12-7-2005

Theatre arts assessment in New Jersey high schools

Julie Lawrence
Rowan University

THEATRE ARTS ASSESSMENT IN NEW JERSEY HIGH SCHOOLS

By
Julie Lawrence

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts in Theatre Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
December 2005

Approved by

Date Approved   12/ 07/ 05

ABSTRACT

Julie Lawrence
THEATRE ARTS ASSESSMENT IN NEW JERSEY HIGH SCHOOLS
2004/2005
Dr. Elisabeth Hostetter
Master of Arts in Theatre

Core Curriculum Content Standards and State Frameworks have outlined what needs to be taught in public high school arts programs, but how will teachers and administrators evaluate student achievement in the creative fields? Investigation of recent brain-based research and information on metacognition as they relate to the arts will be discussed in this project. Viable assessment tools for high school theatre arts programs that reflect recent research in metacognition will be included in this thesis.

Table of Contents

Chapter One
The Drive to Assessment

High school theatre arts teachers engage students throughout the day in a variety of activities such as reading dramatic literature, choreographing physical movement, discussing acting technique styles, and lecturing on the history of drama. The teacher uses performance (practiced or improvised) as a medium to engage students in character study and encourage students to perform on their own. In all these activities the teacher critiques student work both formally and informally. Theatre teachers assign, direct, and oversee cast and crew members for both in-class and after-school productions throughout the school day. Theatre arts educators who direct productions must act as full-time creative artists as well as administrators in their own realm. Their duties include casting (hiring), directing (supervision and instruction), advertising a show (public relations), and designing sets, lights, sound and costumes (architecture and maintenance). In addition, they must make dozens of judgments in a variety of formats on student progress (evaluation) each semester.

This thesis will investigate why theatre arts teachers need to find consistent and clear formalized ways to critique, evaluate, and document student artist work. It highlights the historic evolution of current legislative mandates and discusses New Jersey state standards. This paper additionally aims to report on research-based reasoning on best practices in student evaluation in the arts and focuses on evaluation through "authentic" assessment in the high school theatre arts classroom that incorporates performance evaluation as an innate part of the academic discipline.

In "Beyond Standardized Testing," Doug Archbald and Fred Newmann describe the premise behind "authentic" assessment:

A valid assessment system provides information about the particular tasks on which students succeed or fail, but more important, it also presents tasks that are worthwhile, significant, and meaningful – in short, *authentic*.

Assessments that provide little substantive information and lack authenticity undermine the legitimacy not only of the numerical indicators, but of the educational enterprise itself. This can depress student learning, teacher commitment, and public support. In contrast, informative assessment of authentic achievement can invigorate teaching, learning, and public support. Such assessments should consider tasks that meet at least three criteria: disciplined inquiry, integration of knowledge, and value beyond evaluation (Archbald, Newmann 1-2).

Public schools historically rely on number or letter grades to indicate student progress. Semester and final letter grades have become almost indispensable and expected in schools. Grading in the performance arts, however, has traditionally been left outside of traditional academic framework. Because creative arts endeavors require unique and somewhat subjective forms of evaluation, theatre arts (as well as the other performing arts of dance, music, and visual arts) are often omitted from standard curriculum debates.

While standardized exams routinely test educational outcomes of many other more quantifiable disciplines, the arts lag behind. Math ability, for example, is routinely evaluated through tests that allow for a right or wrong answer. Questions and answers are black and white, leaving no space for creative reasoning. Artistic ability, on the other hand, *has no* definitive right or wrong. Art is subject to creative interpretation. Teachers

can measure students' understanding of language through sentence structure and proper use of grammar. In a written or oral exam, students can demonstrate proficiency in their understanding of language. In many disciplines, teachers have numerous ways to write questions that clearly assess student proficiency based on a "right" or "wrong" answer. Traditional multiple-choice testing formats can quickly assess student knowledge. Testing proficiency in the arts however can pose a conundrum in terms of objective interpretation. The questions surrounding comprehensive and universal arts assessment often sound something like this: "Can we put a number grade on a work of art when its interpretation is by nature personal?" "How can we determine the degree to which the student artist is communicating his or her intent?" "Should students be judged on 'talent' or 'effort'?" "What are the teachable aspects of creativity?" "Should the teacher's aesthetic judgment be the predominant measure of excellence?" While teachers can judge technical merit using criterion-based decision making processes based on some aspects of observable criteria, the aesthetics and/or personal taste of the individual rater remain highly subjective.

The balance between objectivity and subjectivity has always challenged theatre arts education teachers. Theatre arts educators can grade student knowledge in vocabulary and content area, but often lack standards for grading performances. Too often this ill-defined criterion has kept the arts outside of the mainstream; after all, if it can't be graded, how can it be quantified and considered important? How can you really track good teaching practices in the theatre arts? In addition, grading student performance can take the "fun" out of extra-curricular activity and /or create a competitive environment. Should a child with a small role receive a lower grade? Most

importantly, what determines whether students are really learning skills and techniques generally considered "talent-based?" Theatre arts educators are challenged by current educational mandates to objectively assess seemingly subjective material in an open and unbiased manner. Historically, our schools have treated the arts as extra-curricular, leisure activities. In some places arts classes are "filler" courses or simply "prep time" for "regular" teachers. The "special areas" (even the code name separates the arts discipline from the rest) are labeled "different," perhaps due to the plain fact that *they are different.* Nevertheless, different should not imply less important. Until now, that difference has relegated arts assessment in education outside mainstream standardized, large scale testing.

Assessments borrowed from other disciplines do not work when applied to the arts. Although concrete disciplines like math, science, and language have some room for creative thinking, testing in these traditional academic areas often focuses on concrete facts and definitions. Concrete evidence in math, science, and grammar is adequately tested and quantified by right/wrong, yes/no answers. Teachers assessing the arts consider another side of learning – the realm of "what if's," "reflective thinking," and "creative problem-solving". Furthermore, new brain-based research proves that the brain functions differently in arts activities. It is no wonder that traditional grading systems relying on true/false or "fill in the blank" do not work for arts educators. The arts demand "authentic" rather than pencil and paper assessment. The tasks required for assessment need to be as close to "real life" situations as possible: worthwhile, significant, and meaningful. Concrete evidence of progress and learning in theatre arts should be grounded in authentic assessment that blends on-demand tasks (physical

4

demonstration of understanding such as hanging stage lights or performing a scene), portfolios (documentation of achievement in concrete form to include writing, video, and drawings of student work), and constructed response inquiries (written answers to questions which not only reflect student recall and knowledge, but which demonstrate student ability to use higher levels of thinking to include analysis, evaluation and creativity). The arts demand a slightly different approach to assessment, in part because students develop proficiency in them in a different way.

This paper will demonstrate which non-traditional forms of assessment seem to work best in theatre arts. It will discuss the historical and scientific background to support the usefulness of assessments. The New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards' guidelines for teaching the arts will also be examined. This thesis will present examples of pedagogical tools which could prove useful in local curriculum and instruction. Rubrics will be offered as examples of potentially accurate and meaningful arts assessment.

Research shows that learning through the arts engages more of our brains than any other discipline. Sensory and perceptual motor systems involved with all art-making include activity in the following areas of the brain: visual, auditory, premotor, motor, planning action, action and integrating thought, feeling, and actions (Jensen, Arts 3). Tremendous action occurs in the brain during arts activities. The kinesthetic arts engage at least twelve neurobiological systems.

This complex engagement and, ultimately, enhancement of our innate biological systems is absolutely unheard of in virtually any other discipline. We are always creating an effect that involves our mind, our body, and the environmental

5

stimuli. In fact, there's no doubt that kinesthetic arts activate far more brain areas than traditional seatwork. (Jensen, <u>Arts</u> 72)

Data gathered from the 2004 SAT scores supports the evidence that study of theatre arts benefits student achievement. Students who studied acting and play production scored an average of 66 points higher on the verbal section of the SATs than students who had no theatre arts coursework. According to reports by the College Entrance Examination Board, student SAT scores increased in direct proportion to the number of years students took an active part in arts curriculum. For example, in 2004, students with two years of arts coursework scored an average of 22 points higher than students with a half year or less study, and students with four years of arts study averaged 28 points higher in the verbal section than the two-year students (MENC). Research now suggests that the arts offer valuable links to learning. More information on new brain-based research will be offered and explained in Chapter Two.

The issue of appropriate, authentic assessment will be a central focus of this thesis. In an effort to understand why this topic is important to today's educational reforms, it would help to review the sequence of events that led to these latest educational reforms.

Historical Overview

On the heels of the Russian launch of the satellite "Sputnik" into outer space in 1957, scientists around the world began competing to explore and conquer space and the United States felt a need to enhance math and science education. In the 1960's, in reaction to the outcry over Sputnik and the subsequent emphasis on math and science, cognitive psychologist and Harvard University professor, Jerome Bruner, spoke out for curriculum reform and said we must "give students an understanding of the fundamental structure of a discipline." In his 1960 publication, The Process of Education, Mr. Bruner went on to define a discipline as "any subject having an organized body of knowledge, specific methods of inquiry and skills and a community of scholars who generally agree on fundamental ideas in the field." (Bruner 22) According to a leading scholar of educational theory, "This publication had a direct impact on policy formation in the United States and influenced the thinking and orientation of a wide group of teachers and scholars." (Smith) In his text, Mr. Bruner examined the human thinking process and more specifically child cognitive growth. He emphasized the need to learn structure and relationships rather than facts, and that intuition is an essential part of productive thinking. He believed that all subjects could be taught at a sequential level of intelligence, a concept better known as a spiraling curriculum. For example, the principle of musical form taught in first grade might deal with "same and different" phrases or "A B" while the same principle in eighth grade might investigate "sonata-allegro form" or "theme and variations." Bruner also supported the notion that interest leads learning, so motives must be intrinsic and not necessarily attached to a grade. That same eighth grade music class might be more motivated to learn about sonata-allegro form if the teacher

introduces it in a current popular recording that has personal relevance to students. In his

1966 postscript to his book, Mr. Bruner writes:

> To instruct someone...is not a matter of getting him to commit results to mind.
> Rather, it is to teach him to participate in the process that makes possible the
> establishment of knowledge." (Bruner 215) By 1966, Mr. Bruner also
> acknowledged the importance of culture: "culture shapes our mind...it provides
> us with the toolkit by which we construct not only our worlds but our very
> conception of ourselves and our powers." (Bruner 84)

Mr. Bruner foreshadowed the importance of both process (how we think) and product

(our relationship to the arts) which would later influence national policy.

On the heels of this educational theory, Manuel Barken, an artist and educator

from Ohio State University, responded to Bruner's constructivist theory by taking it a

step further toward the creative arts saying, "arts are disciplines with their own models of

inquiry." He said acclaimed artists, art critics, and art historians model excellence and

form the parameters of the discipline. According to Mr. Barken, the arts represent a valid

and significant humanistic discipline unto itself, complete with productive historical and

critical structure. He also noted that arts education should use problem-centered and

discipline-centered strategies and objectives; that themes focused on life problems should

shape all educational activities (Killeen 14-15). Mr. Barken expanded Bruner's theories

into the field of the arts and created the original outline for problem-based learning

(PBL). This radically changed the approach to arts education, which had heretofore been

seen as an aesthetic frill or cultural "extra." Mr. Barken suggested that the arts not only

deal with aesthetics, but constitute an independent discipline with all the criteria

attributed to any other discipline and should be taught to all students. This theory

prompted the U.S Office of Education to create an "Aesthetic Education Program."

Unfortunately, this initiative was never successfully implemented and did not

significantly change the actual practice of arts education in the United States.

In the same decade, congress passed The Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965

to improve educational opportunities for underprivileged populations of students, and to

combat the pronounced racial discrimination in the nation. This legislation formed the

foundation for what eventually became "No Child Left Behind" almost thirty years later.

America would have to wait almost three decades for legislation to have significant

impact on arts education.

In 1977, the Arts, Education and Americans Panel of the American Council for

the Arts in Education (ACAE) published <u>Coming to Our Senses: The Significance of the

Arts in American Education</u>. This report urged law makers to see the value of educating

in the arts. It noted that a curriculum stressing only math, science, and language arts at

the primary and secondary levels does not produce fully-rounded, successful students.

Researchers documented three essential principles: 1.Arts education should have parity

with all other subjects in the school curricula. 2. Arts need to be central to an individual's

learning experience, in or out of school and at every stage of life. 3. School programs

should use community resources; artists, media, and environmental. (Rockefeller) Even

though this report presented compelling arguments for and testimonies about school

visitations, community programs, and national surveys, this plea for arts education went

unheeded.

Six years later, in 1983, in response to growing criticism of our educational system, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released their report: A Nation at Risk. This report documented major declines in student achievement, literacy rates, and standardized test scores from the 1960's through 1980. This report proclaimed America's educational system was "mediocre" at best. In a knee-jerk reaction to the findings of the Commission, schools reverted back to basics. In a last ditch effort to infuse America's educational system with purpose and to compete in a growing world market, boards of education placed heavy emphasis on reading, writing, and arithmetic. The arts suffered countless cuts as a result of this set back. State legislators slashed monies for arts programs and redirected all resources to the Four R's: Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic, and Raising test scores. "Teaching to the test," (i.e. national standardized, multiple choice assessment) would become a standard mode of practice for the next generation.

By 1988, large scale school reform was not the *minor* concern of a few experts, but a *growing national necessity*. International educational measures indicated that students in the United States could not perform on par with students in many other economically privileged, industrialized nations. Our students simply could not keep up with the students in other industrial nations such as Japan, Germany, and France (Nation at Risk). The United States of America needed to develop skills in young students for creativity and problem–solving. Many government leaders recognized that we needed to be a nation of great communicators in order to compete in the complex world market, to work cooperatively, possess emotional stability and have a good sense of self worth. One scholar pointed out:

We need less trivia and more in-depth learning about the things that matter the most in our world; order, integrity, thinking skills, a sense of wonder, truth, flexibility, fairness, dignity, contribution, justice, creativity, and cooperation. Does that sound like a tall order? The arts can do all that. We need more of the arts because they can do more of that than any other discipline. (Jensen, Arts 10)

In short, experts eventually began to consider that we needed to use and understand the arts in American schools, as do schools in nations outside the U.S. with high achieving student populations.

Toward Civilization, a report on arts education from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1988, made a plea to make the arts sequential in grades K-12 curricula and to return the study of the arts to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The report proposed focusing on "civilization, choice, communication, and creativity" as ways to save our educational system. It outlined the need for standards in art education, modes of evaluation, highly qualified certified teachers, and professional development. It also encouraged schools to build partnerships with the professional world outside the school yard. This resonated with policy makers around the country. Within a year, America would have new National Educational Goals – unfortunately, the arts were not included in the first draft.

At a crossroad and in need of new direction for our educational system, our nation lacked a strong plan of action. President George Bush Sr. used the report created by the National Governor's Association at the 1989 Education Summit, America 2000, (also known as the National Education Goals) to create a comprehensive report known as Goals 2000: Educate America Act. This important document led the way for the current

nation-wide school reform with the premise that students would reach higher levels of achievement when more was expected of them. Goals 2000 addressed school readiness, high school graduation rates, demonstrated proficiency in subject matter, adult literacy, disciplined drug and alcohol-free environment, professional development, and parental involvement. (Summary of Goals 2000) State and local officials pushed toward reform and initiated a clear avenue for drastic change in our education system. The Goals 2000 document is the keystone of the 2001 No Child Left Behind legislation and details precisely what it says – *goals*. Much like personal goals (I will lose 20 pounds in 6 months), it clearly sets high standards and outlines the ideal scenario for our schools. NCLB stresses the following goals:

- All children will start school ready to learn

- High school graduation rate will be a minimum of 90%

- American students will be the first in the world in science and math

- Upon leaving grades 4, 8, and 12, students will demonstrate competency in math, science, history and geography

- Every adult will be literate

- Every school will be drug free and violence free and have a disciplined environment conducive to learning

These lofty, noble goals are perhaps unrealistic or unattainable; nevertheless, *goals* should always express idealized scenarios and reflect the best situations. Without educational ideals, mediocrity can prevail.

In January of 2002, the House and the Senate passed the "reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965," otherwise known as No Child Left Behind

(NCLB), into law. According to the executive summary for NCLB, the 2002 legislation was designed to "close the achievement gap through accountability, research-based instruction, flexibility and options for parents so that no child would be left behind." (NCLB) The major thrust of the law is to significantly increase accountability for student performance, fund educational research, empower parents with information about education, improve teacher quality, and encourage safe schools. In addition, the legislation vows to attend to disadvantaged students, move students with limited English proficiency to fluency level, and put reading first. (whitehouse.gov) Individual states must accept and implement NCLB on their own and apply for funding as needed. While NCLB does not focus on the arts, it integrates arts education into the core curriculum for the *first time in the history of American Education*. The document does define the arts as a core subject and acknowledge the intrinsic and extrinsic importance of the arts. It allows state administrators to leverage federal funds for the professional development of arts teachers and to add arts curricula in their schools. NCLB also signifies a major historical shift because for the first time there will be accountability for student achievement and therefore a need for comprehensive assessment in the arts (NCLB).

We now stand at the portal of a new millennium in which arts curriculum in public education is supported by national legislation and backed by educational reform. New technology can demonstrate how the brain functions during participation in the arts by tracking brain activity this research clearly validates the intrinsic and extrinsic values of arts education. Recent research in how people learn (known as "meta-cognition") also validates the importance of the arts. Treatises on multiple intelligences and learning taxonomy (which will be discussed in Chapter Two) point to learning through the arts as

a crucial pathway to student academic achievement in all academic endeavors. It is the opportune moment to demonstrate in actual classroom practice what the scientific research shows – the arts help us learn in ways no other discipline can duplicate. They are an important and *necessary* part of education and life.

In the summer of 2004, Secretary of Education Rod Paige wrote:

...the arts are a core academic subject under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). I believe the arts have a significant role in education both for their intrinsic value and for the ways in which they can enhance academic achievement and improve students' social and emotional growth. (Paige)

While new federal mandates and increased accountability (such as No Child Left Behind) may seem to burden both educators and students alike, these laws actually offer potential for improved future for education. Although "bad press" given to NCLB has warned the public to resist changing the educational system, maintaining a system built on a structure devised for the industrial age is even more unproductive and illogical. Historically, America's schools have prepared students to work in factories and industrial trades by seating children in rows and stressing repetition of facts. Some educators continue to cling to these antiquated methods. A few generations ago "knowledge" only meant memorized facts and figures. Today, we are surrounded by technology which allows us to retrieve new information from a wide range of sources at a staggering rate. Teachers can no longer expect students to "know all the facts." Instead students need to know how to use logic and how to access and analyze information. Students are challenged not simply to regurgitate information, but to comprehend, apply, analyze, synthesize and evaluate new information. Educators need to develop and use thinking

that equips the learner to synthesize information to construct new models and to apply information in new contexts. Research in brain function during arts activities offers strong, positive, scientific data that proves how exposure to the arts educates us in ways parallel to other academics *as well as in ways that no other discipline can reproduce.* This information leads us to believe that the arts help us think in new and different ways.

According to Eric Jensen, in his book <u>Arts With the Brain in Mind,</u> "The arts enhance the process of learning. The systems they nourish, which include our integrated sensory, attentional, cognitive, emotional, and motor capacities, are, in fact, the driving forces behind all other learning." (Jensen, <u>Arts</u> 2) He goes on to say, "...it's the arts that lay the foundation for later academic success. A strong art foundation builds creativity, concentration, problem-solving, self-efficacy, coordination, and values attention and self-discipline." (Jensen, <u>Teaching</u> 36)

Both <u>Critical Links</u> (2002), a compendium of studies edited by Richard J. Deasy, and <u>Champions of Change</u> (1999), a study done by the Arts Education Partnership, edited by Edward B. Fiske, detail a correlation between creativity nurtured in arts education and improved self-concept, emotional stability, and problem-solving. Perhaps these social attributes may seem like "bonuses," but, developing emotional and cognitive skill will be *crucial* to society's future. Future leaders and innovators need to solve problems appropriately and creatively. People who work cooperatively, possess emotional stability, and have a good sense of self will lead our economy and government, and preserve our culture. According to Dr. James Catterall, drama researcher for <u>Critical Links,</u>

15

The most expansive areas where the arts pay off are these: first, in basic reading skills, language development, and writing skills. Increases in general academic skills also show up and would appear to reinforce these specific literacy-related developments. Here we refer to focus and concentration, skills in expression, persistence, imagination, creativity, and inclinations to tackle problems with zeal. In addition, a wide range of social skills accompanies learning in the arts and engagement in arts activities. These are the sorts of skills and behaviors that, in their absence, parents and teachers have been seen to tear their hair out: positive social behavior, social compliance, collaboration with others, ability to express emotions, courtesy, tolerance, conflict resolution skills, and attention to moral development. (Catterall)

The arts strengthen all of these skills. This demonstrates the importance of arts education.

Public recognition of the value of the arts in our society correlates with political clout. More "press" for the arts correspond with a larger perception of enhanced worth. In the United States, public education is affected by a political system which determines funding allocation and priorities. With government money comes perceived power and the implied importance of the discipline. Together, funding and implied importance establish the way arts are valued (or devalued) within a community. School administrators who recognize the importance of arts education and put financial and practical backing behind them will be on course with the new laws that require them to support the scheduling and promotion of courses in the arts at all levels in all public schools. Local governing bodies that understand and recognize how strong arts

16

involvement can affect a community, and then integrate the arts into the academic classroom will benefit their communities both immediately and over time (Champions of Change).

Research shows that arts instruction encourages brain development as much as the sciences, mathematics, and language instruction. If knowledge is defined as "making sustainable new pathways in the brain," then the arts are our link to learning because we know that the: "arts provide learners with the opportunity to develop specialized brain systems, none of which are easy to quantify because they are the processes that allow for *later* results." (Jensen, Arts 113)

To adhere to National Standards of education, arts teachers also need to know what our students really know. Often teachers assume student understanding. Because of standards, educators now have the opportunity and obligation to accurately assess and document student comprehension. The French derivative of assess, "*assidere*" means "to sit beside." Educators need to be the "guide at the side" as students make discoveries about art, life, and themselves. They also need to precisely ask what students have learned. Did every student "get it?" It is no longer acceptable to examine only the vocabulary of various art forms and to focus entirely on superficial content material. The educator must find out what and how students learn in the arts classroom. Good teachers should sit beside students to assess. And, if what is assessed really reflects what is important for all students to know, then let the assessment begin!

Student accountability is an integral part of our current educational reform. Students and teachers both need to take ownership of learning and the process of learning. Comprehensive and logical documentation of student growth within the arts

proves crucial if we hope to fulfill the legal requirements and demonstrate to the public that the arts are more than an extra-curricular or leisure time pursuit. Recent national educational reform under the title "No Child Left Behind" relies heavily on tracking and imposing increased accountability and tangible universal methods to document student progress. In other words – the new mandates call for a paper trail of documentation on student learning. NCLB requires accountability for teachers and students alike. AYP or "Adequate Yearly Progress" is a marker by which states articulate the way in which each discipline guides student progress and satisfies the requirement for NCLB. When educators can show a clear increase in student learning through the arts, they have succeeded. This sounds simple, and indeed can be, when students and teachers have the tools needed to achieve the goal. When educators have the facts about school reform and the latest research on how students learn, they can begin to formulate a structure for assessing the arts. This thesis aims to provide insight into formulating assessment structure in the arts.

Communities and state legislators across the nation are becoming increasingly aware of the need for arts education, and have adopted Arts Standards (basic guidelines for teaching). A national consortium of school administrators, service providers, stake holders and arts educators recently drafted and adopted a document entitled <u>Core Curriculum Content Standards</u> (CCCS). The Core Curriculum Content Standards, adopted by the New Jersey State Board of Education in 1996 and revised in 2004, were modeled after these National Standards for Arts Education. For the first time in U.S. history, the national standards relate specifically to grade level and skill acquisition and the arts are divided into separate categories of Dance, Music, Theatre and the Visual Arts

18

in grades K-4, 5-8, and 9-12. Taken from the Kennedy Center's ArtsEdge website, the eight national theatre content standards cited at the high school level are:

1. Script writing through improvising, writing, and refining scripts based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history.

2. Acting by developing, communicating, and sustaining characters in improvisations and informal or formal productions.

3. Designing and producing by conceptualizing and realizing artistic interpretations for informal or formal productions.

4. Directing by interpreting dramatic texts and organizing and conducting rehearsals for informal or formal productions.

5. Researching by evaluating and synthesizing cultural and historical information to support artistic choices.

6. Comparing and integrating art forms by analyzing traditional theatre, dance, music, visual arts, and new art forms.

7. Analyzing, critiquing, and constructing meaning from informal and formal theatre. Film, television, and electronic productions.

8. Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in the past and the present.

While adoption and implementation of the national content standards are voluntary and merely provide guidelines for specific grade levels and skills, New Jersey standards are now mandatory (NJ Admin. Code 6A:8) and define what students need to know in the larger frame of the arts. More specific guidelines can be found in the strands and cumulative progress indicators published by the New Jersey State Department of

Education. The New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for Visual and Performing Arts are:

Standard 1.1 (Aesthetics) All students will use aesthetic knowledge in the creation of and in response to Dance, Music, Theater and Visual Arts.

Standard 1.2 (Creation and Performance) All students will utilize those skills, media, methods, and technologies appropriate to each art form in the creation, performance, and presentation of Dance, Music, Theater, and Visual Art.

Standard 1.3 (Elements and Principles) All students will demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles of Dance, Music, Theater, and Visual Art.

Standard 1.4 (Critique) All students will develop, apply, and reflect upon knowledge of the process of critique.

Standard 1.5 (History/Culture) All students will understand and analyze the role, development, and continuing influence of the arts in relation to world cultures, history, and society.

This administrative code, adopted in April of 2004, eight years after the writing of the standards, outlines minimum achievement for Visual and Performing Arts.

N.J.A.C. 6A:8 requires districts to: align all curriculum to the standards; ensure student performance is assessed in each content area; and, provide teachers with opportunities for professional development that focuses on the standards. (NJDOE ii 2004)

Legally, the arts must be available in all public schools as part of the "thorough and efficient" education promised by the New Jersey constitution and local boards of

education must take on the issues of assessment. N.J.A.C. 6A:8 also demands that arts teachers be highly qualified, (fully certified in their field and able to demonstrate competence). Federal legislation attached to NCLB demands teachers to be "highly qualified" (HQT) by fulfilling base standards:

1. Hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree in the subject area (with at least 30 credits in their major).

2. Hold a valid NJ teaching certificate.

3. Demonstrate content preparation in any of the following ways:

   - Pass a test that proves competency in subject area (Praxis, NTE)

   - Hold National Board certification in subject area.

   - Hold a graduate degree in the subject area.

   - Accrue 30 credits in subject area that would equate to a "major."

   - Accrue 10 points on the NJ Home Standards Content Knowledge Matrix (NJBOE 21-22)

As a part of NCLB, subchapter 5 of the New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:8 requires high school students to complete: "at least five credits in visual and performing arts effective with the 2004-2005 grade nine class." The legislation that calls for this reform has finally validated what arts educators have known for years – Arts Education is crucial and necessary for the development of all human beings. To begin to affect the much needed change, all arts educators need to know these standards, how they evolved, what research informed them, and how to help our students attain the CCCS aims. That information will be discussed in the following chapters in detail. Educators can view

these reforms as a great opportunity to raise the standard and availability of arts education in the public school curriculum.

The Core Curriculum Content Standards are guidelines that carry the weight and accountability of law. They coordinate with the federal legislation entitled "No Child Left Behind." The "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001" was signed into law by President Bush in January 2002. The aim of this law is to improve the public educational system, especially for disadvantaged children. This legislation primarily aims to improve student learning and to hold schools and states accountable for student achievement. The emphasis of the legislation is not on the arts, but it names the arts for the first time and carries them into a new realm of visibility and accountability.

Educators are charged with "proving" the value and achievement in arts classrooms and activities. Legislators and administrators want numbers and facts, but measurements in the arts are highly subjective. Educators still ask: How do we adequately quantify the arts experience of our students since it involves growth over time? How do we most appropriately assess the arts? Research shows the positive effects of arts activity on learning. The studies point out the increased reading/language and social skills inherent in arts training. Now that schools are moving toward having qualified teachers (HQT mandate) and a larger pool of students in arts classrooms, it is crucial that arts teachers document these increased language and performance skills. It is time for teachers to meet standards and measure student achievement. It is time to assess in a meaningful way that encourages students to learn.

Chapter Two
Brain Research

For the first time in history, science can track and record what physically happens in the brain as we learn. Doctors can use computer technology to create images of activity as the brain works. The relatively new fields of neuroscience (the science of brain function) and cognitive science (the science of thinking and learning) have merged and this has a potentially huge impact on education. Educators challenged by increased demand for accountability can begin to understand how students think and create learning environments aligned with cognitive processes.

According to the book <u>How People Learn,</u> jointly published by the Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education and the National Research Council:

> More than ever, the sheer magnitude of human knowledge renders its coverage by education an impossibility; rather, the goal of education is better conceived as helping students develop the intellectual tools and learning strategies needed to acquire the knowledge that allows people to think productively about history, science and technology, social phenomena, mathematics, and the arts. Fundamental understanding about subjects, including how to frame and ask meaningful questions about various subject areas, contributes to individuals' more basic understanding of principles of learning that can assist them in becoming self-sustaining, lifelong learners. (Bransford 5)

New research is undermining the traditional intelligence formula developed by psychologist Alfred Binet who in 1900 worked for the French government to create an intelligence test to measure probable success of its students. Binet devised the measure known as the IQ Test, which became the foundation of western understanding of

intelligence for almost one hundred years. Americans eagerly adopted the "IQ myth" to help stratify the work force. The IQ test became a measure by which the nation could justifiably restrict some populations to menial labor and encourage others to pursue more meaningful professions. We held fast to the idea that a number branded individuals with a few digits to show the world how prosperous he or she would be in society and life - an immutable, genetically implanted IQ rating. This number predicted whether an individual would perish or thrive intellectually. It also gave teachers and parents a measure of students as either "under-achieving" or "on level."

According to new thought, however, "The brain is what we have; the mind is what it does. In other words, the 'mind' is not a thing; it's a process." (Jensen, Teaching 15) Current research and technology shows that "intelligence" is not fixed. The brain can develop at any age. The structure of the brain physically alters and reorganizes while engaged in learning. Weight and thickness of nerve cells and blood vessels in the brain change when stimulated by new information. According to John Bransford, Professor of Psychology and Co-director of the Learning Technology Center at George Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, "These findings suggest that the brain is a dynamic organ, shaped to a great extent by experience and by what a living being does." (Bransford 235)

To stimulate this kind of desired growth, our educational goals should have students studying topics in depth, encourage collaborative teaching, stress the process of analysis (taking ideas apart) and gather and synthesize information from a variety of sources (putting ideas back together in new ways) in a variety of formats. In the end, students need to develop the ability to teach themselves.

Educators who link new knowledge to prior knowledge in multiple contexts will have even higher success rates. Learning stimulates neurons in the brain which in turn causes the neurons to make chemical connections, or *synapse*. When this happens, branch-like extensions, or *dendrites*, are sent out of the *axon* (conductor of information). Eric Jensen found in his brain research that "*Myelin* is a fatty substance that forms around well-used axons…This seems not only to speed up electrical transmission (up to 12-fold), but also reduces interference from other nearby reactors." (Jensen, Teaching 12) In other words, the link to prior knowledge gives the learner faster access and longer lasting knowledge. Good teaching demands that we first understand what existing knowledge our students possess and then guide them to seek out and process the desired new knowledge. An arts-rich environment in our communities assures us that our students will have early arts experiences and therefore be ready for arts training when they get to high school.

Students who learn to create strategies for problem-solving are learning to develop tools to work out future problems. The experience of a mental journey paves the way for future intellectual travel. The mind can better understand itself when metacognition (thinking about thinking) is part of the process. Students who understand the process of thinking take a huge leap toward cognitive development. Research clearly indicates that the mind thrives on connections and patterns in order to instill deeper understanding. The arts contain a variety of patterns in such diverse formats as color, sound, movement, and gesture to name a few. Students who find, interpret, and process these patterns make long-lasting connections to learning. When students connect the relationships between characters, historical time frames, or costuming and set design,

25

they set the stage for future understanding and create a way to break down "the big picture" into learnable and relatable chunks.

Theatre arts teachers who guide students to recognize and reflect on their own thinking (such as in a journal or critique) and to monitor their level of understanding (in a response to questions or group discussion) connect learners to metacognition, also known as "thinking about thinking." Finding meaning in group learning activities satisfies our brain's need to grow in a social environment, especially when it involves our emotional state. This is why collaborative learning is now recognized as an important part of education. Humans are most receptive to deep learning when feelings are present such as when engaged in a heated debate fending off opposing viewpoints. When emotions are involved, the senses are heightened and we remember on different emotional as well as intellectual levels. "Emotions engage meaning and predict future learning because they involve our goals, beliefs, biases, and expectations." (Jensen, Teaching 93) All current research seems to reinforce the fact that learning is a social activity. Chemicals in the human body affect memory, learning and relationships. We learn better when we work together. Theatre arts require and strengthen collaborative learning.

Carl Jung's Theory of Psychological Types and the work done by Harvey Silver and Richard Strong on Jung's research demonstrate that each of us has a dominant learning style. Silver and Strong outlined the four types as sensing, feeling, intuition, and thinking. By understanding how each person learns, we have a better sense of how best to communicate with one another and ourselves. This research enables educators to provide positive environments for collaborative study and to better understand how we learn.

Of all the arts, theatre engages this concept of cooperation and emotional engagement the most vigorously. In understanding the goals, beliefs, biases and expectations of a character, students can work to portray that character. (Didn't Stanislavsky demand the same understanding?) Working in a cast or crew is likewise an integral part of theatre arts education. Working within a functional, social-emotional circle is essential to the theatrical experience. The need to understand how others function is part of an actor's character study as well as part of the collaborative work they exercise with fellow thespians, directors, technicians, and designers.

The brain readily accepts information in chunks or clusters, which help learners organize and assimilate new knowledge. "Chunking" helps the brain make sense of new information and allows it to store information in long-term memory. The process of analysis happens best when we engage our long-term memory. Here is the brain process: Outside stimulus goes to the sensory register where it is received at millions of bits per second (new information). The next stop, a brief 5-20 seconds, is in short-term memory. If the stimulus is revisited, (check for understanding/review) it has the potential to continue traveling to the area of active processing. Once again, only if information is revisited here (through practice, questioning, etc) will it be put into long-term memory. (Bransford 116-126)

Getting valuable information into long-term memory is the goal of education. When students finally "get it" we can say they have learned. That "ah-ha" moment happens when understanding is finally and firmly entrenched in long-term memory. In the theatre, the "ah-ha" moment often happens when the real character appears on the stage where once there was only a student; the moment when emotional and intellectual

understanding of character synthesize on stage. Actors and directors "chunk" information when they break down scenes and beats. The practice leads to long-term memory storage, and if lucky, to the "ah-ha" moment.

Students retain and retrieve subject matter taught in depth more readily than when they superficially memorize broad-based facts. Challenging activities that combine emotion with physical action stimulate the brain adding dendritic branching, more growth spines, a thicker cortex (outside layer of the brain), and larger cell bodies. (Jensen, Teaching) When information is firmly entrenched in long-term storage, the brain can manipulate, reorganize and ultimately synthesize information to form new, even more complex ideas. At this point, students can retrieve information for other uses and ultimately teach themselves.

New knowledge about the process of learning concurrently informs the role of assessment. As Bransford notes in How People Learn:

> The use of frequent formative assessment helps make students' thinking
> visible to themselves, their peers, and their teacher. This provides feedback that
> can guide modification and refinement in thinking. Given the goal of learning
> with understanding, assessments must tap understanding rather than merely the
> ability to repeat facts or perform isolated skills. (Bransford 19)

Two types of assessment are most prevalent in schools: formative – feedback during the learning process; and summative – evaluation at the end of a learning activity. Formative evaluation best stimulates student learning and long-term memory storage. When teachers give students ample opportunities during the lesson to assess their own work and that of peers, they build students' self-assessment skills. When teachers leave

pauses between periods of instruction they allow students to sort out information and revise their thinking if needed. Good teachers allow for reflection and critique.

The arts have historically been a good means to demonstrate reflection and self-assessment. They have also been critiqued and debated by others for as long as they have been in existence. The "review" is the ultimate summative assessment. The arts, because of their subjective nature, allow for complex and multi-layered interpretation. This can require "chunking" which stimulates deep thinking.

According to Howard Gardner in Multiple Intelligences, assessment needs to have three criteria.

- It should be intelligence-fair – presented in such a way that the potency of intelligence can be monitored directly and not through the "lens" of logic and mathematics.

- It should be developmentally appropriate – using techniques appropriate to the child's developmental level in the particular domain of knowledge at issue.

- It should be linked to recommendations – any score or description should be linked to recommended activities for a child with that particular intellectual profile. (Gardner, Multiple 72)

The 'profiles' Mr. Gardner addresses are contained within the Multiple Intelligence theory (MI) in which educators look at not one or two ways to provide relevant experiences to their students, but to eight. According to this theory, all learners absorb information through all eight modalities, but each student has certain stronger preferences and therefore uses a certain skills to achieve more lasting absorption and retention of information. Here are the profiles:

- The *logical mathematical* learner works well with numerical symbols, sequencing information and solving numerical problems. This intelligence resides in working with objects, assessing, weighing, measuring and computing. Students with dominant logical mathematical intelligence will be at home with math and science.

- The most common intelligence is *verbal linguistic* which, at its highest level of functioning, allows learners to comprehend the meaning of words – both spoken and written. It allows students to follow rules of syntax and grammar and appreciate the sounds, rhythms, and inflections of speech.

- Artists, designers, and architects have strong *visual spatial* intelligence that helps them form mental images and manipulate them so as to be seen from alternate perspectives. Visual spatial intelligence is also used in interpreting maps and navigation.

- Using one's body for expressive, recreational, or goal-directed purposes in different ways signals strong *bodily kinesthetic* intelligence. "When we involve the body in learning, the neural activity generated helps to provide the cognitive structures that allow us to understand and recall the information at a later date." (Gardner) Manipulatives sometimes provide necessary props for the bodily kinesthetic learner. Movement provides impulses to the inner ear and back to the cerebellum (center for motor activity in the brain) and the rest of the brain including the visual system. (Jensen, Teaching).

- *Musical rhythmic* intelligence deals with rhythm, melody, tone, pitch, and pattern. Of all the intelligences, this one can have the most conscious effect. It can calm,

excite, or inspire us. It can make us move faster or slower, increase our buying level in stores, or help us to relax in the dentist's chair. Its steady beat can keep us dancing, marching, or typing. Music can also help us recall information and relieve our stuttering.

- Working well in groups points out *interpersonal* intelligence. It is the ability to communicate both verbally and non-verbally and to perceive emotions, moods, motivation and intentions in others. This intelligence not only helps us "read" other people, but it also allows us to empathize with another's feelings, fears, and beliefs.

- *Intrapersonal* intelligence, on the other hand, involves internal knowledge of oneself. This intelligence monitors our thinking and reflecting processes, as well as our thoughts about self-image and personal identity. Evidence of strong intrapersonal intelligence can be found in people with awareness of higher states of consciousness (spiritual or otherwise).

- Star-gazing, bird-watching, and biological sciences would be examples of practical application for *natural* intelligence. This intelligence would lead to making consequential distinctions in the real world.

The MI theory, first proposed in the 1980s, refuted the accepted view of intelligence that formerly defined intelligence in a fixed way. The narrow view measured by the IQ test only assigned due weight to verbal and computational skills, not to the full range of the human potential.

Understanding these theories of intelligence leads educators to new ways of teaching and assessing. Assignments like requiring students to employ movement to

illustrate a story, use a song to give directions, create a journal to study a character, or create a drawing to express a character cross and criss-cross the lines of multiple intelligence. By using a multiple intelligence approach, teachers find not only new ways to connect with student understanding but also new ways to assess beyond the bubble test of the past which only tapped linguistic or mathematical skills.
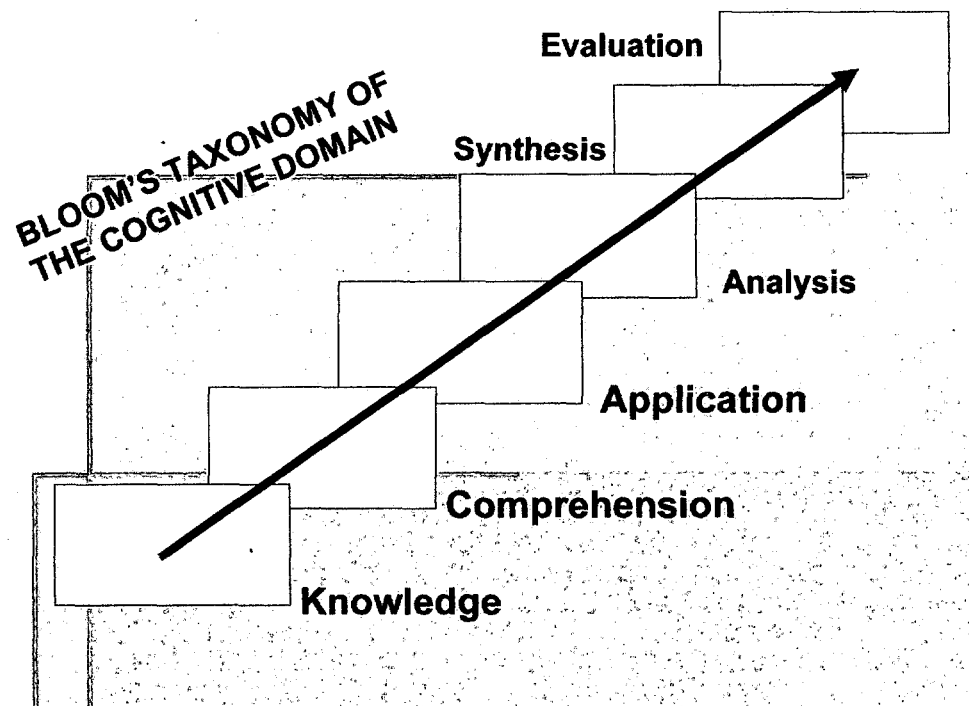
In the arts classroom, the students must make connections by *doing* the activity. The arts, therefore, fully engage the mind. Theatre arts can simultaneously involve all eight modalities of intelligence. For example, acting uses body and voice (kinesthetic and verbal-linguistic) and is a study of character (intrapersonal) usually executed in an ensemble (interpersonal); pacing a scene, the rhythm, timbre, and tempo of dialogue exercise musical intelligence; lifting and moving imaginary objects uses mathematical as well as visual-spatial intelligence; designing outdoor sets could rely on natural intelligence. Learning styles and multiple intelligences can be readily employed in the theatre arts classroom.

This new understanding on intelligences and learning styles can inform the way teachers teach as well as the way they assess. In the past teachers have sought to test student knowledge. In the future, teachers will need to accurately assess student *understanding*. In order to fulfill educational mandates and satisfy district educational objectives, teachers need to see assessment as a tool for student learning and challenge their students to demonstrate understanding. Before this happens, educators must know *how* to challenge student thinking.

As mentioned in Chapter One, we no longer live in a world where we can carry all the necessary data and objective facts in our heads. There is too much information

available to learn by rote. Instead, we need to access the information, understand it, apply it, analyze it, synthesize and evaluate it. We need to use the six levels of Benjamin Bloom's "cognitive domain theory" to streamline our educational process. In 1956, Bloom, a teacher, scholar, and researcher at the University of Chicago, developed a hierarchy of the thinking process. His work remains at the forefront of contemporary educational wisdom. Bloom identified six levels within the cognitive domain from simple recall, or recognition of facts as the lowest level, (the one we have historically tested) through increasingly more complex and abstract mental levels. His scale culminates in the highest order of "evaluation." Bloom's qualitative and escalating taxonomy has been outlined and diagramed as follows:

1. **Evaluation** – Student appraises, assesses, or critiques on a basis of specific standards and criteria.

2. **Synthesis** – Student originates, integrates, and combines ideas into a product, plan or proposal that is new to him or her.

3. **Analysis** – Student distinguishes, classifies, and relates the assumptions, hypotheses, evidence, or structure of a statement or question.

4. **Application** – Student selects, transfers, and uses data and principles to complete a problem or task with a minimum of direction.

5. **Comprehension** – Student translates, comprehends, or interprets information based on prior learning.

6. **Knowledge** – Student recalls or recognizes information, ideas, and principles in the approximate form in which they were learned. (Huitt)

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY OF THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN

Evaluation

Synthesis

Analysis

Application

Comprehension

Knowledge

A team of psychologists and educators led by editors Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl to help teachers align objectives to assessment techniques revised Bloom's taxonomy in 2001. They replaced Bloom's nouns with more active verbs in order to help teachers translate these concepts directly to written objectives. While Bloom's premise remains intact, the newly revised language aids educators in analyzing objectives in alignment with standards based assessment. This translation of Bloom's original text makes the taxonomy more user-friendly. The new language activates the intent of the level of thinking in demonstrable tasks. Here are the headings and samples of verbs that lead to more assessable goals:

1. **Create** - Plan, generate, produce, invent, make, devise, construct, design.

2. **Evaluate** – Critique, detect, monitor, test, hypothesize, judge, check, experiment.

3. **Analyze** – Compare, integrate, find, organize, deconstruct, outline, attribute, structure.

4. **Apply** – Implement, use, execute, carry out.

5. **Understand** – Interpret, infer, paraphrase, compare, summarize, explain, classify, exemplify.

6. **Remember** – Recognize, recall, list, name, locate, describe, retrieve.

In addition to up-dating Bloom's language, Anderson and Krathwohl also reinterpreted Bloom's affective and psychomotor domains, and renamed "the knowledge dimension," to coordinate with "the cognitive process dimension." They envisioned finding a way to document factual knowledge, conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge, and meta-cognitive knowledge at each of the six levels of cognition and created the chart here.

The Knowledge Dimension		**The**	**Cognitive**	**Process**	**Dimension**	
	6.Remember	5.Understand	4.Apply	3.Analyze	2.Evaluate	1.Create
Factual Knowledge						
Conceptual Knowledge						
Procedural Knowledge						
Meta-Cognitive Knowledge						

(Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001)

The graphic shows how each of the "knowledges" intersects with the level of thinking. For example, teaching students blocking (procedural knowledge) demonstrates their ability to recall stage directions (remember), explain why the characters move (understand), shows them where to move at the appropriate time (apply), compares one character's blocking to another (analyze), judges whether that character is moving appropriately (evaluate), and designs their own movement for the character (create). In a similar way, each "knowledge" could be shown in each of the levels of understanding. This chart then becomes a valuable asset to the theatre arts teacher for documenting student understanding.

Teachers can better assess when they understand Bloom's taxonomy. As evidenced in Bloom's table, knowledge is not the same as understanding. To understand students must justify or creatively use what they know. Assessment tasks must go beyond the lower levels of knowledge, comprehension, and application to require synthesis and evaluation in order to inspire long-term student learning because information that is used, manipulated, and reviewed, will remain in the brain longer.

Arts educators must put the research on how we learn together with the best teaching strategies in order to develop fair, developmentally appropriate tasks linked to recommendations outlined in state standards in the arts.

Chapter Three
Assessment

There is a difference between testing and assessment. When teachers test, they evaluate. When they evaluate they make value judgments and measure results. Tests seek "correct" answers. Many national tests are created by personnel outside the education field and kept secret from test takers in order to ensure statistical validity, reliability, and comparability. Consequently, some accepted standardized tests do not ask questions about realistic educational issues. Taking standardized tests can sometimes be like taking a driver's test without ever having been behind the wheel of a car. They rarely offer students an opportunity to learn through the test, but rather create test taking anxiety and leave test takers without performance feedback for extended periods of time. If not properly aligned to pre-established desired learners' outcomes, standardized tests can take students "blindly" into the testing arena and then offer results that only compare performances to those of other test takers. Nowhere in this process does the student learn. This kind of testing does not promote the student's education and can discourage future study. Poorly designed tests contain isolated items requiring recognition of regurgitated information and/or only require low levels of cognitive ability (see Bloom's Taxonomy) or test only basic skills. Historically, standardized paper and pencil tests offer no individualized assessment and reduce feedback to a set of numbers that teachers and/or school administrators can misinterpret. These tests are not always scored quickly enough to give teachers or students useful feedback. These tests do not allow students to self assess. Electronically scanned paper and pencil exams focus on multiple choice questions to facilitate easy scoring and can misrepresent levels of student knowledge and skill. This kind of testing does not respond to current research and accepted positive

educational practices. It flies in the face of the research that tells us to teach subjects in depth and with attention to learning styles and multiple intelligences.

Large scale tests tend to provide an "objective" score based on a comparison of students to set a "mean" or standard score. These tests, a once-a-year chance for students to show improvement, do not provide the opportunity to relearn and retest current and relevant subject matter. This is the way current research says students learn best. Traditional standardized tests do not teach, they measure and compare. National testing services such as ETS in Princeton and the College Board offer high stakes tests and the authors of the tests are not, and never have been, primary or secondary school teachers. Test writers, often experts in their field, write questions in one subject matter, while students taking the tests are largely generalists. Standardized tests present particular problems in the arts, where subject matter defies the multiple choice format and demands discussion and performance. Most large-scale standardized tests do not promote student learning. They do not provide opportunities for discussion, evaluation, or performance.

Assessment is a more general term than "test" and describes what teachers observe and what they use to teach and guide individual students. It encompasses the guidelines by which teachers assess students as well as the process involved in the assessment. It requires students to produce a quality product and/or performance, as well as responses to student work. In an authentic assessment (one that is worthwhile, significant and meaningful), teachers use multiple assessments as tools to monitor student understanding all along the way – not just at the end of a unit. For example, an assessment on a student monologue performance would include a rubric which outlines (in advance so unit goals are in mind all along the path of study) the rating criteria for the

performance including use of vocal expression and physical gestures. The assessment might also invite student self-reflection on the performance, and/or critique by other students. Part of the assessment might include opportunities to review and improve the performance. Assessments that allow students to succeed (or fail without finality) offer chances for student growth and development. This approach is an educationally sound approach.

While it is important to balance declarative (knowing why) and procedural knowledge (knowing how), creating "authentic tasks" and using these tasks as evaluative tools is a comprehensive way for teachers to assess in the arts. The teacher should address realistic (or near realistic) problems which have realistic options, constraints, standards and serve a genuine purpose when creating these authentic tasks. Authentic tasks honor recent brain research that shows us how making learning "relevant" to students is key to long term retention and student success. According to one scholar, "A critical feature of effective teaching is that it elicits from students their pre-existing understanding of the subject matter to be taught and provide opportunities to build on – or challenge – the initial understanding." (Bransford 15)

Teachers should inform students of their expectations before beginning authentic performance tasks and students should revisit the criteria for evaluation of those tasks. It is important in the assessment process for students to know the criteria and descriptors of competency. This can be accomplished by using rubrics. Rubrics describe desired and less-than desired outcomes and specifically show students the range of performance choices. When used properly, rubric-based assessment becomes a major, integral part of teaching and learning through authentic tasks.

Authentic assessment can offer opportunities for explanation, application and/or justification, which means authentic tasks can stimulate higher levels of thinking – a primary goal of education. Designing and implementing authentic tasks also demands continuous, quality feedback from the instructor, thus the *process* of assessment becomes as important as the product. No assessment should be a one-shot, secret examination lurking at the end of a maze where the student cannot see the end goal. Instead, ongoing, multiple forms of assessment lead the learner to a specific goal or level of inquiry. Clearly defining the task at hand, providing performer-friendly feedbacks, and offering students ways to mark their own growth and improvement, are educational imperatives. Consistent and detailed feedback is an absolute necessity.

Rubrics define the tasks, criteria, and standards by which the instructor assesses student work. Students can self assess their progress toward educational goals and mastery of skills. To be effective, rubric criteria must be made known to all students. In a good rubric, validity is not sacrificed for scoring reliability and ease of scoring. Calculating a score where every aspect carried the same weight would be easy, but most times there are parts of the task which have more value. The task involves the important aspects of performance and/or core challenges of the field of study and is weighed appropriately. (Wiggins 23) For example, if "vocal expression" was the focus of a lesson in presenting a scene, the aspects of volume, pitch, timbre and timing would be more important than blocking or facial expression. While the latter two are crucial to the success of the scene, they are not the focus and therefore would not be as heavily weighted in scoring. Rubrics complete with criteria and scoring guides published before the assessment would alert students to the focus of the lesson.

Before the assessment is in place, teachers must outline *educational objectives* and define a process to realize those objectives. First, teachers must ask themselves a series of critical questions to determine the exact purpose of the assessment. Is the assignment designed to check on student accomplishment, or to place students in appropriate learning groups? Is the purpose of the assessment to diagnose student strengths and weaknesses in order to prescribe appropriate instructional programs? Will the teacher use the results to determine whether a student has artistic talent or to challenge students' creativity? Will the assessment evaluate effort or measure achievement? Will the format be performance based (hands on) or written assessment? The goal is for teachers to use competency based assessment through varied means including, but not limited to authentic assessment. Educators must find ways to make data-driven decisions based on observable behaviors and outcomes, aligned with new brain and cognitive research.

Once the educational goals are established, educators need to articulate an overarching purpose or *instructional goal*. What skills are students really honing? Should they learn proper fingering on an instrument or play a perfect etude? Should they recognize the work of a famous artist or be able to explain why the artist is important? Instructors must seriously consider what content material will elicit deep understanding of the lesson. They must decide exactly what they want students to understand and then create tasks which allow students to demonstrate their understanding. Teachers must ask what they want students to accomplish in clear terms. They cannot expect students to answer questions that were not asked. In order to uncover student understanding, teachers must know exactly what they are assessing and ask for answers in a way that

uses cognitive, social, and/or metacognitive skills. Are there concepts, definitions, and principles which every student should be able to apply in other situations and disciplines? How do we know that students possess understanding or the requisite performance ability? Questions like these lead educators to find the authentic assessment tasks.

The authentic assessment task may take a variety of forms. A performance task can be either rehearsed or "on demand" and should require each student to physically demonstrate understanding of concepts. Assessment needs to clearly evaluate specific parts of student performance in order to promote growth and encourage improvement. Specific parts of the larger performance can easily be addressed in a rubric. Acting in a scene or monologue, presenting visual work, singing a song, or demonstrating choreography may form the foundation of a deep learning performance task and may be evaluated using rubrics.

Portfolios, another form of authentic performance assessment, collect hard evidence of "best works" and/or "works in progress" to show growth over time. They might include specimens of written or artistic work as well as recorded audio and/or visual works. Photos, journals, and other documentation, including letters from outside sources, might be part of a portfolio. Essays offer students the chance to reflect, compare and contrast, analyze, and/or evaluate in written form. The teachers may create a performance task which demonstrates student understanding of blocking, stage design, or character analysis. A portfolio could give evidence of student note and rhythmic accuracy in a recorded musical example, or could be an essay in which students describe the relationship of a Renaissance painting to time and culture. Before embarking on the creation of assessment tasks, teacher should consider the following benchmarks for

success outlined by Nancy Pistone on page 31 in <u>Envisioning Arts Assessment: A</u>
<u>Process Guide</u>. Teachers should strive to develop items or tasks that are:

- Comprehensive and faithful in addressing the arts framework.

- Fair in testing content that all students had an equal opportunity to learn.

- Realistic with respect to the contexts and problems encountered in the arts field.

- Authentic in requiring student response/performance that represents the arts area being tested, i.e., dancing, singing, acting or creating.

- Feasible in terms of time, space, materials, and stimuli required.

- Reasonable in allocating enough time for students to think and generate a response.

- Clear in directions for students that include contextual clues that enable them to apply the appropriate knowledge/skills to address the question or problem.

- Explicit in criteria that are understandable to students and which enable scorers to distinguish between diverse levels of performance.

Teachers should also, review test items for –

- Elimination of controversial and sensitive topics.

- Balanced consideration of all student racial and ethnic groups.

- Sensitivity to students' varied backgrounds and regions.

These considerations are further expanded in the 1998 SCASS Arts/NEA workshop notes that ask: Are all assessment measures -

- Aligned?

- Representative of what is taught?

43

- Educationally worthwhile?

- Direct?

- Fair?

- Practical?

- Easily communicated?

The notes go on to explain -

The process is aligned if....

- The assessment process fits the purpose.

- All the stakeholders (educators, students, parents, etc.) share the same interpretation of the standard.

- The instruction, assessment, and the scoring are based in the standard.

The process is representative if....

- The assessment reflects sufficient scope and depth of the standard(s) taught.

- Student evidence generated by the assessment is sufficient (in quantity and variety) to make instructional decisions.

The process is worthwhile if....

- The assessment process informs instructional decisions.

- The assessment helps students to self-evaluate, set goals and improve their work.

- The assessment guides and focuses professional development.

The process is direct if....

- Given the context, the approach provides the most straightforward route to gathering and judging information about a student's attainment of the standard.

- The directions, tasks and items present only clear and essential information (i.e. free of ambiguous and irrelevant material).

The process is fair if....

- The assessment is developmentally appropriate.

- The scores for similar work are consistent (reliable) from one student to another and one evaluator to another.

- Alternative assessment approaches are possible to address varied student needs.

- The assessment process is free of bias (e.g., socioeconomic levels, geographic location, gender, race and ethnicity, etc.).

The process is practical if....

- The approach is efficient in terms of committed time and resources.

- The benefits justify the time, resources, and effort required.

The process is easily communicated if....

- The assessment process, findings, and value are easily understood by all stakeholders.

- All stakeholders can identify quality performance or work.

- The results contribute to arriving at an appropriate grade or mark of progress. (SCASS)

Some auxiliary considerations might include making the task inter-disciplinary (cover artistic achievement in a variety of fields) or multi-dimensional (working in a multiplicity of student configurations and/or on a variety of sub-tasks toward the completion of a large project). When an assessment tool accomplishes all of these goals, it becomes

authentic as well as valuable. By all definitions, authentic assessment should also promote sustained and long term learning and/or skill acquisition.

Teachers must thoroughly consider how to describe an effective assessment. Scoring rubrics are one of the most promising answers to this challenge. Rubric descriptors offer arts educators a substantive way to articulate the necessary criteria at every level of competency. Rubrics describe exactly what the teacher will teach and what the student should learn. In creating a good rubric, the teacher leaves no room for guesswork in grading and no room for student misunderstanding. The assignment becomes clear; the student knows ahead of time exactly what the teacher considers exemplary work and the teacher has a guide for grading what might otherwise be considered very subjective work. That is the beauty of a scoring rubric.

Before teachers assign essays, performance tasks, or portfolio assignments, they should outline for students and parents the specific criteria used for assessment. Teachers should also provide examples (anchors) of different levels of accomplishment in written work, on video tape, or other appropriate medium. These anchors will show students what exemplary, working, and struggling performances look like. While there is an arsenal of evaluative tools available to teachers, the scoring rubric efficiently accomplishes this goal. A scoring rubric is defined in Scoring Rubrics in the Classroom as:

> A set of general criteria used to evaluate a student's performance in a given outcome area. Rubrics consist of a fixed measurement scale (e.g., 4-point) and a list of criteria that describe the characteristics of products or performances for each scale point. Rubrics are frequently accompanied by

examples (anchors) of products or performances to illustrate the various score points on the scale. (Arter 181)

Good scoring rubrics contain the statement of the performance task (what the student is being asked to do), a clear scale of delineated standards for each element of scoring (what is expected for each score), and established standards on the scale (examples or "anchors" to illustrate each level). The following page contains a rubric template teachers can adapt to create viable goals for high school theatre students. A rubric must include descriptions of work as well as corresponding examples (anchors). These examples give students a view of their goal before they embark on the task. Teachers can create rubrics to assess performance, essay, and portfolio work in all arts disciplines. All discipline-specific examples contained within this thesis are rubrics teachers can adapt and use in high school theatre classrooms.

The template on the following page, taken from <u>Rubrics For Web Lessons</u>, a website on rubric design, offers a sample format for a performance rubric.

RUBRIC TEMPLATE
(Describe here the task or performance this rubric is designed to evaluate)

	4 Exemplary	3 Accomplished	2 Developing	1 Beginning	Score
Stated Objective or Performance	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting total mastery of performance	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting some mastery	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting inconsistent achievement	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting incongruous attempts	
Stated Objective or Performance	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting total mastery of performance	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting some mastery	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting inconsistent performance	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting incongruous attempts	

Rubric template (Pickett and Dodge, 2001)

If, for example, the task was to perform an improvisation with a prop, the first stated objective might be: Uses body language to focus on prop. A "4" might be: Actor's use and focus on prop was evident throughout the improvisation. "3": Use of prop was evident, but not consistent. "2": Focus on prop was minimal and unclear. "1": Actor did not acknowledge prop. The second stated objective might deal with dialogue and use similar criteria for each of the scoring points.

The rubric template shown here uses a 4 point scale. Scales can define more or fewer levels of classifications, depending on the teacher's specific needs. Sometimes it is also useful to have a place for "0" to denote an inability to grade due to lack of response

(student is unprepared or unwilling to perform). It is important for teachers to use as many scale points as needed to clearly and adequately define the range from "excellent" to "poor performance."

The objective stated in the rubric defines for the teacher as well as the student, the main objective before students begin the authentic task. "Demonstrating character specific hand gestures" might be an objective for an actor working on stylized plays. Detailed criteria help students focus on elements integral to the assignment (remember the guidelines). "Student uses practiced hand gestures in line with character expression throughout the performance" might be the criteria for a score of "4" for this objective. Keeping this rubric visible – written and available for student viewing before and after the assignment (in student hand-out, on the classroom wall, and in course notes), helps students know exactly what teachers expect.

When teachers share the rubrics with parents, they too could assess the quality of student homework and would know what excellent student work looks like. Teachers still assess the *student work,* not the student. Sometimes no one will achieve excellence – and that is all right. The rubric model of excellence is a goal to work toward. It may take time and practice before students can achieve the highest level.

Rubrics also serve as a way to guide self-assessment. When students see how they will be evaluated, they focus more precisely on the task at hand. For instance, if a student knows he or she will be graded on inflection and dynamics in a monologue, he or she may take more time in vocal warm-ups to practice a full range of pitch and volume. Rubric criteria also set goals for student revision. Students can see where their performance matches up to the criteria and can work to improve in future performances.

Additionally, rubrics can guide peer assessment. This can be a powerful way to help students learn to evaluate and critique – an especially important tool in the arts. For example, when students practice describing exactly what they heard and what they saw in a student performance, they become acutely aware of the same things in their own performances. Highly descriptive criteria for a particular performance task and peer assessment leads directly to improved performance for all.

Self Assessment

Self-assessment is another valuable tool for student learning. It helps brings the student closer to self-motivation. The figure on the following page from Steve Russell's Getting Assessment Right: Drama, is an example of a scoring guide (an alternate form of rubric) for student self-assessment. It states the skill the evaluation will assess and offers the student the opportunity to reflect on his/her own performance for each descriptor. It might be interesting to include the date of the assessment and to collect several student self-reflections in a portfolio in order to show progress over the academic year. In addressing the accomplishment of these skills, the student becomes responsible for self-monitoring and thereby develops into a self-motivated learner. The assessment form layout gives students visible and viable tasks to work on throughout the year. This will encourage acquisition of skills. It is interesting to note that the skills of teamwork, initiative, and independence, while difficult to quantify and evaluate are valuable in all life situations, not only the drama classroom. The "Student Learning Skills Reflection" offers a ripe opportunity for cross-curricular teaching and can encourage students to be life-long learners.

Student Learning Skills Reflection					
Learning Skill Learning skills are important in all subjects. In drama, learning skills have an impact on your success in many ways. Rate yourself honestly on the chart and take some time to reflect on these skills. In the comments section give some specific evidence from classes or state some specific steps you can take to improve. Your honest reflection on these skills makes this process meaningful.	**Self-Assessment**				If you rate yourself with an N or S, state specific steps you will take to improve. If you rate yourself with a G or E, give a specific example to support your rating.
	N	**S**	**G**	**E**	
N – Needs Improvement S – Satisfactory G – Good E – Excellent					
Teamwork					
Sharing resources and ideas to achieve group goals.					
Active listening to teacher and all others. (Retains and recalls facts in the drama.)					
Sharing the workload when planning and presenting work.					
Performing a variety of group roles (e.g. recorder, chair, supporter, leader).					
Seeking agreement and involvement of all group members.					
Encouraging others verbally, nodding, eye contact and facial expression.					
Refraining from inappropriate laughter and put-downs.					
Initiative					
Volunteering (e.g., to go first, to lead).					
Taking the risk to try something new.					
Using resources from outside of class (e.g., bringing in related articles).					
Creating your own rehearsal opportunities.					
Seeking assistance when needed.					
Raising new and related issues.					
Works Independently					
Following instructions without reminders.					
Completing work on time and with care.					
Using time effectively in class.					
Finishing what you start.					
Reflecting thoughtfully on work in class, commenting on or drawing on meaning behind the drama.					

(Russell 63)

Student Created Rubrics

In some cases, teachers can also ask students to help create the rubrics (and

scoring guides) well ahead of the task and can use actual student work as anchors or

examples of excellence for others. This can give students more agency in their own

learning and can stimulate discussion about the nature and process of education. It will

engage the students in decisions about their own education. It could aid students in

understanding the most important goal of the assessment, what demonstrates exemplary

performance, and what an acceptable performance looks like. Not only will the

assessment have relevance, but it will be written in terms created and understood by

students.

A prototype of a student-created rubric, which addresses ensemble work, follows.

When students create their own rubric, they discuss and express various levels of learning

in ways that make it more meaningful and personal to them. Such rubrics should

improve student motivation, interest, and performance. Having students create rubrics

often inspires them to think critically about their own learning expectations and to define

their own measure of success. It also sets the stage for peer assessment. In creating their

own assessment, students invest in, and learn about the hallmarks of excellence. Criteria

couched in student language (guided by teacher input) will create a rubric students feel

they can reach and at the same time raises the standard. Students often set higher goals

for themselves than teachers do. Students own their rubrics and cannot later claim they

are unfair or arbitrary since they defined the standards themselves.

Student-created rubrics would best serve mature and highly motivated students

capable of articulating the varying degrees of a performance. These rubrics may also be

useful for a less sophisticated group who need self-involvement to propel them forward.

Again, teacher input and discretion proves vital if the rubric must carry academic weight.

Possible use for student-created rubrics includes informal, formal, rehearsed or

improvised performance tasks as well as critical essays, creative writing, and design

projects.

Ensemble Criteria	4 Excellent	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Unacceptable
Blocking	Uses director's blocking consistently	Mostly uses director's blocking with some modifications	Demonstrates inability to remember blocking	Refuses to follow blocking direction
Memorization	Off book at designated time with no errors	Off book at designated time with frequent errors	Has difficulty giving up script and continues to use book past deadline	Not willing or able to memorize part
Cast interaction	Performs with professional attitude and expectations of self and others	Performs adequately when onstage, but does not stay on task behind the scenes	Has "star" syndrome and not tolerant of other cast members	Disruptive and takes up valuable rehearsal time in self-centered issues
Rehearsal	Arrives on time ready to work	Arrives on time and needs coaching to get focused	Arrives consistently late and not focused	Misses rehearsals and does not add to ensemble when in attendance

(Lawrence)

Students will have used their subject area expertise as well as their "social

knowledge" in collaboratively creating a rubric. Research tells us that we learn best in

social settings, when we have an opportunity to share or teach what we know. This is a

golden opportunity for student enrichment. It also offers opportunities for using analysis,

synthesis, and evaluation, Bloom's highest levels of thinking. Students who construct

their own assessment will begin thinking in terms of "best practices" and naturally "tune

into" traits that demonstrate excellence. Once students begin to think in the language of

the discipline (like thinking in a foreign language), they can "see" with the eyes of the

53

theatre professional. Not only will students more accurately understand their own performance, but also the performance of others. Creating rubrics enhances an ensemble environment in the classroom and enhances student ability to collaborate and compromise. The process of rubric creation puts students in the teacher's role and allows them to lead instruction, which inherently forces them to view the art form from a new perspective. At this point peer assessment becomes a natural "next step."

With a heightened awareness of excellence, students become more sensitive to their classmates performances. Student-created rubrics may provide guidelines for peer assessment. Of course, the teacher must guide and evaluate peer assessment, because assessment must describe and not judge. It describes the work, not the student. What a terrific way for students to learn at an early age about the origin of the word "assess" as "to sit beside" and that we can learn through assessment.

With a basic understanding of rubrics, teachers can create their own categories and authentic tasks to measure learning goals by following these steps:

- Begin with some models. Look at rubrics that may or may not be usable in your discipline. (Included in the bibliography are some online sources for rubrics.)

- Create a grid (This can be done in any Word program).

- Clearly list criteria and/or Learning Objectives.

- Articulate gradations of quality. Describe exactly what excellence looks like. It is helpful to build from the top. Begin with the description of perfection. Again,use as many scale points as you need to clearly define and adequately cover the range from excellent to poor.

- Practice with models and keep student samples. These samples will become "anchors" you can use to describe work at each level of performance. They are especially useful if the rubric will be used by more than one teacher.

- Evaluate the end product and revise instructional practices and rubrics as needed. Did the rubric help students to identify excellence and understand the scoring for their task or does the rubric need clarification or edits?

Remember that an authentic assessment is reliable if it yields accurate and stable results. When different teachers score the same performance, do they all come up with a similar score? In order to ensure reliability, teachers must administer and score the task in a consistent way for all students. An assessment is valid for a particular purpose if it truly measures what it was intended to measure, that is the objectives and the criteria must be clearly stated and understood by both teachers and students.

Analytic Rubric

There are two types of scoring guides – analytic and holistic. One is not better than the other, they simply serve different purposes. The analytic rubric looks at many smaller aspects of a single large performance task. It uses "slices" of the whole piece to help students and teachers visualize and describe how the important components fit together. For instance, a rubric which describes aspects of the voice (dynamics, tone quality, inflection, and phrasing) used for a monologue or scene, would be analytic because it details parts of the performance within the whole. This example is taken from the Pennsylvania Crosswalks Framework for Theatre.

Analytic Rubric for Scoring Monologue Voice Work

	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Projection				
Tone				
Articulation				
Inflection/ Emphasis				

(PA Frameworks 35)

Accompanying this scoring guide would be criteria for each level of performance which would read as follows: *Advanced* – Uses effective variation and appropriate levels throughout performance which enhance characterization; *Proficient* – Uses variation and levels in most, but not all, of the performance; *Basic* – Can be heard and understood with little regard to character portrayal; *Below Basic* – Cannot be heard or understood throughout performance.

This tool becomes especially helpful when actors are focused on improving a particular part of their performance. By slicing voice work into various skill sets, students can practice their technique in isolation before putting all the parts together; much like an instrumentalist would practice scales or a series of difficult fingerings alone and then play them in the context of the whole piece.

An analytical approach works. It allows for specific feedback to students on complex performances by assessing the components of a finished product. It is also more time consuming.

56

Holistic Rubric

The holistic rubric evaluates the performance as a complete work, and works well for summative and/or large scale assessments. For example, a rubric which aims to assess the performance of a monologue or scene by noting general vocal usage, movement, and range of emotion would serve as a broad, holistic tool. This type of rubric could be even more general and assess costume, acting, set, and/or lighting. Holistic rubrics can quickly judge simple products or performances by assessing only one important trait. They give a quick snapshot of overall quality or achievement and can evaluate the impact of a product or performance; however, this type of assessment cannot be used for detailed analysis of strengths and weaknesses. The following example is designed for an actor's one minute monologue. You may notice less specificity than above; however, this format is particularly useful when teachers must assess many students in limited amounts of time. It offers an ideal place for additional comments on student performance as well. Best practice suggest that comments should clearly describe (not evaluate) what the rater has seen and heard.

Holistic Rubric for Scoring an Audition Monologue

	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Vocal				
Physical				
Emotional				
Presentation				

(PA Frameworks p.35)

Criteria accompanying the analytic scoring guide could also accompany this one:
Advanced - Consistently uses all aspects listed to enhance characterization; *Proficient* –
Uses all aspects (vocal, physical, emotional) at times, but not consistently, during the
performance; *Basic* – Uses at least half of the parts being observed and without regard to
character; *Below Basic* – Demonstrates none of the items being observed.

Understanding the types of rubrics can help teachers create more comprehensive
assessment. The following presents some technical requirements to consider while
refining your rubrics. Rubrics descriptors must be:

Continuous - The change in quality from one scoring point to the next needs to be
the same. (Example: the difference between 4 and 3 should be the same as the difference
between 2 and 1).

Parallel – Each descriptor is constructed in language reflective of the others.

Coherent – The focus must objectively address the same criteria throughout.

Aptly Weighted – Each criterion is relative in reference to others.

Valid – What is scored is the most important aspect of the performance.

Reliable – Descriptors are clear and well structured to create inter-rater reliability.

Scoring rubrics can be *generic* and judge a broad topic or performance. They can
be *task specific* and evaluate a single task.

Generic Rubric

Generic rubrics apply to a variety of situations. They feature very general
language in order to address different points of instruction. Generic rubrics tend to offer
a holistic view and show "the big picture" for student tendencies. The following example

assesses student involvement. It was modified from "Junkyard Wars" found online at

www.discoveryschool.com.

Categories	0-1 points	2-3 points	4-5 points
Intellectual Curiosity And Spirit of Investigation	Asks no questions or Irrelevant questions; Answers no questions Not involved with production Does not complete assignments	Makes effort to understand production Asks and answers clarifying questions about the production Mostly involved Passive participation	Strives for complete understanding Asks and answers probing questions that extend understanding Full, active participation Goes beyond intended activity
Personal Responsibility	Tardy or significant time wasted Careless with equipment Does not follow directions Unprepared for the activity	Time wasted or does not compete task Some carelessness Or lack of attention to detail Partially prepared	Makes good or excellent use of time Uses stage equipment and facilities responsibly Prepared for class, has needed elements for class
Group Dynamics and Interactions	Does not contribute to group Minimal or negative interactions Creates or encourages unrelated activities or discussion .	Some contribution to group understanding Mostly receptive to ideas and opinions of others Creates some distractions.	Contributes to group understanding through questions or explanations Makes everyone in group understand Receptive to ideas and opinions of others Makes effort to reduce group distractions

(discoveryschool.com)

In most cases, generic rubrics do not provide sufficient evidence for grading

students in class, but would certainly help students recognize and better understand their

work behaviors. This type of assessment would create a written picture of students for

teacher- parent conferences. Teachers make these generic assessments informally and

subconsciously everyday, nevertheless, the written rubric allows teachers to objectively

record and reflect their responses to individual students and their work. It also allows

students to understand clearly the nuances of the impressions they make. A log for each student with criteria in an objective format would guide, evaluate, and document instruction. Generic rubrics articulate the relationships and interactions between teachers and students and allow students to see definable gradations in levels of behavioral patterns. A teacher, who posts a generic rubric like the one above in a classroom, will show students a better way to work.

Task Specific Rubric

Task specific rubrics have limited, but powerful potential. They clearly show strengths and weaknesses in student understanding, writing, and/or performance. Analytic by design, task specific rubrics take more time for teachers to create and use, therefore, sharing these rubrics with colleagues who assess similar student works would be wise. This sharing will reduce teacher preparation time and make the tool more universal and applicable in a variety of theatre classrooms from year to year. Clear descriptors and "anchor" samples will keep the assessment consistent and guide student understanding and achievement. This type of rubric lends itself to grade conversion and documentation. Enough concrete evidence in each of the many descriptors can provide guidance for student understanding and make the assessment more objective. Student work should clearly fit one descriptor category and enable teachers to demonstrate to both parents and students the level the student has achieved. Task specific rubrics use well-defined descriptors and work well in major assessment arenas where educators need to document and formally critique performance.

Here is an example from a website dedicated to professional development found at www.phschool.com/professional_development/assessment (phschool.com)

Oral Presentation Rubric

Name: _____

Date: _____

Class: _____

	Exceptional	Admirable	Acceptable	Amateur
Content	An abundance of material clearly related to thesis; points are clearly made and all evidence supports thesis; varied use of materials	Sufficient information that relates to thesis; many good points made but there is an uneven balance and little variation	There is a great deal of information that is not clearly connected to the thesis	Thesis not clear; information included that does not support thesis in any way
Coherence and Organization	Thesis is clearly stated and developed; specific examples are appropriate and clearly develop thesis; conclusion is clear; shows control; flows together well; good transitions; succinct but not choppy; well organized	Most information presented in logical sequence; generally very well organized but better transitions from idea to idea and medium to medium needed	Concept and ideas are loosely connected; lacks clear transitions; flow and organization are choppy	Presentation is choppy and disjointed; does not flow; development of thesis is vague; no apparent logical order of presentation
Creativity	Very original presentation of material; uses the unexpected to full advantage; captures audience's attention	Some originality apparent; good variety and blending of materials/media	Little or no variation; material presented with little originality or interpretation	Repetitive with little or no variety; insufficient use of multimedia
Material	Balanced use of multimedia materials; properly used to develop thesis; use of media is varied and appropriate	Use of multimedia not as varied and not as well connected to thesis	Choppy use of multimedia materials; lacks smooth transition from one medium to another; multimedia not clearly connected to thesis	Little or no multimedia used or ineffective use of multimedia; imbalance in use of materials—too much of one, not enough of another
Speaking Skills	Poised, clear articulation; proper volume; steady rate; good posture and eye contact; enthusiasm; confidence	Clear articulation but not as polished	Some mumbling; little eye contact; uneven rate; little or no expression	Inaudible or too loud; no eye contact; rate too slow/fast; speaker seemed uninterested and used monotone
Audience Response	Involved the audience in the presentation; points made in creative way; held the audience's attention throughout	Presented facts with some interesting "twists"; held the audience's attention most of the time	Some related facts but went off topic and lost the audience; mostly presented facts with little or no imagination	Incoherent; audience lost interest and could not determine the point of the presentation
Length of Presentation	Within two minutes of allotted time +/–	Within four minutes of allotted time +/–	Within six minutes of allotted time +/–	Too long or too short; ten or more minutes above or below the allotted time

In summary, rubrics can be *longitudinal* and measure progress over time toward mastery. Students can create their own rubrics to become aware of the important aspects of performance. (This works especially well with project-based learning). Rubrics can be *weighted* to focus attention on specific aspects of a project or performance. Weighted

rubrics communicate which parts are more important for a particular activity. (See Chapter Four for discussion of these forms).

When creating scoring rubrics it is important to consider these questions:

- Does the rubric directly relate to the outcomes being measured?

- Does it address anything extraneous?

- Does the rubric cover important dimensions of student performance?

- Do the criteria reflect current conceptions of 'excellence' in the field?

- Are the categories or scales well-defined?

- Is there a clear basis for assigning scores at each scale point?

- Can the rubric be applied consistently by different scorers?

- Can the rubric be understood by students and parents?

- Can the rubric be applied to a variety of tasks?

- Is the rubric grade/age appropriate?

- Is the rubric useful, feasible, manageable and practical?

Using the guidelines for creating rubrics and answering the questions above will help teachers create and use scoring rubrics.

Well constructed rubrics solve problems for many performing arts assessment problems. Previously unanswered questions come to mind: What are the teachable aspects of creativity? Should students be judged on talent or effort? Should the teacher's aesthetic judgment be the predominant measure of excellence? Can we put a number grade on an aesthetic when its interpretation is by nature personal? Rubrics offer an avenue to answer these questions for the student, the teacher, and even the parent.

A descriptor in a rubric might be "emotional impact on the audience." Within this descriptor teachers can actually reflect and describe in detail a subjective feeling they get from a performance. The key descriptors give students some understanding of what is expected of them. Sometimes impact can be described as a feeling or mood created by the student actor. Impact should be part of a theatrical rubric because it leaves room for creativity. A "balanced portfolio" (to borrow a financial phrase) of assessments will describe what the teacher sees in a performance and help students to improve their performance. Assessment focuses on goals and the process that carries students to those goals. Wise teachers find a variety of ways to have students "learn-try-see results-adjust." (Wiggins 227)

Portfolios

A potentially effective form of assessment in the theatre arts classroom is the portfolio. A portfolio, according to the 1995 National Forum on Assessment, is "a purposeful or systematic collection of selected student work and student self-assessments developed over time, gathered to demonstrate and evaluate progress and achievement in learning." Portfolios can show "best work" and/or "works in progress." They can provide tactile proof of accomplishment and/or demonstrate a longitudinal pattern of growth with the focus on documentation and/or evaluation. Portfolios can include skill and competency charts that track student progress. They document student performances on paper. Keep in mind that student self-evaluation of the work included in their portfolios stimulates consistent long term growth. Teachers can use portfolios as a "student-centered" way to foster self-evaluation. When students can choose the work they want to include and offer their responses to that work, they demonstrate their true

abilities to the reviewer. Portfolio items might include written, artistic, audio, and/or visual recordings. In a theatre curriculum, student essays, design work, videos, performances, and assessments could easily be included in a portfolio. Once students thoughtfully assemble a portfolio with these items, it becomes a consistent picture of their work, which evaluators can objectively view to help students further identify and clarify goals. Students can see their progress and revise their thinking as needed. Some prefer to call this collection of designs, essays, and/or performance videos a *"process folio"* or a *"working portfolio."* This student-centered collection of work should also include student reflection and projection. If the student is to learn from the experience s/he must acknowledge both the achievement and the deficiency of their own work and be able to create a plan (with the teacher's help) toward improvement.

The *showcase portfolio* displays a collection of the student's best work that confirms higher levels of thinking. This portfolio might be part of an assessment at the end of a semester or project. According to the Portfolio Implementation Guide created by Pennsylvania Assessment Through Themes (PATT), this kind of portfolio would include entries in the following categories:

Investigation – Students generate their own information, draw conclusions, and report findings. This entry can focus on a student-generated question to which the student draws a conclusion. Entries related to a high school theatre curriculum require evidence that students can:

- Design a performance
- Critique a performance
- Research an historical arts concept

- Direct a group critique

- Produce persuasive writing

- Produce written justification for a clearly stated position or opinion

- Cross-check authenticity of material

Research – Students answer a question or solve a problem using data generated by someone else. The research entry would be presented in the form of a report complete with references. Entries may require students to:

- Review historical research

- Label explanatory notes/diagrams

- Propose and explain solutions to emerging issues

- Write and justify a petition

- Report on places, people, things, relating to the arts

- Write autobiography/biography

- Retrieve and summarize information (e.g. from internet)

- Write essays

- Conduct interviews

Application – Application happens when students use information for a purpose other than research and may be expressive or inventive in nature. The application may answer the question: How will I apply what I have learned to a real life experience? Entries require evidence that theatre students can:

- Conduct a demonstration

- Participate in a community service project

- Design posters and models

- Design and interpret performances

- Critique a public performance

- Compose a letter to the editor, pen pal or school official

- Write dialogues

- Write character studies

Open Choice – Students select any work that may exemplify growth, creativity, or work quality to complete the portfolio. The entry should strengthen the portfolio and may showcase a unique talent. The open choice entry allows students ownership to "strut their stuff" and show their individual talents. Entries may require evidence that students can:

- Design a performance

- Teach an arts lesson

- Produce learning logs, journals, essays, reports, speeches

- Write original poetry, songs, or rap compositions

- Produce a video or photo essay

- Draw a rendering of their character

(PATT 28, 38, 100)

According to the PATT survey, "portfolios provide an essential link for students, teachers, and parents to the educational process. They are an effective tool for students and educators to identify, clarify and achieve goals that were not previously assessable." (PATT 14) Creating a "document" that captures a concise picture of student progress allows students, parents, and teachers to see student achievement at a glance. The portfolio can enhance verbal and written communication, (discussion of entries with

teachers and parents; journal reflections, essay responses, etc) and since keeping the

portfolio "current" becomes the job of the student, portfolios can enhance responsibility.

Portfolio review also promotes interaction among students, teachers, parents and

administrators. Validation of portfolio work by school and/or community authorities

lends legitimacy to the process. When community members with expertise in theatre are

requested to "sign off" or "add comments" to a student portfolio, the work becomes

validated by yet another source. The portfolio can provide a wealth of ways to

authentically display and assess student progress in all of the arts. Conscientious

educators will recognize quality work in the portfolio and can evaluate students'

expertise. Rubrics can help to describe degrees of sophistication in reasoning, style and

content, and describe degrees of accuracy in organization, craftsmanship, and impact on

works within a portfolio.

Performance

Performance assessment is the heartbeat of theatre, music, and dance education.

Our discussion here brings us back to "authentic assessment" in performance. Not all

performance tasks are authentic. If students are asked to perform (with practice or on-

demand) beyond their development or personal experience, the assessment becomes

muddled and falls short of "authentic." If the task is not representative of what is taught

in the classroom or does not align with educational goals, it becomes counterproductive

and inauthentic. For instance, teachers should not ask students to perform a

Shakespearean monologue for a grade if they never worked on classical pieces in class.

Informed educators need to keep established curricular goals in mind when they

create authentic assessments. Performance assessments should not only delineate

curricular expectations, but guide and inspire students as well. Performance tasks can "stretch" a student's ability within the parameters of authentic assessment when they follow the characteristics of sound assessment discussed in Chapter Three. Performance reviews measure impact, craftsmanship, methods, content, and sophistication. Teachers can focus on one or more of these criteria at a time when assessing performances. The change in focus allows students to concentrate on their personal development toward their "personal best."

Rubrics can be used for to provide feedback before a formal graded assignment (such as in rehearsals), as well as for grading purposes. Student scores from rehearsal performance assessments completed during the semester would point to the student's strengths and weaknesses. Students could then practice in the areas where they are weakest before they are evaluated for a final grade. The choices of focus would inform the rubric and, in turn, the stakeholders.

Impact plays an important role in performance assessment. Including a specific goal in rubric form such as "persuasive characterization" or "unique character insight" might help teachers define and value "impact." Teachers should establish a place in performance rubrics for impact and creativity and a place for additional written comments on the performance. When factoring impact into assessment, teachers need to keep Bloom's whole hierarchy of higher levels of thinking in mind. In theatre, character analysis and portrayal naturally involve the first four steps of Bloom's taxonomy: knowledge, understanding, application, and analysis. The "impact" comes with synthesis and evaluation of the character when students formulate character traits and predict character outcomes - getting inside the head of the character. When the actor fully

understands and applies his knowledge of his character through character analysis, then the actor can synthesize and evaluate what the character does; the actor can evaluate what "works" for the character and create the character anew. Acting is a perfect occupation to exercise Bloom's highest levels of cognition – evaluation and creation. Impact happens when the performance process arrives at the highest levels of cognitive sophistication.

Teachers should also consider alternative performance tasks – tasks that are not solely based on characters on a stage. To create theatre, students must know many aspects of production. Authentic assessment can measures various skills. Tasks might include "performance tasks" like running lights, acting as stage manager, or designing or building a set. Tasks might also include sewing costumes or organizing props. Teachers must clearly define the assessment rubric and make space to allow for *impact* or *creativity*. Teachers who keep the performance assessment authentic, credible (valid and reliable), and user-friendly (feasible and appropriate) will follow educationally sound practice. They will view performance as more than an extra-curricular activity and it is likely that the educational community will recognize and begin to value that view.

"Best practice" involves assessment in a variety of formats. In theatre, this may mean assessing through a "cold reading," a timed improvisation, and/or a prepared monologue.

Essay tasks include any paper-and-pen assessments. These tasks also need to be aligned with the curriculum and follow the guidelines set forth earlier. Rubrics also serve as a means to assess essay work in an authentic way. Consider options for selected-response items (multiple choice, fill in the blanks) or constructed response. For the latter, students have a multitude of ways to respond on paper and are only limited by the teacher's

imagination. Students might respond to questions that require prior knowledge, reflection, reaction, or anticipation. They might also be challenged to analyze or evaluate a play, scene, situation, a set or costume design. An essay task may require students to discuss how lighting affects a scene or how a set gives clues to the drama. By substantiating their answers, students can think independently and create new brain connections.

Requiring use of stimulus material (graphics or audio visual aids) can increase the level of rigor in an essay task. Assessments requiring students to use graphic data to distinguish and/or classify information and relate assumptions or a hypothesis employs analytical skills. For example, asking theatre students to create their own original plans (set design) from stimulus material (basic stage measurements) requires synthesis. An item that asks students to appraise or critique a visual (perhaps a lighting or costume design) involves evaluation, the highest level of Bloom's taxonomy.

When teachers ask students to write dialogue or a monologue, they provide a ripe opportunity to engage students in a meaningful theatrical experience. Research into related theatrical themes and subsequent writings on the topics provide another way to use written assessment. All these writing tasks engage students in writing across the curriculum and maximize student understanding at greater levels of rigor (Bloom's top three).

Anonymous student anchors (sample essays from the past) collected by the teacher and shared with current students provide another means for goal setting in the classroom. Highlighting proficient as well as deficient parts of past student essays can enlighten students and provide in-hand, authentic rubrics.

Teachers should use a variety of tools to guide the learning process, foster creativity, and reflect on student achievement all along the educational path – not only at the end of the journey and not just for a final grade. Teachers should think of assessments as signposts along the way. Without signage, we would all be lost. How could anyone, even the most seasoned traveler, find their way? We all need signs to keep us on track! Students need "signs" to tell them if they are on the right track. Frequent assessment in a variety of formats provides students with needed guidance and helps teachers comprehend student competencies. Utilizing assessment data, theatre teachers can individualize instruction to student need. In theatre arts education, it is imperative for successful teachers to "sit at the side" of the "student driver" to maximize student potential – to assess.

Chapter Four
Reality Application

Throughout this thesis, various forms of assessment are discussed. There is no single best way to assess student understanding. Research suggests that teachers should assess often and in a variety of formats, using assessment as a reflective tool to lead students to think about their own thinking process. Frequent assessment becomes the "signage" to help students track their progress and to offer their "best performance." Frequent assessment helps the learner measure their progress. To begin the process of assessment, teachers need to consider what they wish to evaluate and determine which methodology matches their unique situation. Assessment is meaningless if it is not embedded in pedagogical practice that links curriculum and instructional practice. Assessment needs to be part of the process as well as the product of education. Teachers who offer ongoing constructive critical feedback in a safe and emotionally healthy environment can empower students to take charge of their own educational objectives.

This chapter discusses the positive and negative aspects of a variety of assessment resources available to drama teachers. The reader will find in-depth analysis of rubrics and scoring guides that could be used to assess a variety of theatrical challenges. Many rubric examples can be found on the internet, but there is no conclusive evidence supporting the effectiveness of these tools. Meaningful rubrics take time to create because teachers must reflect on and articulate clearly values they may not have previously examined or articulated. In addition, rubrics are difficult to share since they are generally designed for specific tasks. Teachers also need to be aware that rubrics are not the perfect method for all assessment. Sometimes they do not offer sufficient room for creativity since some works may be "off the chart" (successful or lacking and beyond

descriptive criteria) in one way or another. In these cases, a place for teacher comments would be important. Students, parents, and educational decision makers must understand the analysis of student performance data gathered through rubrics.

Future study in the field will inevitably include scientific evaluation of rubrics. Why are so many of the internet scoring guides untested in the classroom? Can research conclusively confirm that rubrics enhance student learning? Can large-scale, costly testing proponents use rubrics to effectively assess arts learning within the confines of tight state budgets and the time constraints of an academic year? Scientific data on the impact of rubrics on student progress will have to wait for future study. The outcome of such research would not only improve classroom learning, it could provide a monumental change in the way that states view learning in the arts. Everyone benefits when arts assessment becomes synonymous with authentic, rubric-based testing, that measures student achievement in the practice, as well as in the knowledge, of the arts.

Theatre teachers using rubrics assessment already understand the significant value of this tool. Rubrics form the backbone of arts assessment. They provide a structure which teachers can use to assess student learning and performance skill. While teachers have used rubrics for years, this method of assessment has only recently been widely discussed.

The following rubrics can offer a variety of assessments. We will look at a longitudinal rubric documenting and guiding accomplishment over time, a weighted rubric that notes the most important parts of the challenge, student self-assessments, teacher evaluation rubrics, and also rubrics that highlight collaborative learning. Scoring rubrics for performance tasks with slight variations in criteria in each are also included.

73

Drama teachers should find here a wealth of practical information to use in the classroom.

Students will need clear directions to describe the task and teachers must provide examples of student work at all levels of success. Also, teachers can and should *adapt* these resources to fit specific and unique curricular needs. These resources are only useful if they correlate with the theatre skills being taught in the classroom and if they actually guide and promote student learning.

Longitudinal Rubric

A longitudinal rubric tracks student progress over time. This kind of rubric helps a student master a specific skill. It may require students to make multiple attempts. On-going goals should take many forms and include a variety of task assessments. The longitudinal rubric could track the development of the goal through many tasks. This example adapted and modified from the PA. Framework (p37) includes spaces for notating multiple attempts and a place to record subsequent mastery of the standards. The standards of Creation and Performance as well as in Elements and Principles of Art (aligned with NJ CCCS) are the focus. Students should have a copy of this rubric before the assessment to know what they need to accomplish and teachers should keep the master copy to track student progress. Teachers should check or date student attempts and initial the rubric when students master skills. For example, during the course of the semester a technical theatre class may introduce vocabulary, design study, technology, and safety issues. While students work on set designs, they could analyze other sets as well as their own, using theatrical vocabulary, and demonstrating proficiency with computers and/or shop tools. Throughout the semester, students have formal and

informal opportunities to demonstrate proficiency in each of the areas listed above and below. Sample optional teacher codes may show an "I" when skills are introduced, a "W" when students work on skills, and an "A" when students accomplish goals. Teachers may choose to have a minimum number of "Ws" (working) before assigning an "A" (accomplished). This structure follows educational doctrine that tells us students need to encounter new subject matter and work with it in many ways before teachers assess student ability. Any arrangement of codes and/or sequences that work for the teacher to guide and assess is good. This longitudinal rubric directly aligns with state arts standards and readily adapts to any other skill assessed over time as students move toward proficiency.

9/18	9/24	9/29	10/1	10/15	Technical Theatre Class (dates of accomplishment)
	I		W	W	A. Development of design skills (uses design elements and principles in age/developmentally appropriate manner to create drawings)
					B. Development of design skills (uses design principles to evaluate/revise personal work)
I	W	A			C. Vocabulary (uses vocabulary related to production and exhibition of the stage: proscenium, thrust, drill press, linear foot, etc)
					D. Specific styles (uses knowledge of cultural and historical styles to create sets, costumes, etc.)
					E. Communication (creates artwork to inform and persuade)
					F. Analysis of artworks through production or exhibition
					G. Practice (uses journal and/or practice in teacher or self-directed activities)
I	W	W		A	H. Safety issues (uses teacher assigned equipment, tools and materials in safe and appropriate manner and with appropriate care and maintenance)
					I. Performances (demonstrates awareness of and/or participates in school, local, and national tech theatre events)
					J. Traditional and Contemporary Technologies (uses traditional and contemporary technologies to create works for the theatre)
					K. Furthering understanding in the humanities (uses the creation of theatrical costumes and sets to broaden understanding in the humanities)

(PA Framework)

An example of how to use the rubric might look like this: on September 18 the teacher spoke at length about shop safety. The teacher would then enter that date at the top of the rubric and mark "I" to the left of H. On September 22 and September 29 students were asked to demonstrate their working knowledge of shop safety as they worked in the shop. "W" would be placed in the columns to the left of H under the appropriate dates. At a future date when shop safety is fully demonstrated (in practical application and through written exam) "A" would be placed left of H. There could be multiple "W"s and "A"s to show work and accomplishment. This assessment tool, kept in a visible place, informs students where they stand on mastery of skills necessary for promotion and/or recommendation to the next grade or level of expertise. Longitudinal rubrics give educators a chart to track student understanding and proficiency in all of the core curriculum content standards. Every informed New Jersey high school classroom could have a visual way to demonstrate that theatre arts teachers are keeping score and that their students are in the game to win.

Weighted Rubric

Weighted rubrics can explicitly describe to students and parents what concepts are important for certain activities. In the example that follows from "The Advantages of Rubrics" series found at www.teachervision.fen.com, the teacher stresses the importance of descriptive characters delivered to us through the language of the student author.

Weighted fiction-writing content rubric

Criteria	4	3	2	1
PLOT: "What" and "Why" 25%	Both *plot* parts are fully developed. .25 x 4 = 1.00 point	One of the *plot* parts is fully developed and the less developed part is at least addressed. .25 x 3 = .75 point	Both *plot* parts are addressed but not fully developed. .25 x 2 = .50 point	Neither *plot* parts are fully developed. .25 x 1 = .25 point
SETTING: "When" and "Where" 25%	Both *setting* parts are fully developed. .25 x 4 = 1.00 point	One of the *setting* parts is fully developed and the less developed part is at least addressed. .25 x 3 = .75 point	Both *setting* parts of the story are addressed but not fully developed. .25 x 2 = .50 point	Neither *setting* parts are developed. .25 x 1 = .25 point
CHARACTERS: "Who" described by appearance, personality, character traits, and behavior. 50%	The main *characters* are fully developed with much descriptive detail. The reader has a vivid image of the characters. .50 x 4 =2.00 points	The main *characters* are developed with some descriptive detail. The reader has a vague idea of the characters. .50 x 3 = 1.50 points	The main *characters* are identified by name only. .50 x 2 = 1.00 point	None of the *characters* are developed or named. .50 x 1 = .50 point

(teachervision.fen.com)

As this example shows, when students know the varying points, or weight, for each task, they see that not all elements are equal. This is an important message in life as well as in literature. A weighted rubric clearly identifies the most important aspects of the assessment. In this example character is more important than plot. This type of rubric could be recalculated each year to reflect different elements emphasized in a particular

class. Any rubric can be weighted to emphasize particular parts of an authentic task, but it is difficult to calculate the scores – which can make grading cumbersome. The trick is to keep the math as simple as possible. Weighted rubrics can often work well in large-scale exams where comprehensive testing occurs. The weighted point system not only demonstrates varying value on different tasks, but can help teachers arrive at a calculated whole number for a total score. Teachers should cautiously consider the task value as the primary criterion and the calculation of score points as a subsidiary concern. Teachers need to keep in mind the relative importance of each task represented by a point value, and not be driven by ease of configuring the numbers.

Student Self-Assessment

As researchers learn more about the way people learn, scientists tell us that student self-assessment is a crucial ingredient in education. Student reflection is an essential part of learning. Through self-reflection, or self-assessment, students "think about thinking;" thereby practicing metacognition.

In his text, Getting Assessment Right: Drama, Steve Russell offers the following two scoring guides for student self-reflection and evaluation. The data on these forms could be easily quantified into numerical grades. Our goal must be to get students to take responsibility for their own education, so it makes sense to build their ownership of their learning little by little over time. When students have a voice in their goals as well as a perception of their progress they feel empowered, since ultimately, students must make educational and life choices on their own.

Here follows a form for student reflection with space for them to discuss their goals. Student and teacher could pass this document back and forth in an ongoing

dialogue. Along with the "check" system, the rubric allows space for the student to create his/her own action plan. This assessment not only allows for student reflection, but also helps him or her develop a future plan. It gives students the chance to develop their own future work. Typically, educators tell students what to do instead of letting students formulate their own learning goals. Consider the message uninformed teachers send when they constantly force-feed "to-do lists" to students. The message is that students have no say in their education, their input is unimportant, and they are merely passive players in the process. These tactics keep students "on the bench" where they can never get "in the game." Educators who perpetuate this practice keep themselves and their students off track. Students who have no ownership of their education grow apathetic to learning. They show no personal academic drive because they never needed any.

Informed educators will keep the students inside the "learning loop" and hold them responsible not only for the results of their education, but also for the planning of it. These teachers will set up opportunities for students to join the learning team of teachers, students, parents and administration. When teachers encourage self-reflection, evaluation, and planning, they keep students centered on their educational growth. This process generally works in the ego-centric world of the student.

On the following page is a "Student Classroom Participation Reflection" form with a reminder to "fill in thoughtfully" which puts the onus on the student for truth and introspection when reflecting on their own work. The obligation to be fair with others as well as oneself acts as an important element in self-reflection. This life skill will impact student learning and understanding far beyond the classroom. Encouraging students to

see their classroom theatre experience as part of "the big picture" of life sends an

invaluable lesson. Relevance makes the learning meaningful and long lasting. That fact

alone gives educators good reason to fully invest students in their own education process.

While the following form addresses classroom participation in its current state, teachers

could easily use it to encourage student/teacher dialogue on multiple performance skills.

Student Classroom Participation Reflection

Name:_____

Your drama teacher is evaluating you on the curriculum expectations and learning skills listed below. These all have to do with working together in groups in drama. Your teacher may use some of the information you provide on this form when making decisions about your marks and learning skills evaluation. Fill it in thoughtfully.

	Self-Assessment		Teacher Assessment		
	Consistently	I will work on this	Consistently	Please work on this	Level
I show respect for others, by:					
- listening to other students when they are talking.					
- looking at people when they are talking.					
- redirecting the attention of others to the person who is talking.					
- asking for the opinion and suggestions of everyone in my group.					
- resolving disagreements positively.					
- avoiding put-downs.					
I use good manners, by:					
- asking and not telling.					
- waiting for my turn.					
- saying 'thank-you'.					
I show responsibility to my group, by:					
- speaking about the topic.					
- using time wisely.					
- encouraging others.					
- working toward the group's goals.					
- doing a fair share of the workload.					
- taking on different jobs within the group.					
- compromising.					

Action Plan
List some specific steps that you will take next to improve your group skills.

(Russell)

Student Unit Self Evaluation	
Name:	This is a form you can use to reflect on your learning and inform the teacher about your work. Fill it in carefully. Reflection gives meaning to experience.

In this unit I worked on...
List the jobs you did, the roles you took on within your group and what you contributed.

The part I did best...
Describe the highest level of achievement you attained in this unit.

What I'll change next time...
Explain what steps you need to take next in order to improve your achievement on similar tasks in the future.

I learned that...
Explain what significant new learning has taken place for you.

What I want you to notice about my work...
Describe the particular strengths in your work or areas where you feel you have exceeded your expectations or gone beyond your earlier achievements.

(Russell)

This form acts as a catalyst for student introspection. Unlike most rubrics that force the assessment into little boxes, this one offers an open space for students to write and reflect on their performance. It allows the student to cite his/her "best" work and provides a place for the teacher to see the "best work" through the student's eyes. Once

81

again, the assessment inspires and rewards metacognition. In explaining what "significant new learning has taken place," students must reflect on their learning and create long term memory of that performance. As Mr. Russell, author of Getting Assessment Right: Drama states at the top of this form, "Reflection gives meaning to experience." When we reflect on past performance, we revisit the relevance of the performance. We also think of the act in a new and meaningful way, which helps the experience/learning find a place in into our long term memory. Students use verbal/linguistic skills when they describe the experience and reflect on the performance. Here we see Gardner's "Multiple Intelligences" at work. Students also use significant analytic skills when they explain their performance level on this guide by describing "significant new learning" and "next steps to improve achievement." Students who exercise higher levels of thinking using multiple intelligences enhance their sustained memory. (Silver)

The following contains a rubric within a rubric from Getting Assessment Right: Drama. It explains general expectations and then delineates the tasks within each expectation. This rubric clearly breaks down steps that lead to proficiencies. For example, the expectation: "Convey character through the effective use of voice and movement techniques" is further defined by a specific task. The specific descriptions that follow assess the observable performances from lessons taught in "effective use of voice/movement/techniques, and believability of character." Teachers could use this rubric to evaluate a scene or an entire production, or they might use it to assess individual descriptions so that the student sees his/her strong and weak points in the performance. This rubric asks the teacher (and perhaps later a student observer) for specific evidence to

support observations. A level number that represents gradations of excellence

accompanies the description of each specific part of the observed performance. This

rubric not only describes the performance, but also justifies the observation with specific

evidence which will facilitate grading. Written evidence within the rubric validates the

grade and clearly presents the objectives.

Evaluation Evidence Sheet

Assignment:_____ scene presentation _____
Date: _____   Student: _____

Expectation	Observation criteria	Level	Overall level
	Specific evidence		
Demonstrate an understanding of the tasks and interrelated responsibilities of individuals in the production of theatre	Handle props with care and as organized backstage		
	Provide program information		
	Line and blocking memorization		
	Punctuality, commitment to rehearsals.		
Reinterpret characters, using suggestions or notes provided by peers, and demonstrating further insight in the characters in subsequent rehearsals and performances	Taking notes from the director		
	Listening and responding to peers		
	Characterization develops over time		
	Further insights into character are revealed		
Convey character through the effective use of voice and movement techniques	Effective use of voice		
	Effective use of movement		
	Evidence of techniques being used		
	Believability of characterization		
Effective use of voice in portraying a character	Uses a range of volume levels		
	Uses a range of pitch		
	Varies the tempo to enhance meaning and impact		

(Russell)

83

Collaborative learning provides another avenue for students to achieve sustained memory. In working together as a team, students once again must exercise their "social intelligence." In this "Daily Collaboration Assessment Form" from the Ohio Arts Education Assessment Project, students have clear descriptions of the many roles within a working group. This list describes group participants of all ages and raises awareness of group dynamics. The form asks students to identify the traits of each group participant; this assessment teaches students to acknowledge and assess the personalities found in any group. It also has special significance as a theatrical exercise as a form of character study, as traits observed may well become a resource for future character analysis. This form immediately becomes relevant to the students' experience because it offers models for future characters. It also allows for interpersonal and intrapersonal investigation. When tactfully used, this rubric allows students to understand how others impact their emotions through definable behavior. Learning grows from relevance.

Daily Collaboration Assessment Form

DAY:_____

Role and Description	Your Name	Name of Teammate 1	Name of Teammate 2	Name of Teammate 3
	Rating	Rating	Rating	Rating
Information Giver: Offers facts, beliefs, and personal experience.				
Information Seeker: Asks for additional input or clarification of ideas and opinions that have been presented.				
Initiator: Helps the group get moving by proposing a solution, giving new ideas, providing a new organizational scheme to solve a problem.				
Summarizer: Pulls together related ideas, reflects what the group seems to be agreeing or disagreeing on, and tests for consensus by offering a decision based on what others said.				
Administrator: Keeps people on track and aware of the time.				
Harmonizer: Seeks to smooth over tension in the group by settling differences among others.				
Blocker: Indulges in negative and stubbornly resistant behavior, including disagreements and groundless opposition to ideas. Reintroduces a topic or idea after the group has rejected it.				
Avoider: Displays noninvolvement in the group's work by such behavior as pouting, cynicism, or nonchalence.				
Recognition Seeker: Calls attention to self by behavior such as boasting, providing information to the group about own qualifications or experience, or reporting personal achievements.				
Distractor: Goes off on tangents, tells irrelevant stories, etc.				

(Ohio Arts Education Assessment Project)

The following guide offers a breakdown of scores for student reflections, but does not specifically describe what the teacher needs to look for in the work. This somewhat vague guide might not function well for grade documentation, however, it might help guide student progress as they work ("W") on the skill of reflection. Clarification of phrases such as "specific examples," "a few examples," and "some roles" would make this rubric more effective. For instance, if the guide stated "three or more examples," "two examples," and "one specific example" it would allow for more objective interpretation. This might be used in conjunction with student examples and/or anchor papers which model expected results. These excerpts come from the Ohio Arts Education Assessment Project.

Teacher's Scoring Guide for Students' Collaboration Reflection

Score	Criteria
4	Student describes how various roles contribute to collaboration and cites specific examples from his/her project.
3	Student describes how some roles contribute to collaboration and cites a few examples from his/her project.
2	Student describes some roles.
1	Student is unable to describe roles.

(Ohio Arts Education Assessment Project)

Again, the criteria in the Teacher's Scoring Guide for Student Research are not specific enough to make it valuable because the vague descriptors do not unequivocally show students what excellent work looks like. Little differentiation between scores could easily lead to confusion and debate. The ambiguity in the statements leads teachers back to subjective scoring and gives them little evidence to justify grades to students, parents,

and administration. While it is not a stellar example of a scoring guide, it is typical of forms many teachers have seen and used. Confronted with such a vague guide, the wise teacher should insist on clarifying the criteria before adapting it for their own use.

Teacher's Scoring Guide for Student Research

Score	Criteria
4	Student correctly provides all bibliographical information, thoroughly summarizes information, and identifies authors' viewpoints.
3	Student correctly provides all bibliographical information, summarizes information, and identifies some authors' viewpoints.
2	Student correctly provides some bibliographical information, partially summarizes information, and identifies some authors' viewpoints.
1	Student provides little correct bibliographical information, summarizes little information, and does not identify authors' viewpoints.

(Ohio Arts Education Assessment Project)

SCASS Arts Education Consortium developed the rubric below to assess a two person "open script," or ambiguous scene. The National Arts Assessment Training Institute used this rubric. There could be some confusion over the difference between "exceptional level" and "appropriate level." Clearer description, such as "consistently using all standards mentioned above throughout the entire performance" and "using most standards mentioned above in most, but not all, the performance" would make this guide much more effective. On the lower end of the scale, the distinction between "inconsistent level" and "minimal level" also needs clarification. A possible solution to this language dilemma might include "does not use standards throughout performance" and "occasionally uses few standards." Remember that succinct wording should not jeopardize clarity in a rubric. The function of the guide is to adequately describe the performance so that all parties involved, (teachers, students, and parents) understand exactly what is asked at each performance level.

87

	Voice	Movement	Characterization	Ensemble
4	Students communicate expressively, enunciating and using variety of rate, pitch and volume to effectively illuminate character. Students demonstrate an exceptional level of vocal ability.	Students move expressively, using variety of gesture, body movement and facial expression to effectively illuminate character. Students demonstrate an exceptional level of movement ability.	Students communicate expressively, illuminating the life and world of the characters. Students demonstrate an exceptional level of believability.	Students collaborate seamlessly to effectively illuminate the world of the scene. Students demonstrate an exceptional level of performance ability.
3	Students enunciate clearly, using rate, pitch and volume to express character. Students demonstrate an appropriate level of vocal ability.	Students move cleanly, using gesture, body movement and facial expression to express character. Students demonstrate an appropriate level of movement ability.	Students communicate clearly, expressing the life and world of the characters. Students demonstrate an appropriate level of believability.	Students collaborate effectively to express the world of the scene. Students demonstrate an appropriate level of performance ability.
2	Students attempt to enunciate and use vocal variety. Students demonstrate an inconsistent level of vocal ability.	Students attempt to use gesture, body movement and facial expression. Students demonstrate an inconsistent level of movement ability.	Students attempt to express the life and world of the characters. Students demonstrate an inconsistent level of believability.	Students attempt to collaborate to express the world of the scene. Students demonstrate an inconsistent level of performance ability.
1	Students use limited or inappropriate enunciation and vocal variety. Students demonstrate a minimal level of vocal ability.	Students use limited or inappropriate movement. Students demonstrate a minimal level of movement ability.	Students use limited or inappropriate acting technique. Students demonstrate a minimal level of believability.	Students use limited or inappropriate collaboration. Students demonstrate a minimal level of performance ability.

(SCASS)

The most important point to remember is that teachers benefit form using a
variety of ways to describe student work and document progress. Teachers can use a
clear rubric, one that leaves little room for misunderstanding, as credible documentation
for grades. Parents and students alike accept scoring when the structure for the
assessment is clear, well defined, relevant, and as objective as possible. Students work
more efficiently when the assignment and the grading criteria are clear and in full view.
Well-written rubrics and scoring guides smooth the education process for teachers and
students alike.

Assessment should be a natural part of daily instruction. Teachers should be a "guide at the side" to keep learners on track and focused on excellence, on proficiency, and on individual creativity. In "real life," adults face assessment every day and in a variety of ways including writing time sheets, professional reviews, and formal reports. It is time to bring "real life" relevancy into the arts classroom. It is time for daily assessment in a similar variety of forms.

Chapter Five
Relevant Education

This paper has discussed not only the need, but the importance of assessment in the arts; legislation dictates it, educational theory demands it. Previous chapters have shown how research demonstrates that there exists a positive correlation between learning in the arts and intellectual development and that assessment enhances learning in the arts. Astute educators acknowledge the need for frequent and varied assessment of student work. Teachers need to know, and be able to articulate, what their students are learning. Educators have a variety of tasks and rubrics for guiding assessment, but can they put it all together to guide students to a complete and meaningful education in the arts? We are close to finding the answer.

Educators know that there are always obstacles on the path to success; in fact, teenaged students face a path full of obstacles. Teens face the need for social time and peer acceptance, and raise questions regarding life, love, and the pursuit of happiness. If educators (and students) adjust their perspective and reframe obstacles as opportunities, problems can become possibilities and they can eliminate some of the distracting debris. As a result, we can all begin to feel successful. When students link education with daily life, they will easily put new information into the brain's long-term storage. Reframing real life events into educational endeavors and reframing school challenges through a "real life" lens will connect them and create relevance. Elbert Hubbard, literary philosopher, wrote, "A school should not be a preparation for life. A school should be life." Perhaps the segue to that quote would be: when school is life, education will be about emotions, values, and everyday transactions. Education will become the process by which we become who we are.

Research tells us that we learn best in social situations when we interact with our peers. The arts offer perfect social opportunities for teen interaction especially in theatre classes. Actors create characters with social status, personal idiosyncrasies, and relationships that parallel real life. Theatre activity offers a social framework for teens to learn through drama. Working as an ensemble creates the "social circle" that our brains need. A variety of sources, including the National Research Council, tells us that we retain information by linking it to prior knowledge. New information must directly relate to our own understanding. Empirical evidence proves that theatre offers fertile ground for learning because theatre deals with real life situations and requires sustained collaboration. Characters in plays sometimes struggle with the same issues as the students who portray them. Both classical and contemporary dramatic literature explore issues of self-doubt, identity, mortality, relationships, and violence. These same controversies plague today's teenagers. This link between teen reality and theatre can become the "hook" for theatre arts education. Students can safely act out teen questions and concerns on stage as a character in a production.

Because the arts and entertainment industry in the United States has become a large-scale job market, the vocational schools of New Jersey have established programs in the Performing Arts. They have focused on theatre and dance as major fields of study and have included vocal music in their course offerings. The performing arts have arrived in New Jersey public schools as a training ground for "The Entertainment Business." Teaching performing arts in a vocational setting suggests an educational philosophy that equates the arts with the trades such as auto mechanics, welding, floral design, and dentistry. In this world of supply and demand, people competent in

performing arts are in demand. Vocational-Technical schools will provide the first place to begin a case study of "high stakes" assessment to decide student eligibility for certification at graduation. This "high stakes" assessment, developed by a consortium of practicing New Jersey theatre and dance teachers, will fulfill the performing arts students' exit exam requirements. It will be the equivalent of trade based certification testing for students studying plumbing, cosmetology, medical assistance or other trades taught in Vocational-Technical schools. According to a New Jersey State Department memo issued in 2001:

> All seniors completing the vocationally certified programs are federally mandated to take (nationally-normed) industry-based entry level exams as a required exit test. This includes the visual and performing arts which fall under the aegis of the *Arts: Audio/Video Technology and Communications* cluster; one of 16 career clusters delineated by the US Department of Education. Unfortunately, no industry-based arts exam currently exists. In order to comply with these regulations, teachers around the state have historically relied on locally developed exams. These tests range widely in terms of rigor and reliability as measures of student competency in career driven programs. (NJDOE memo)

As of 2001, no such exam existed for arts assessment on the national, state, or local level. So the New Jersey State Department of Education sent out a call to assemble teachers of theatre and dance from vocational schools for the purpose of creating a state-wide exit exam based on state standards and integrated with the concept of authentic assessment. These educators formed the consortium for the New Jersey Performing Arts Pilot Exit Exam which met regularly over a three year span to devise, develop, and

disseminate an appropriate assessment to measure competence in the arts at graduation. Other vocational-technical programs already had exit exams in place. Students studying welding, cosmetology, nursing, plumbing, marine science, building trades, auto repair, etc. had both written and practical exams, approved by the professionals in their fields, to prove professional competency. To comply with the law, performing arts Vo-Tech seniors had to take and pass an exit exam. By creating a senior exit exam for drama and dance students, the Vo-Tech Performing Arts teachers in New Jersey have led the way for other states. Dale Schmid, Visual and Performing Arts Coordinator for the Office of Academic and Professional Standards, guided the process. The journey took these teachers through intense training in authentic item writing, sensitivity and bias review, curriculum alignment, and principles of good test construction. The resulting assessment became two tests known as Occupational Competency Exit Exams for the arts which blends both paper and pencil testing and on-demand performance assessment.

The efforts of the group have also been linked at the national level through the State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards – better known as SCASS. A goal of SCASS is to create an authentic National data pool of arts assessments. According to their literature, "SCASS is the only state-based national initiative working to develop and support innovative assessment methodologies aligned with state and national standards." (NJDOE) SCASS operates under the auspices of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). CCSSO oversees SCASS to ensure that the assessment process mirrors the overall vision and mission of providing leadership, advocacy and service through partnerships with educational personnel toward implementing high standards and valid assessments to maximize student achievement.

CCSSO and SCASS are particularly interested in authentic assessment aligned in compliance with the educational goals of NCLB legislation.

In 2001, approximately twenty vocational school teachers of dance and theatre convened to undertake the daunting task of creating a state-wide assessment for exiting Vo-Tech theatre and dance seniors. Their assessment product may well become a national prototype for a future public school arts exit exam. They worked together to create an exam in line with the goals of authentic assessment; a test aligned with recently approved National and State standards in the arts that included multiple, fair, balanced and universal measures. It is reassuring to note that practicing classroom teachers in the arts created the test. Over the course of three years, these teachers met, discussed, and debated curricular issues that affect arts classrooms. They continually asked: "What exactly are the most important issues and skills of our curriculum?" "How will we pose the tasks to truly discover if our students have achieved competency?" "Is there any kind of bias in the way tasks are presented?" "How does each test question fit into the state standards?" "How does the exam coincide with and inform our own teaching?" The process of analysis took the consortium members through a labyrinth of investigative questioning. In the process, teachers developed a heightened awareness of the way that item construction can affect (positively or negatively) student response. Consortium members began to think about communicating and collaborating in new ways which ultimately improved their instruction.

The consortium of theatre and dance teachers trained for many days in task writing, analysis, and bias and sensitivity review. The group was fully dedicated to the idea of *authentic* assessment. They created tests in theatre and dance involving a variety

of very specific performance tasks. The theatre tasks include: a timed written test including selected response (i.e. multiple choice) and constructed response (i.e. short answer and essay with and without visual stimulus material), two rehearsed one-minute monologues, (one selected by the student and one from a bank of approved monologues), one short improvisation, and one cold reading of a scene. A team of teachers and working theatre professionals reviewed these performance tasks at each test site (northern, central and southern) and scored according to a detailed rubric. Students from each region gather at a centrally located school or performance venue for a full academic day of on-demand testing.

The written test includes sixty selected response items, three short constructed response items, and two extended constructed response items. The teacher's guide provides detailed rubrics and student anchors accompany each constructed response question. Teachers do not grade the work of their own students, but do pair with outside graders to review the work of other schools. A grading guide links each item to both the National and New Jersey standards, describes a level of rigor, and cites a bibliographical source. The following sample page from the teacher's guide refers to an item which requires students to draw inferences and write a short essay about a play from a set design sketch. The question asks students to use an extended response to reflect on the type of set, era, social class and mood presented in the visual information of a set rendering. It also asks the students to support their answer with specific observations. Students are encouraged to use specific language and pictorial references in their answers. The rubric appears to be comprehensive, but does the scoring guide objectively define the levels of achievement? Does it unequivocally quantify a grade? Most would say "no." The

question does not ask for a specific number of terms or phrases needed to achieve at each of the grading levels. This omission could leave both student and teacher without guidance and clarity. Keep in mind, however, that the New Jersey Performing Arts Exit Exam is under continual yearly revision based on student performance and curriculum reform. It is very possible that modifications have already been made to this rubric.

Creating and implementing task specific rubrics is time consuming, as members of the consortium know. With this in mind, theatre arts teachers need to connect with other theatre arts teachers and form a local, grassroots, network to share rubric resources. Arts assessment at this local level could prove to be an effective way to involve teachers in professional development and simultaneously provide arts students with authentic challenges. Performance assessments will be required at the local level also and rubrics present one of the only ways to manage the logistics of grading students in this manner. Continual revision of rubrics for the purpose of student and teacher understanding and objectivity remains primary.

Here is the scoring guide sample from the New Jersey Performing Arts Consortium exit exam which responds to the task: "By looking at the set design you can draw inferences about the play. In essay form describe those inferences, including in your answer the type of set, era, social class and mood. Support your answers with specific observations from the drawing." (NJ Theatre Exit Examination Pilot, 2004)

Social Class -As long as answer is supported, could be the following: upper class, upper/middle or middle class.
Possible references: furniture, line, chandelier, windows, drapery, linens, look of woman.

Type of set: As long as answer is supported could be the following: Box set, proscenium set, or realistic set, big set, multilevel set
Possible references: 3 walls, defined arch

Mood- As long as answer is supported could be the following: light, upbeat, happy, cheerful or conversely lonely, isolated, secluded, mellow or calm.
Possible references: Color choices fabric greenery lights.

Era- As long as answer is supported could be the following: Victorian, 1800s, early 1900, 1700
Possible references: dress style of furniture use of candles ceiling height

Scoring Guide:

 4 The student clearly, coherently and insightfully analyzes the scenic designer's rendering supporting their comments with specific observations from the drawing.

 3 The student addresses the majority of the concerns called for in the question in a clear and concise language. However they wither fail to address all of the categories or support some of their observations.

 2 The student gives a limited, sometimes inaccurate response to the question.

 1 The student's response is brief, incomplete, inaccurate, unclear or lacking in detail. There is little effort shown and or no attempt to follow the directions and format called for in the question.

 0 The student provides an irrelevant or unintelligible response to the question.

Level of Rigor: 4
Key Descriptor: Analysis/Evaluation
National Standard: 3. Designing by conceptualizing & producing artistic environments
NJ Standard: 1.3 Elements and Principles of the arts
Verifiable Source: Scene Design and Stage Lighting. 6ᵗʰ Edition. W. Oren Parker & R. Craig Wolf, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.

(NJ Performing Arts Consortium)

The rubrics and scoring guides created to accompany the exit exam continue to evolve based on student performance. Considerable professional and artistic thought and expression continues to pour in as this state-wide test evolves. The consortium maintains their commitment to the creation of a viable and worthy document by revisiting the exit exam throughout the year to rework the test as well as the answer guides.

Rachel Evans, a former teacher at the School of Performing Arts at Middlesex County Vo-Tech School and currently a theatre arts faculty member at Kean University, recalls her experience working on test development:

> This process of projecting into my own future, based on my past experiences happened often: deciding which units of theatre history had to be covered, deciding which plays needed to be covered (in full, or would in-summary be sufficient?) But these questions arose frequently AFTER I had participated in the item development sessions. I'm not sure if I would've been able to anticipate all the curricular issues raised by the exam. Some, yes. Maybe even most. But the process of debating each and every item down to the very word choice in a definition was one of the most effective and lasting means of professional development I had during my five years at the School of Performing Arts. The intellectual exercise alone was worthy! (Evans)

The process included creating a common value system among many creative artists, some of whom were not interested in compromise. Nancy Jarrell, Drama Director at the Vocational-Technical Performing Arts Academy of Gloucester County Institute of Technology, reflects on her experience as part of the exit exam team:

> Getting everyone to agree on topics that should be tested has been the biggest problem. Everyone teaches different things at their school and has different amounts of time. Some programs are two year, whereas most are four year. How can we test two year students on the same thing as four year students? Is there a difference in scores? Also, being artists, we all think our own way is the best way, so compromise was difficult. (Jarrell)

98

Nancy also remarks that she now creates much better test questions because she is aware of the proper format. Rachel adds:

> Ultimately, the real benefit of going through the process was improved delivery of instruction to my students. I was able to explain concepts better having identified the appropriate word choice with Nancy and Meg in an earlier meeting. I was able to both streamline and expand the curriculum in meaningful ways. The four-year experience at the School of Performing Arts became increasingly more logical and organized as I practiced curriculum development with the guideposts established by the exam's scope.
>
> That's not to say that I was "teaching to the test." I was "teaching to my expertise," knowing what was important to my own theatre education, and in some cases, matching that knowledge first with the exam, and secondly, in a more refined and processed manner, with my classroom activities. (Evans)

All consortium members discovered that this in-depth investigation into item development and curriculum dissection would ultimately inform their teaching and benefit their students. This positive result confirms that we do learn best when fully engaged and learning subject matter in-depth. The research on authentic assessment and learning styles works for students of all ages and on all sides of the educational table.

The consortium continues to modulate and adjust based on student and teacher feedback. Student anchor samples (copies of student work which exemplify a particular level of competency) continue to accumulate, and detailed rubrics continue to be refined as part of the model for all teachers to emulate.

In summary, an ideal assessment must:

- Know exactly what you are assessing.

- Align with standards

- Take bias considerations into account

- Create authentic tasks

- Decide on the form of item (constructed response, selected response, performance, portfolio) that is most appropriate

- Develop rubrics and/or scoring guides to show specifics and inform analysis

The answer to the recurring question "How do we assess learning in the arts?" becomes clear. Arts teachers need to assess often and in a variety of ways, including performance and written formats that demand the use of higher levels of thinking. Teachers need to focus on multiple intelligences and learning styles to challenge and encourage students. Arts educators need to understand what their students understand and, at the same time, acknowledge and support creative approaches. Linking to prior knowledge and providing opportunities for reflection and metacognition become essential to the education process as do "chunking" information and providing in-depth instruction. By developing clear and descriptive outlines (rubrics) of desired outcomes, educators clear the path to success for their students. Assessment focused on student experience creates the necessary authenticity. Teachers need to take this path to assess theatre arts in New Jersey High Schools. While this presents a challenge in terms of time for pedagogic reflection and restructuring, it can prove exceedingly worthwhile and rewarding. Consider the advantage students have when they truly understand and can

articulate their competencies. Consider also, the impact of giving concrete evidence of student understanding to parents, administrators, and students. This evidence empowers all parties involved in the educational process.

Theatre educators need to sit in the director's chair, with a rubric on the clipboard, and guide students scene by scene through the play. They must simultaneously give guidance on backstage activity as well as action in front of curtain. Teachers need to be versed in educational and scientific "dramaturgy" and be the "guide at the side" to students learning the craft. Daily assessment becomes critical. Teachers must distribute scripts, assess, read through play, assess, block scene, assess, do character study, assess, make costumes, assess, develop lighting plot, and assess.

Survey of Resources

This project relies on many sources. One of the foremost is <u>Arts With The Brain in Mind</u> by Eric Jensen. Mr. Jensen has taught elementary school through college level and is best known for his work with brain-based learning. He is a much sought-after speaker and a member of both the Society for Neuroscience and the New York Academy of Sciences. In his 2001 text, Mr. Jensen cites research that shows the *long term* benefits of arts involvement and he encourages sustained involvement in the arts. His disclaimer insists that he gains no personal benefit by revealing the facts of his research, which strongly points out that study in the arts makes us human. Mr. Jensen also wrote <u>Teaching With the Brain in Mind</u>, a 1998 publication, which shows relationships between the functions of the brain and educational practice. He points out what works for and against the learning process. Both reader-friendly books offer relevant educational information.

Nancy Pistone has written many texts which are beneficial to understanding arts assessment. Ms. Pistone, an arts consultant and former Supervisor of Visual Arts for the Pittsburgh Public Schools in Pennsylvania, wrote two books on specific ways to document learning: <u>Envisioning Arts Assessment: A Process Guide</u> and <u>Taking Full Measure</u>. In <u>Envisioning Arts Assessment</u>, Ms. Pistone gives a background for the development of standards and assessments and explains the challenges of assessing the arts. She examines the entire process of assessment development from planning through implementation. This text is published through a collaborative effort of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSS) and the Arts Education Partnership (AEP). AEP is a

private, non-profit coalition of organizations that promotes arts education. The partnership was formed through an agreement between the National Endowment for the Arts, the U.S. Department of Education, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and the Council of Chief State School Officers. AEP is administered by CCSSO. CCSSO, a non-profit organization, provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance services to help state education agencies understand, devise and execute policy, adopt initiatives to promote educational reform efforts, and engage in collaborative exchanges to share best practices and model solutions. Taking Full Measure is subtitled "Rethinking Assessment Through the Arts." Here, Ms. Pistone and Dennie Palmer Wolf team up to write about successful inter-disciplinary projects. Dennie Wolf has authored books on assessment and is the director of PACE (Performance Assessment Collaborative for Education) in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The two authors discuss portfolio and performance assessments in their text.

Howard Gardner, a researcher at Harvard Graduate School of Education, has written many books on the mind and human development. His work with Multiple Intelligences at Harvard's Project Zero has led the way to new thinking on intelligence. According to Mr. Gardner, we are no longer prisoners of an IQ rating, but have many new ways to assess and document intelligence. Mr. Gardner proposes that humans learn through various natural pathways, which include logical/mathematical, verbal/linguistic, visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and existentialist.

How People Learn is the culmination of work done by both the Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education and the National Research Council. John

Bransford, co-chair of the project, is a professor of psychology and co-director of the Learning Technology Center at George Peabody College at Vanderbilt University. He is also a senior research scientist at the University's John F. Kennedy Center. The text approaches learning as a science. It synthesizes educational theory and scientific brain research and paves the way to better understanding of the science of education. The text validates the hypothesis of some educational theorists through a scientific lens.

Judith Arter, from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, and Jay McTighe, authors of Scoring Rubrics in the Classroom, give the reader more insight into rubrics than was previously thought possible. This in depth text ably provides both teachers and administrators resources to increase teacher effectiveness and student performance. Devising questions and answers about performance criteria and assessment through the use of rubrics make up this text.

The most useful text on the subject to date is Educative Assessment; Designing Assessments to Inform and Improve Student Performance. Grant Wiggins' book warrants attention for future curriculum and instruction review. It advocates the use of portfolios, performance, and rubrics to promote student understanding and provide ongoing feedback. It also uncovers some of the myths of standardized tests and boasts an extensive bibliography. Grant Wiggins, is the president and director of programs for the Center on Learning, Assessment, and School Structure (CLASS) located in New Jersey. He has published other books on assessment and testing and has written numerous articles for educational journals.

In the teacher's resource handbook Getting Assessment Right: Drama, Steve Russell draws on his experiences as Head of Integrated Arts at Peterborough Collegiate

and President of the Council of Drama and Dance in Education in Canada to discuss practical means to assess drama activities in the classroom. Mr. Russell has also written a course of study in the dramatic arts and presented workshops on teacher qualifications in drama. He won TV awards for Best Youth Program, The Peel School Board of Excellence, and the TVOntario/OTF Award of Excellence. In this text, Mr. Russell gives practical solutions for contemporary theatre education challenges.

Research into the Item Development for the SCASS Arts National Item Pool with Dale Schmid, Visual and Performing Arts Coordinator, New Jersey State Department of Education, Office of Academic & Professional Standards, provided a ripe and relevant opportunity for collecting material and establishing a methodology. Working at the state department also afforded an opportunity to examine raw data on the New Jersey Vocational-Technical High School Theatre Exit Exam. The exit exam is the culmination of an on-going pilot process in which practicing educators in theatre and dance arts regularly meet to develop two specific and highly reflective state-wide assessment tools for students specializing in theatre and dance in pre-professional programs.

Works Cited

Anderson, L.W. and Krathwohl, eds. <u>A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and</u> <u>Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives</u>. New York: Longman, 2001.

Archbald, Doug A. and Fred M. Newmann. <u>Beyond Standardized Testing</u>. Reston: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1988.

Arter, Judith, and Jay McTighe. <u>Scoring Rubrics in the Classroom</u>. California: Corwin Press, 2001.

Arts Education Partnership, et al. <u>No Subject Left Behind: A Guide to Arts</u> <u>Education Opportunities in the 2001 NCLB Act</u>. Washington: 2004. <http://www.aep-arts.org/PDF%20Files/NoSubjectLeftBehind.pdf>.

---. <u>The Arts and Education: New Opportunities for Research</u>. Washington: 2004. <http://www.aep-arts.org>.

Berk, Ronald A., ed. <u>Performance Assessment</u>. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Bransford, John D., Ann L. Brown, and Rodney Cocking, eds. <u>How People Learn</u>. Committee on Developments in the Science of Learning. Washington: National Academy Press, 2000.

Bruner, Jerome. <u>The Process of Education</u>. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960.

Carnegie Forum's Task Force. <u>A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century</u>. Washington:1986.

Catterall, James. <u>Critical Links:Learning in the Arts and Student Social and Academic</u> <u>Development</u>. New Horizons for Learning. Washington: 2002. <www.newhorizons.org>. updated 12 June 2005.

"Constructed Response Scoring Giude." New Jersey Vocational Theatre Exit Exam. NJ Performing Arts Consortium. 2004.

Deasy, Richard J., ed. <u>Critical Links</u>. Arts Education Partnership Compendium. Washington: 2002. <www.aep-arts.org>.

Evans, Rachel. "Re: Exit Exam Thoughts." E-mail to Julie Lawrence. 6 April 2005.

Fiske, Edward B., ed. <u>Champions of Change</u>. AEP and Pres. Comm. On the Arts and the
       Humanities compendium. Washington: 1999.

Gardner, Howard. <u>Frames of Mind</u>. New York: BasicBooks, 1983.

---. <u>Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice</u>. New York: BasicBooks, 1993.

Herbert, Douglas. "Finding the Will and the Way to Make the Arts a Core Subject." <u>The
       State Education Standard.</u> Winter 2004.

Herman, Joan L., Pamela R. Aschbacher, and Lynn Winters. <u>A Practical Guide to
       Alternative Assessment</u>. Alexandria: ASCD, 1992.

"How to Weight Rubrics: Part four in a five-part series." <u>Family Education Network</u>.
       19 September 2004. <<u>http://www.teachervision.com</u>>.

Huitt, W. <u>Bloom's Taxonomy</u>. *Educational Psychology Interactive,* 4 October 2004.
       <<u>http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/cogsys/bloom.html</u>>.

Jarrell, Nancy. "Re: Exit exam info." E-mail to Julie Lawrence. 22 March 2005.

Jensen, Eric. <u>Arts With the Brain in Mind</u>. Alexandria: ASCD, 2001.

---. <u>Teaching With the Brain in Mind</u>. Alexandria: ASCD, 1998.

"Junkyard Wars for the Classroom." <u>Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators</u>.
       <<u>http://discoveryschool.com</u>>.

Killeen, Donald J., ed. <u>Transforming Education Through the Arts Challenge</u>. The
       National Arts Ed Consortium, Dept. of Art Ed. Ohio University, et al
       consortium. Columbus: Thompson Communications, 1997.

National Assessment of Educational Programs. <u>Arts Education Assessment Frameworks</u>.
       College Boards and Council for Basic Ed., Washington: CCSSO, 1997.
       <<u>http://www.nagb.org</u>>.

National Association of State Boards of Education. <u>The Complete Curriculum: Ensuring
       a place for the arts and foreign language in America's schools</u>. Alexandria: 2003.

National Endowment for the Arts. <u>Toward Civilization :A Report on Arts Education</u>.
       Washington:1988.

Nation At Risk, A – April 1983: Archived. <<u>http://www.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk</u>>.

New England Conservatory. "Journal for Learning Through Music." Summer 2003.

New Jersey State Board of Education. The New Jersey Model for Identifying Highly Qualified Teachers. 2004-05 edition. <www.state.nj.us>.

New Jersey State Department of Education. Visual and Performing Arts Curriculum Framework. 1999.

---. Core Curriculum Content Standards. April 2004.

No Child Left Behind. <www.whitehouse.gov/news/reports>. 4 October 2004.

Ohio Arts Education. The Power of Arts Assessment in Teaching and Learning. The Ohio Arts Council, Ohio Dept. of Ed., et al. Columbus: 1999.

"Oral Presentation Rubric." Professional Development-Hot Topics-Assessment. Pearson Education. 28 November 2004. <http://www.phschool.com>.

Paige, Rod. Letter to superintendents concerning arts as core subject in NCLB. July 2004.

Pennsylvania Department of Education. Pennsylvania Assessment Through Themes (PATT):Portfolio Implementation Guide. Harrisburg: 1998.

---. Pennsylvania Crosswalks Framework for Theatre. Theatre Education Associates, et al. collaboration. Harrisburg: 2002.

Pickett, Nancy, and Bernie Dodge. Rubrics for Web Lessons. June 2001. <http://edweb.sdsu.edu/triton/july/rubrics/RubricTemplate.html>.

Pistone, Nancy. Envisioning Arts Assessment: A Process Guide. Washington: Arts Education Partnership, 2002.

Pistone, Nancy, and Dennie Palmer Wolf. Taking Full Measure. New York: College Board Publications, 1991.

Plunkett Research, Ltd. "Entertainment and Media Industry Overview" Online posting. 9 April 2005. <http://www.plunkettresearch.com/entertainment>.

Rich, Barbara, and Jane L. Polin, ed. Acts of Achievement: The Role of Performing Arts Centers in Education. New York: Dana Foundation, 2003.

Rockefeller, David and the Education and Americans Panel Arts. Coming to Our Senses: The Significance of the Arts for American Education. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977.

Russell, Steve. Getting Assessment Right: Drama. Canada: Data Based Directions. <www.databdirect.com>.

SCASS/NEA workshop notes. <u>Assessing Artistic Outcomes</u>. 1998.

Schmid, Dale, comp. <u>New Jersey Theatre Exit Examination Pilot</u>. Trenton: NJ State Dept of Education, Office of Academic & Professional Standards. 2004.

Scores of Students in the Arts. MENC-The National Association for Music Education. 7 June 2005. <<u>http://menc.org/onformation/advocate/sat.html</u>>.

Silver, Harvey, Richard Strong, and Matthew Perini. <u>So Each May Learn</u>. Alexandria: ASCD, 2000.

Smith, Mark K. <u>Jerome S. Bruner and the process of education</u>. The encyclopedia of informal education. <<u>www.infed.org/thinkers/bruner.htm</u>>. updated 28 January 2005.

Spitz, Amdur and assoc. <u>Learning and the Arts:Crossing Boundaries</u>. Proceedings from a meeting for educators, arts, and youth funders. Los Angeles: January 2000.

Stepura, Dr. Richard. <u>Developing and Assessing Curriculum in a Standards Environment</u>. Hasbrouck Heights: 1998.

Summary of Goals 2000: Educate America Act. <<u>www.ncrel.org</u>>. July 2005.

Vrabel, Deborah. <u>The Power of Arts Assessment in Teaching and Learning</u>. Ohio Arts Council, et al. Columbus: 1999.

Wiggins, Grant. <u>Educative Assessment</u>. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.