

Performance Assessment Examples from the Quality Performance Assessment Network

by Christina Kuriacose

Four examples spanning grade levels and disciplines demonstrate the range and possibilities of performance assessment. These examples were compiled by Christina Kuriacose, Program Associate, Quality Performance Assessment, Center for Collaborative Education.

The following performance assessments are strong examples of teacher-developed performance assessments from schools within the Center for Collaborative Education's Quality Performance Assessment network. These performance tasks demonstrate the pedagogical decisions teachers made, as well as the ways the experience allowed for deeper learning. While these summaries do not address the full curriculum, expectations, or teaching context in which the tasks are embedded, they do offer a consistent format to explore task details and learn more about work resulting from teacher-created, student-centered design.



Christina Kuriacose

DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE LEVELS

These performance assessment examples refer to Depth of Knowledge Levels from Quality Performance Assessment, which are:

Depth of Knowledge 1: Recall; memorization; simple understanding of a word or phrase.

Appears in...

Issue 47

Performance Assessment:
A Deeper Look at Practice
and Research

This issue is an online supplement to VUE 46, which addressed the topic of performance assessment – a personalized and rigorous alternative to standardized testing that allows teachers to build on individual students' strengths and foster more equitable learning outcomes.

VUE 47 adds additional current materials, offers opportunities for additional voices, and provides more examples of performance assessment. Because performance assessment is an active national conversation, the work continues; following VUE 46's publication, important national conferences and other milestones occurred that we're able to share here. This issue also provides perspectives from students, educators, researchers, and policymakers.

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Depth of Knowledge 2: Covers level 1 plus: paraphrase; summarize; interpret; infer; classify; organize; compare; and determine fact from fiction. There is a correct answer, but may involve multiple concepts.

Depth of Knowledge 3: Students must support their thinking by citing references from text or other sources. Students are asked to go beyond the text to analyze, generalize, or connect ideas. Requires deeper knowledge. Items may require abstract reasoning, inferences between and across readings, application of prior knowledge, or text support for an analytical judgment about a text.

Depth of Knowledge 4: Requires higher-order thinking, including complex reasoning, planning, and developing of concepts. Usually applies to an extended task or project. Examples: evaluates several works by the same author; critiques an issue across time periods or researches topic/issue from different perspectives; longer investigations or research projects.

See www.qualityperformanceassessment.org for additional information.

Related content

Performance-Based Assessment: Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners

Seizing the Opportunity for Performance Assessment: Resources and State Perspectives

The Future Is Performance Assessment

GreenTalks at Boston Green Academy: Student Reflections on Performance Assessment

Case Study: The New York Performance Standards Consortium

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT EXAMPLE 1

Background

Your Community Project: Understanding and Describing a Community

School: Plymouth Elementary School, Plymouth, NH

Grade level: 1

Content area: Social Studies, ELA

Teacher Authors: Sarah Carlson, Kristen Kilduff, and Karen McLoud

Plymouth Elementary School, part of SAU 48 in New Hampshire, entered performance assessment work by focusing on assessment literacy. Over three years, the school's professional development plan focused on building the full staff's capacity to design, validate, and implement performance assessments. As part of their collaborative practice, Plymouth teachers engage in monthly validation sessions that are facilitated by a volunteer group of teachers. Incorporating feedback is a key focus as the faculty members build their assessment literacy. Plymouth Elementary School is also a Tier 2 (building capacity) member of New Hampshire's Performance Assessment for Competency Education (PACE), a statewide initiative in which member districts and schools are exempt from most state standardized testing and use teacher-generated local and common performance assessments in its place to assess student learning. Beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, the school will become a Tier 1 PACE school; the PACE performance assessment system becomes their state accountability

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model.

The Task

The Your Community task is designed to help students see the diversity of people, places, and things that are included in communities. After completing a unit on the community, students draw a picture of a community, real or imagined. They are asked to include and label people, buildings, animals, and nature. Once the maps are completed, students present their maps to the class, explaining how people use the different spaces in their communities, what makes their community inviting or uninviting to live in, and what people do in their community.

- Topic: What is a community?
- Genre: Social Studies and ELA
- Depth of Knowledge: 3 – requires students to synthesize information from multiple texts and develop a complex model
- Habits/Skills/Dispositions
 - Communication
 - Creativity
 - Self-Direction
- Voice and Choice: Students create their own communities
- Audience: Classmates and teacher
- Time Frame: Three weeks, including current reading unit, the drawing process, and the presentation process

Teacher observation on the Your Community performance task

“The prior unit fell around Thanksgiving and Christmas time, so we had been focusing on community in general. Starting in October, we learned about community helpers. For Thanksgiving, we participated in creating centerpieces for lunches. We were active in our community, not just learning about community. I had told the students we would be creating our own communities later in the unit, but halfway through the community unit, they were already asking to create their own. When I introduced the task, they cheered!”

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT EXAMPLE 2

Background

Building Bold Bills: Integrating Civics into Persuasive Writing

Daniel J. Bakie Elementary School, Kingston, NH

Grade level: 4

Content area: ELA and Social Studies

Nels Tooker, Kathleen McLaughlin, and Jillian Zeeben

Bakie Elementary School is part of the Sanborn School District in New Hampshire. Sanborn is a vanguard district in New Hampshire in terms of competency-based education (competency-based education sets broad learning targets of what students should know and be able to do; students progress as they demonstrate proficiency over them), and was one of the initial districts in the founding cohort of NH PACE schools. Since 2012, Sanborn has been hosting a summer symposium on competency-based learning, inviting schools from all over the state and beyond to attend. Because their approach to competency-based learning is vertically aligned from kindergarten through 12th grade, the Sanborn School District frequently hosts site visits for schools exploring the shift towards competency-based learning.

The Task

With this task, three teachers aim to integrate civics standards into their fourth grade lesson about government through a persuasive writing task. Pairs of students are asked to research an issue that is important to them. Based on the research, they individually write persuasive essays proposing a state bill. In their essays, they must consider arguments and counter-arguments. Finally, the students go back to their pairs to draft a final proposal, combining their ideas. These proposals are brought to a mock New Hampshire Senate session where the students proposing the bill act as co-sponsors and their peers as Senators. In this formal mock Senate session, the co-sponsors stand up and present their bill. If the bill is passed after a Senate vote, it goes on to the governor for veto or signing into law. This task introduces students to the law-making process, the balance of power in government, and the process of decision-making about civic issues that are important to them.

- Topic: The United States' law-making process
- Genre: Persuasive writing – the goal of students' essays is to convince their peers to accept their proposal
- Depth of Knowledge: 3 – requires synthesis of multiple sources and evidence to support arguments
- Habits/Skills/Dispositions
 - Communication
 - Collaboration
 - Creativity
 - Technology use
- Voice and Choice: Students select their topic
- Audience: Classmates in a mock Senate
- Time Frame: 7 days (45- to 60-minute sessions each day)

Teachers' observations on the Building Bold Bills performance task

“Collaboration, communication, and creativity are important skills that students employ in this task. . . . Students come up with amazing things. One of the groups that we had this year wanted to limit tattoos. They researched the topic and called the bill “Think Before You Ink,” which I think is really catchy. The persuasive writing that they did was top-notch for what they were capable of, because they cared about the issues they chose and this choice is really important for engagement with the task.”

“This task elicited our students’ best work because we worked on creating a task that is both a lot of fun and grounded in a real situation. Hopefully the leaders in our classrooms become the leaders in our country and in our states, and will use the skills they learned in my fourth-grade classroom to make the world a better place!”

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT EXAMPLE 3

Background

Designing Lincoln’s Playground: Combining Mathematical, Writing, and Social Skills

Abraham Lincoln School, Revere, MA

Grade level: 4

Content area: Math/ELA/Art

Lani Pini-Cabral, Rebecca Cohen, Marisa LeManquis

Abraham Lincoln School is one of three Revere schools in the first cohort of Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment (MCIEA) schools, a partnership of Massachusetts public school districts and their local teacher unions to create fair and effective accountability systems through holistic measures for school quality and performance assessment development. During the second half of the 2016-2017 school year, a team of teachers attended four MCIEA Quality Performance Assessment Institute days in order to develop assessment literacy and experience the design-align-analyze cycle through creating an original task. The Lincoln team created and piloted four performance assessments in fourth grade math, second grade ELA, third grade science, and fifth grade social studies as a means of introducing the school to performance assessment. Performance assessment design is a key focus for the school’s Professional Learning Groups as the school builds out their assessment system. Also, assessment of and for student learning is one of three core foci for the Revere Public Schools’ 2016-2021 Improvement Plan.

The Task

With the Designing Lincoln’s Playground task, three teachers integrate mathematical skills into a performance assessment that involves social skills and persuasive writing. Students create a blueprint of the playground for the Lincoln School, including various structures they would like to see in their park. They measure the recess yard in meters and create a 2D version with a partner in math class, measuring the area and perimeter in square meters and meters. Using their math skills, they draw a detailed square/rectangle of each playground structure on a poster. Each of these squares/rectangles symbolizes the play structure’s scale in real life. Then the students write a persuasive essay in ELA to convince an audience that their playground is the best design for the school. Students present their designs to the Lincoln School families and community. Selected designs are built as a 3D model collaboratively, to scale, in art classes.

- Topic: Application of area and perimeter
- Genre: Mathematical Skills/Persuasive writing
- Depth of Knowledge: 3 – requires synthesis of multiple sources and evidence to support arguments
- Habits/Skills/Dispositions
 - Communication
 - Collaboration
 - Creativity
- Voice and Choice: Students design their own playgrounds
- Audience: Classmates, Family, Community
- Time Frame: 9+ days (additional time for building the winning design)

Teacher observation on the Designing Lincoln’s Playground performance task:

“One visiting teacher from Boston noted that I could also take this assessment and connect it to our science curriculum. She suggested that I have students think about the playground structure and materials if the playground were moved to a desert area or an area where it rained often. She suggested pushing students to think of the effects of erosion. I loved this idea! This connection had never crossed my mind. Within minutes, I had a valuable suggestion on how to strengthen this assessment in the future.”

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT EXAMPLE 4

Background

Senior Capstone

Regional School Unit 2, Maine

Grade level: 12

Content area: All

All teachers

Regional School Unit 2 (RSU 2) serves the towns of Dresden, Farmingdale, Hallowell, Monmouth, and Richmond, and the Senior Capstone is the culmination of its proficiency-based, learner-led system. The Senior Capstone for Maine RSU 2 was developed at Hall-Dale High School (one of three high schools in the district) as part of the school's early exploration of personalized and agency-building practices. The entire faculty participates as mentors. "Senior Capstone" is a course that seniors take, so that the time and coaching they need is available to them. The creation of the course – and the first two years of the program – was the work of teacher Linda Aronson, who later went on to write about the experience and philosophy of Senior Capstone in her book, Unleashed to Learn.

The Task

The Senior Capstone at RSU2 is designed to support the senior student in pursuing a fascination and demonstrating it to faculty, students, and community. Students choose a topic (e.g., tiki carving, boat building, business creation). They research that topic in depth, write a research paper, deliver a 20-minute public talk/exhibition that is open to the public, and "enact" their topic in an authentic way (e.g., they carve a tiki, build a boat, start a business). Students begin in December and present throughout the end of their senior year. Every student has two mentors: a faculty member in the school and a community member who can coach the student in their area of expertise.

As can be seen in [this video](#) featuring the Senior Capstone at Hall-Dale High School in Regional School Unit 2 in Maine, the energy and import attached to the annual celebration is powerful. Students learn in the eighth grade what will be expected of them in the 12th, and they prepare and are coached through their high school career.

- Topic: How do I learn?
- Genre: Multiple
- Depth of Knowledge: All are touched on in the process, but the structure of the capstone easily lends itself to Depth of Knowledge 4, advanced application and transfer
- Habits/Skills/Dispositions
 - Communication
 - Creativity
 - Self-Direction

- Collaboration
- Voice and Choice: Students have choice at nearly every step of the way
- Audience: Faculty, students, community
- Time Frame: Three to five months: capstone starts in December and students present from March to May

District superintendent observation on the Senior Capstone performance task

“In the learner-centered model, we want kids to apply the content to a subject matter that is meaningful to them every single day, not just in their senior year. Initially, the kids struggle with it. ‘What do I want to do? What do I want to tackle? What goals do I have for myself?’ So they struggle through the planning process, much like we, as adults, struggle when we start something new. When it comes to the point in the year when they're presenting their culminating project, it's amazing to see the pride and the confidence that they exude when they're making their presentations.”

Student observation on the Senior Capstone performance task

“For my Capstone project, I did animal adoption. For my fieldwork, I organized a dog speed-dating event for the Kennebec Valley Humane Society. I realized how much I needed to be self-reliant. It was really up to me to make my own deadlines, to be assertive in finding my expert mentor, to get what I wanted done, and getting the results I wanted. And I learned I really enjoyed organizing events. So that was fun.”

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