plans, be matched with assessment purpose, and provide formative and summative assessment throughout an instructional unit. Part II ends with two chapters informing teachers on preparing students to be assessed, evaluating / grading student progress and how various stakeholders use grades. The last part (Part III) of the book contains four chapters and presents detailed instruction on how to interpret standardized tests and make informed decisions based on these results. The book ends with thirteen very useful appendices including basic statistical concepts, scoring guides for writing, list of published test results, and code of fair testing practices.

Educational Assessment of Students is well written, clearly explained, and relevant to all those who are interested in best practices in classroom assessment. It covers contemporary classroom assessment issues, provides: examples of how to craft classroom assessments and what they typically look like, checklists with succinct tips for evaluating the quality of each type of assessment taught in the book, strategies for assessing higher-order thinking that serve as models and descriptions for developing problem-solving and critical-thinking assessments, and chapter overviews that engage the readers' interest through posing key questions the chapter addresses as well as describing how the chapter is organized. It is an excellent tool for any educator or school system whose mission is the success of each of their students and recommended for any educator who is involved in classroom assessment. The book is an easy to read guide and it gives great tips, hints, and suggestions for anything that might trouble an educator about the ways s/he assesses and evaluate students.

One recommendation I personally can provide for improving this book is that in the next edition, the author could ease the informal tone a little bit. As it was discussed in the book description, the book provides a “humorous tone” during the content presentation. This is understandable because it is being done in an effort to reduce the complexity of book content. However, doing it too frequently and sometimes doing it when it is not even necessary interrupts the flow of the text.

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