

4 Ways to Help Teachers Create Excellent Performance-Based Assessments

This eBook provides professional development suggestions to help teachers learn to create high-quality performance-based assessments.





01

Ask teachers to recall the most powerful performance task in which they ever participated as a student. What made this performance task so powerful for them? If they could “borrow” one aspect of it to use in a performance task with their own students, what would they use? Why?

1. Performance-Based Assessment Share-Out

10 minutes

- Get the group involved by asking teachers to recall the most powerful performance task in which they participated as a student. What made this performance task so powerful for them?
- Encouraging one or more participants to share their personal experience with performance tasks sets the tone and helps you evaluate their level of understanding and engagement. Teachers that feel less confident about the subject may need a little encouragement! Offer suggestions such as presentations, projects, or science experiments. The goal is to show the group that performance tasks are not a new concept. Create a list on a whiteboard or other means of display, with a brief description of the task. Beside each task, jot down a few words they used to describe what made the task powerful for them. This emotional component of their response is what you will want to tap into as the workshop continues.
- Then, ask the teachers that volunteered what aspect of the performance task they would “borrow” to use in a task for their own students, and why. Even teachers who did not contribute during the earlier discussion might have suggestions as to how to make these connections. Linking a specific part of the task to the feelings it evoked highlights the advantages of performance tasks, and lays a foundation for further activities.

A photograph of two men in a professional setting. The man in the foreground, wearing a black and white striped sweater, is writing on a whiteboard with a black marker. The man in the background, wearing a grey sweater, is looking at the whiteboard. The whiteboard has some faint sketches and text on it. The background is slightly blurred, showing a plant and a window.

02

Engage learners in a specific performance task and then, when it is completed, ask learners to evaluate it with you. What could they use from this performance task in their own classroom? What would they change? Why?

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2. Performance Task Group Activity

1-1.5 Hours

- Engage participants in a simple performance task as a large group or several small groups (by table, row, or perspective on an issue). For example, during a campaign season, learners might write an editorial for a local newspaper taking a side on a particular candidate. Another example might challenge learners to develop a brief business plan demonstrating, with revenue projections, how much money the business will need to succeed. As part of this task, involve learners in developing a grading rubric before the task is begun.
- Instruct learners to trade papers and grade one another using the rubric. Challenge learners to explain how this activity was a performance task. Then ask for volunteers to describe what they could use from the task in their own classroom, as well as what they would change about the task.
- Shift the focus back to the rubric. The group should take note of the standard displayed at the top, the skills being assessed, and the levels of proficiency. If the school will be using specific language in their rubrics, it's a good time to introduce that information if it is available.



03

Ask teachers to identify one important idea that they are currently teaching in their own classroom. Challenge them as to how they think students should be able to use this information in the real world. Provide them with the opportunity to develop a performance assessment to measure student mastery of this knowledge and skills. They should also develop a rubric to enable them to measure student mastery.

3. Small Group Performance Assessment Creation

1-2 hours

- Break participants into small groups by grade level or subject area and ask them to identify an important idea that they are currently teaching in their classroom. Then introduce the concept of tying the idea to real-world application. Distribute blank copies of a rubric template to give participants a starting point. Challenge each group to create a performance-based assessment of the skills needed to demonstrate mastery.
- Visit with groups as they collaborate, observing how each approaches the assignment. The activity is essential in developing the planning skills for creating performance tasks. As needed, steer the groups toward focusing on the actions that demonstrate mastery. Are the students expected to model, evaluate, construct, or demonstrate?
- When everyone is finished, ask a few volunteers to summarize their assessment, identifying the idea they used, the skills being tested, and (especially) the real-world connection. Get some feedback as well on the process and discuss what it looked like for groups creating the rubric first, if any groups chose that path.

Sample Rubric Template

Levels of Performance (Scale)

Describe the task or performance that the rubric is designed to evaluate.

Features	Beginning 1	Developed 2	Accomplished 3	Exemplary 5
State objective here (1)	Description of the performance and characteristics that reflect a beginning level of performance	Description of the performance and characteristics that reflect a beginning level of performance	Description of the performance and characteristics that reflect a beginning level of performance	Description of the performance and characteristics that reflect a beginning level of performance
State objective here (2)	State performance descriptors here	State performance descriptors here	State performance descriptors here	State performance descriptors here
State objective here (3)	State performance descriptors here	State performance descriptors here	State performance descriptors here	State performance descriptors here
State objective here (4)	State performance descriptors here	State performance descriptors here	State performance descriptors here	State performance descriptors here



04

Challenge teachers to identify between 10 and 15 performance-based assessments that people must complete in the real world. What knowledge and skills do these assessments measure? Ask what can be learned from this activity to support teaching and learning in the classroom.

4. Pairs Performance Task Challenge

20 Minutes

- Have participants find a partner nearby; then introduce the idea that they've been taking performance-based assessments their entire lives. Depending upon the level of training the group has received, a quick example might be in order. Ask teachers to think about the examination they passed in order to get their driver's license. Sure, there was a multiple-choice written part...but what about the balance of the test? Student drivers must demonstrate both knowledge of the laws in their state AND that they can safely operate a vehicle while applying those laws. Have them consider all of the things they were graded on...a pretty large list!
- Challenge the pairs to brainstorm 10 to 15 real-world performance tasks, and make a few notes about the knowledge and skills assessed in each. Ask each pair to share one task and knowledge/skill set. Make note of tasks that tested a range of skills and knowledge.
- Bring the challenge full circle by posing the question, "What did you learn from this activity that can support teaching and learning in the classroom?" Participants should see the connection between task complexity (the number of skills or standards being measured) and authenticity (each task had multiple routes to the finished product).