

MEANINGFUL ASSESSMENT

**A Manageable and
Cooperative Process**

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*This book is dedicated to our wives Linda Mulholland Johnson
and Anne Eaule Johnson.*

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The purpose of this book is to provide you with a practical guide to (a) make your assessments more meaningful and manageable and (b) help you use cooperative learning as an inherent part of the assessment process. Read this book carefully and apply its content immediately and often in the classes you teach.

The call for increased accountability of schools has placed an emphasis on assessment. This book presents a wide range of procedures for assessment in a meaningful and practical format that makes them easy to understand. Most of the more powerful and interesting assessment procedures require considerable time and effort to implement and use. Teachers simply do not have the time and energy to use them. Cooperative learning groups provide the setting in which new assessment procedures can be integrated with instruction so that students provide the assistance teachers need. In cooperative learning you can link what is taught with what is measured. The more skillfully instruction and assessment are interwoven in cooperative learning groups, the more students can learn and the more successful the teacher can be.

This book will be most useful when read with one or more colleagues. In reading and discussing this book with colleagues, you are then in a position to help each other implement with real fidelity new assessment procedures in your classrooms. Implementing new assessment procedures, as with all teaching, is like being in love—it always goes better with two.

NATURE OF THIS BOOK AND HOW TO USE IT

This book invites you to improve the quality of your assessments. Acceptance of this invitation consists of two parts:

1. Increasing your understanding of the assessment process and assessment procedures
2. Enhancing your ability to perform assessments

This book contains resources, tools, ideas, hints, and suggestions to enable you to improve the quality of your assessments. If increasing the quality of your assessments seems, at times, overwhelming, use one procedure at a time until it becomes integrated into your instructional routines. Small successes can add up to major gains if you persevere and keep striving to improve.

The purpose of this book is to bring together the theory on assessment and the practical procedures that have proved to be useful to teachers and students. This book focuses on making classroom and school assessments more meaningful and more manageable. Each chapter in this book has a specific purpose and focuses on specific, essential assessment procedures. Assessment begins with a goal-setting conference. Once students' goals are set, students participate in the instructional program. The quality and quantity of academic learning, level of reasoning, skills and competencies, attitudes, and work habits may be assessed by standardized and teacher-made tests, compositions and presentations, individual and group projects, portfolios, questionnaires, and learning logs and journals. The assessment data is used as part of a total, quality learning procedure emphasizing continuous improvement. Teachers participate in collegial teaching teams to ensure assessments are fair

and complete. Finally, periodically teachers use the assessment data to determine students' grades.

This is not a book that you can read with detachment. It is written to involve you in its content. Reading this book will enable you not only to learn the theoretical and empirical knowledge now available on assessment, but also to apply this knowledge in practical ways. As you participate in the activities, use diagnostic procedures for assessing your current practices and skills, and discuss relevant theory and research, you bridge the gap between theory and practice.

To use this book you should diagnose your present knowledge and skills in the areas that are covered, read the chapters carefully, actively participate in the activities, reflect on your experiences, and integrate the information and experiences into action theories related to assessment. You should then plan how to implement the assessment procedures and continue your skill- and knowledge-building activities after you have finished reading the book.

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