

Wiggins, G: Characteristics of Authentic Assessment

A. Structure and Logistics

1. Are more appropriately public; involve an audience, a panel, and so on.
2. Do not rely on unrealistic and arbitrary time constraints.
3. Offer known, not secret, questions or tasks.
4. Are more like portfolios or a *season* of games (not one-shot).
5. Require some collaboration with others.
6. Recur – and are *worth* practicing for, rehearsing and retaking.
7. Make assessment and feedback to students so central that school schedules, structures, and policies are modified to support them.

B Intellectual Design Features

1. Are “essential” – not needlessly intrusive, arbitrary, or contrived to “shake out” a grade.
2. Are “enabling” – constructed to point the student toward more sophisticated use of the skills or knowledge.
3. Are contextualized, complex intellectual challenges, not “atomized” tasks, corresponding to
4. Involve the student's own research or use of knowledge, for which “content” is a means.
5. Assess student habits and repertoires, not mere recall or plug-in skills
6. Are *representative* challenges – designed to emphasize *depth* more than breadth.
7. Are engaging and educational.
8. Involve somewhat ambiguous (“ill structured”) tasks or problems.

C. Grading and Scoring Standards

1. Involve criteria that assess essentials, not easily counted (but relatively unimportant) errors.
2. Are not graded on a “curve” but in reference to performance standards (criterion-referenced, not norm-referenced).
3. Involved demystified criteria of success that appear to *students* as inherent in successful activity.
4. Make self-assessment a part of the assessment.
5. Use a multifaceted scoring system instead of a one aggregate grade.
6. Exhibit harmony with shared schoolwide aims – a *standard*.

D. Fairness and Equity

1. Ferret out and identify (perhaps hidden) strengths.
2. Strike a constantly examined balance between honouring achievement and native skill or fortunate prior training.
3. Minimize needless, unfair and demoralising comparisons.
4. Allow appropriate room for student learning styles, aptitudes and interests.
5. Can be – should be – attempted by all students, with the test “scaffolded up,” not “dumbed down,” as necessary.
6. Reverse typical test-design procedures: they make “accountability” serve student learning (Attention is primarily paid to “face” and “ecological” validity of tests”).¹

1. Thanks to Ted Sizer, Art Powell, Fred Newmann, and Doug Archbald; and the work of Peter Elbow and Robert Glaser for some of these criteria. A more thorough account of them will appear in an upcoming issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* (in press).