

Managing Assessment to Support Learning: B

Build a positive and constructive 'learning culture' with the school.

This is the second of a set of three Briefs on Managing Student Assessment to Support Learning. Each of the set is concerned with an aspect of school-wide management of assessment. Each aspect is derived from research into the effects of assessment on student learning and well-being and steps that can be taken to ameliorate any negative effects and enhance any positive effects.

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- A** Develop a school policy for managing student assessment to support learning.
 - B** *Build a positive and constructive 'learning culture' with the school.*
 - C** Encourage a broad range of learning activities and learning outcomes.
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Formal assessment, especially high-stakes standardised testing, has been shown to have potentially detrimental effects on student learning for some students. However, it also yields information about student learning that can be used to guide and strengthen student learning. Using assessment for the benefit of student learning and well-being therefore requires careful management. It cannot be left to chance. The need for deliberate action and coordination within the school is clear. These Briefs provide the research basis and practical suggestions for such action.

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1. What is the research evidence?

All students need a supportive learning environment for effective learning.

Student anxiety increases where the school's performance on external tests is a public issue and students feel pressure to perform.

Support is strongest in a learning community of teachers and students, that is, where everyone is involved in learning.

An important component of a learning community is teacher collegiality, with teachers collaborating in learning how to improve student learning.

Constructive discussion among teachers about assessment and assessment data contributes positively to student learning.

Consistency across the whole school is important for establishing and maintaining student confidence in their ability to learn.

2. What are the implications for practice?

A supportive learning environment needs to be built; it does not just happen.

In a learning community, teachers are also engaged in learning—about their students and how best to advance their students' learning.

A learning culture is forward-looking rather than backward-looking, that is, places an emphasis on how assessment data informs future learning.

Teacher collegiality implies sharing and collaboration about pedagogical practice (including assessment) and student learning.

In a learning culture, assessment is for learning, that is, all assessments contribute to understanding student progress in learning and assisting further learning.

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Implications for practice

Do:

- ✓ **Emphasise student learning rather than student performance—that is, focus on what can be learned from assessment for further learning.**
- ✓ **Develop a consistent approach to assessment among all teachers in the school.**
- ✓ **Develop processes for teachers to work together to:**
 - *share their pedagogy (including assessment)*
 - *examine and interpret assessment data*
 - *plan actions to assist further student learning.*
- ✓ **Develop processes for involving students in:**
 - *developing personal learning goals*
 - *understanding their own learning progress*
 - *supporting each other in their learning.*
- ✓ **Treat all assessment as an opportunity for learning (by teachers and students).**

Don't:

- ✗ **Treat assessment as a competition (among schools, teachers or students).**
- ✗ **Look at assessment data in isolation (from other data and from other teachers).**
- ✗ **Allow development of defensive and defeatist attitudes (of teachers and students).**
- ✗ **Use assessments only for reporting and not for feedback and improvement.**



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Informing literature reviews:

Harlen, W., & Deakin Crick, R. (2002). *A systematic review of the impact of summative assessment and tests on students' motivation for learning* In *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education.

Harlen, W. (2004). *A systematic review of the evidence of the impact on students, teachers and the curriculum of the process of using assessment by teachers for summative purposes*. In *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education.

Harlen, W. (2005). Teachers' summative practices and assessment for learning: Tensions and synergies. *The Curriculum Journal*, 16(2), 207–223.

Research evidence and recommended actions found in these references informs this three Brief series. However, the advice in the Briefs is our interpretation and distillation of that research evidence and those recommendations.
