

San Juan, Puerto Rico

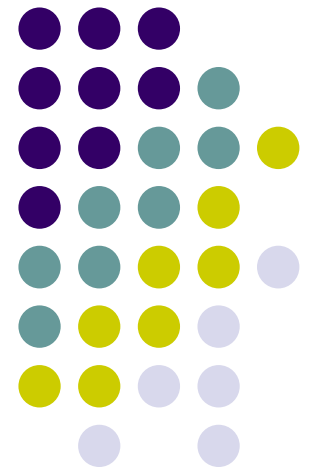
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Getting Started with Assessment in General Education

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What is Assessment of Student Learning?

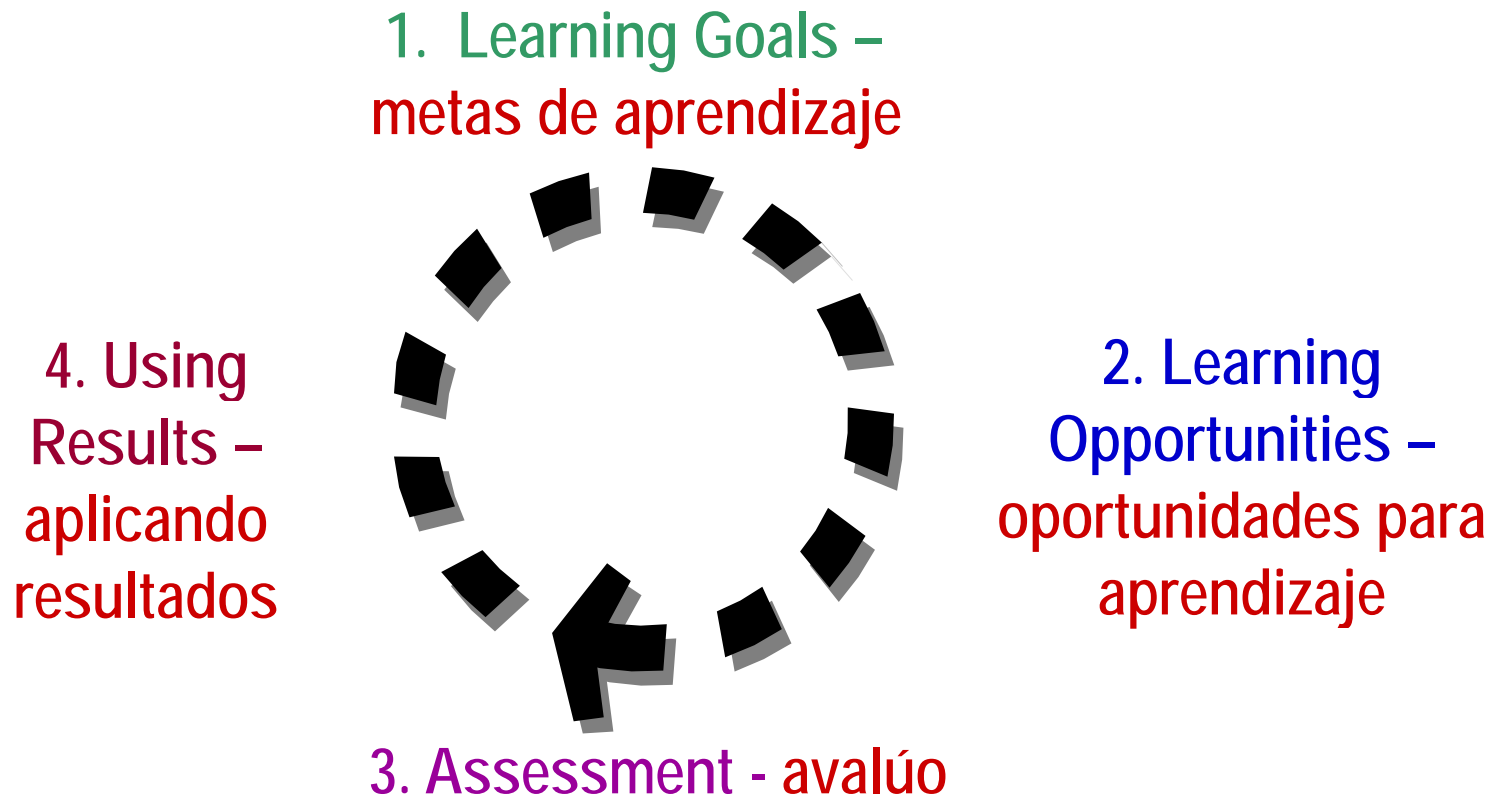


- Deciding what we want our students to learn
- Making sure they learn it!

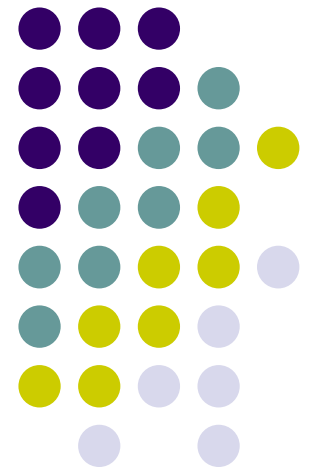
--Jane Wolfson, Director, Environmental Science & Studies Program, Towson University

Student Learning Assessment as a Four-Step Cycle

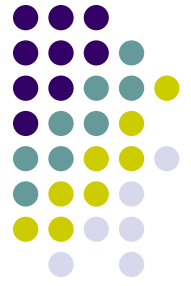
El avalúo del aprendizaje estudiantil como un ciclo de cuatro pasos



1. Laying a Foundation for Assessment Success



Why is it so hard to assess General Education?



- Unclear definitions of Gen Ed & its components
- Lack of ownership
 - *Lack of concern & engagement*
- Lack of coordination
- Some Gen Ed curricula are ineffective
 - *Outdated*
 - *Politically driven*
- Little interest in improving Gen Ed
- Time consuming to assess & improve

Why might faculty and institutional leaders not engage with assessment?



How might your school address each reason?



Three Major Barriers

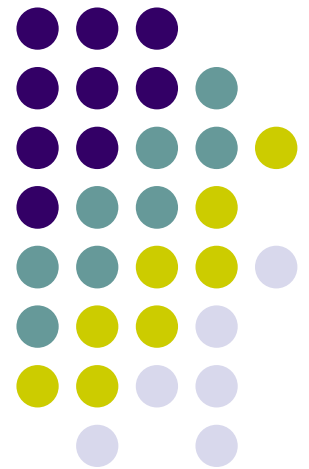


1. Lack of understanding of the value & importance of assessment
2. Lack of resources to engage in assessment
 - Marilee Bresciani
3. Fear of change and risk-taking

What's the big deal with
assessment?



Why aren't grades
good enough?

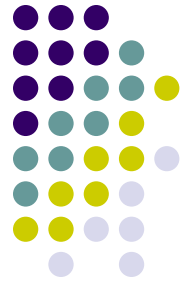


Students who pass my course should know how to...



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

1. Tests, assignments, and grades often don't match goals.



- Would your colleagues have come up with the same list?
- Would your students have come up with the same list?



Tests, assignments, and grades often...

2. Don't focus on thinking skills
3. Poor quality
4. (Grades) Reflect things other than student learning
5. Not used to improve things

Getting Faculty “On Board”



- Professional development
- Grants/stipends to get started
- Value efforts to **improve** teaching
 - Scholarship of teaching
- Value assessment **efforts**
 - Written letters of thanks
- Pay attention to results and **use** them to make improvements!



More Ideas

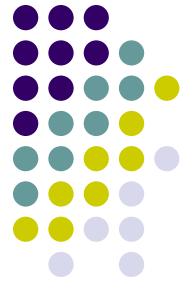
- Help faculty find time.
 - Help faculty stop doing something else.
 - Help them see that assessment is not an “add on.”
- Provide clear guidelines.
 - Set priorities.
- Provide support & resources.
- Minimize paperwork.
- Provide feedback.

Keep your sanity!



- Recognize that some important goals can't be assessed.
- Realistic expectations for quality
- Don't expect to get everyone on board.

What about academic freedom?



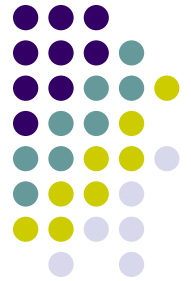
- Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject.
 - *AAUP 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom & Tenure*
- Faculty have an obligation to ensure that all students have sufficient opportunity to achieve those goals that the faculty collectively agree are essential.



What about adjuncts?

- Provide common core materials
 - Core syllabi
 - Core learning goals
 - Core assignments/tests
- Require assessment participation in contract
- Invite to professional development
- Coordinators for adjunct-heavy courses/programs
- Appoint faculty mentors (with stipend)

Getting Organized



- Identify someone to **coordinate**/shepherd Gen Ed assessment.
- Identify **faculty committee** to set Gen Ed assessment policies & monitor/review efforts.
- Invite faculty teaching Gen Ed courses to **participate in discussions**.

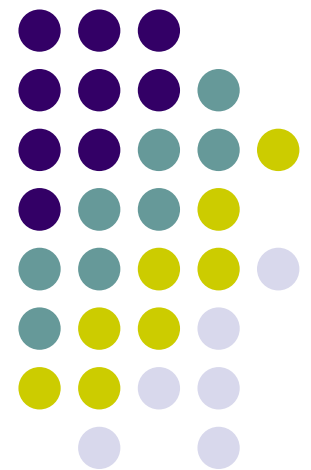
2. Articulating Assessable Learning Goals



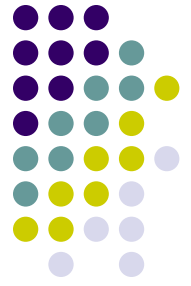
- Learning objectives
- Learning competencies
- Learning outcomes

What should *all* students
be learning at your institution?

Why?

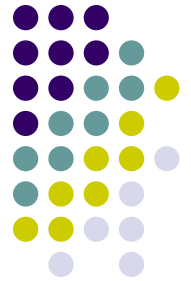


Middle States Standard 12: General Education



- *The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including*
 - Written communication
 - Oral communication
 - Scientific reasoning
 - Quantitative reasoning
 - Technological competence
 - Critical analysis & reasoning

Middle States Standard 11: Educational Offerings



- *[Foster] information literacy and technological skills across the curriculum.*
- What is *information literacy*?
 - **Recognize** the need for information.
 - **Identify** what information is needed.
 - **Find** that information efficiently and effectively.
 - **Evaluate** information critically for relevance & credibility.
 - **Use** information to solve a problem or answer a question.
 - Use information **legally & ethically**.

Other External Sources of Potential General Education Goals



- *League for Innovation Learning Outcomes*
- *Equipped for the Future*
- *Greater Expectations*
- *Teaching Goals Inventory*
- *National Resource Center for the First Year Experience & Students in Transition*
(www.sc.edu/fye)

Internal Sources of Potential General Education Goals



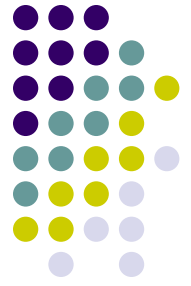
- Mission statement & strategic goals
- Syllabi of current Gen Ed courses
- Transcript analysis
 - *What Gen Ed courses do most students take?*
 - *When?*
 - *In what sequence?*
- Ask faculty to meet and brainstorm common goals across courses

Why are you here?



- What do you need to learn in this session?
- Why?
- What do you want to be prepared to do when you get “back home”?
- How do you want to use what you’ll learn “back home”?

What is a good learning goal?



- **Outcomes** – what **graduates** should be able to do
- **Observable** – what graduates should be able to **DO**
 - Action words
 - *Understand, appreciate*
- **Clear** – no fuzzy terms
 - *Demonstrate (how?), critical thinking, communication skills*
- **Skills and/or attitudes/values**
- **Important** - meet student/employer needs

More Examples of Learning Goals



- Demonstrate effective communication skills across disciplines.
- Demonstrate understanding of other cultures.
- Demonstrate ability to work effectively with computer components.

Learning Goals as a Continuum



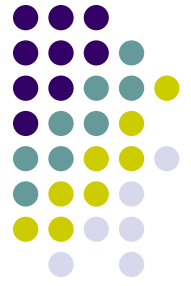
**Use a rubric
to define
broad goals.**

Time to Practice!



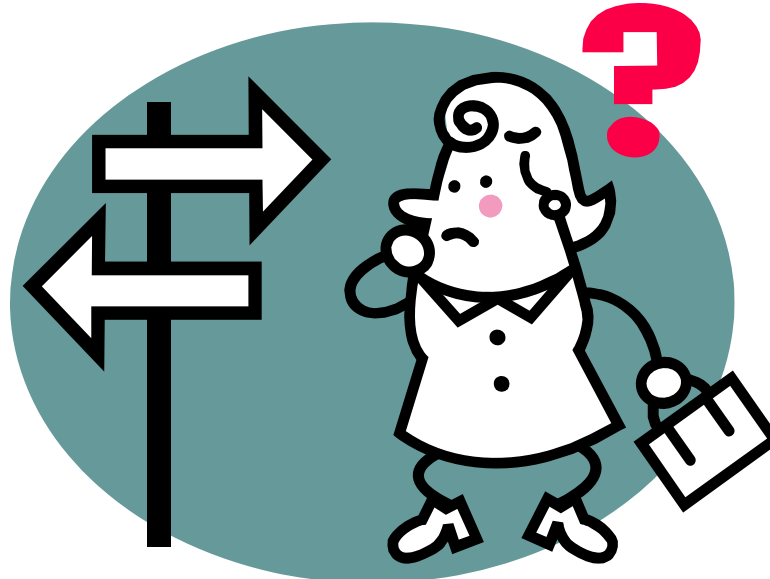
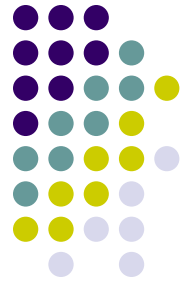
1. Draft at least one learning outcome for your General Education curriculum.
2. Trade papers with someone else; critique & edit the other person's goals.
 - *Clear? No fuzzy words?*
 - *Observable? Action words?*
 - *Outcomes?*
 - *Important? Lasting?*
3. If you need help, ask me!

Prioritizing and Achieving Consensus on Learning Outcomes



- Ask faculty to “vote.”
 - *Write goals on flip chart paper.*
 - *Maybe group similar goals together.*
 - *Vote with dot stickers.*

3. Aligning Goals & Curricula



- Do you want to develop a new General Education curriculum?
- Or keep and tinker with the one you have?

Analyzing Your Current General Education Curriculum



- Grid of Gen Ed goals x courses
 - *Look for underrepresented and “overkilled” Gen Ed goals.*
- Transcript analysis
 - *What courses do students usually take to fulfill Gen Ed requirements?*
 - *Are students achieving a Gen Ed goal through courses in their majors?*
- Syllabus analysis
 - *Do students have enough classwork & assignments to achieve this goal?*

Consider Modifying Syllabi

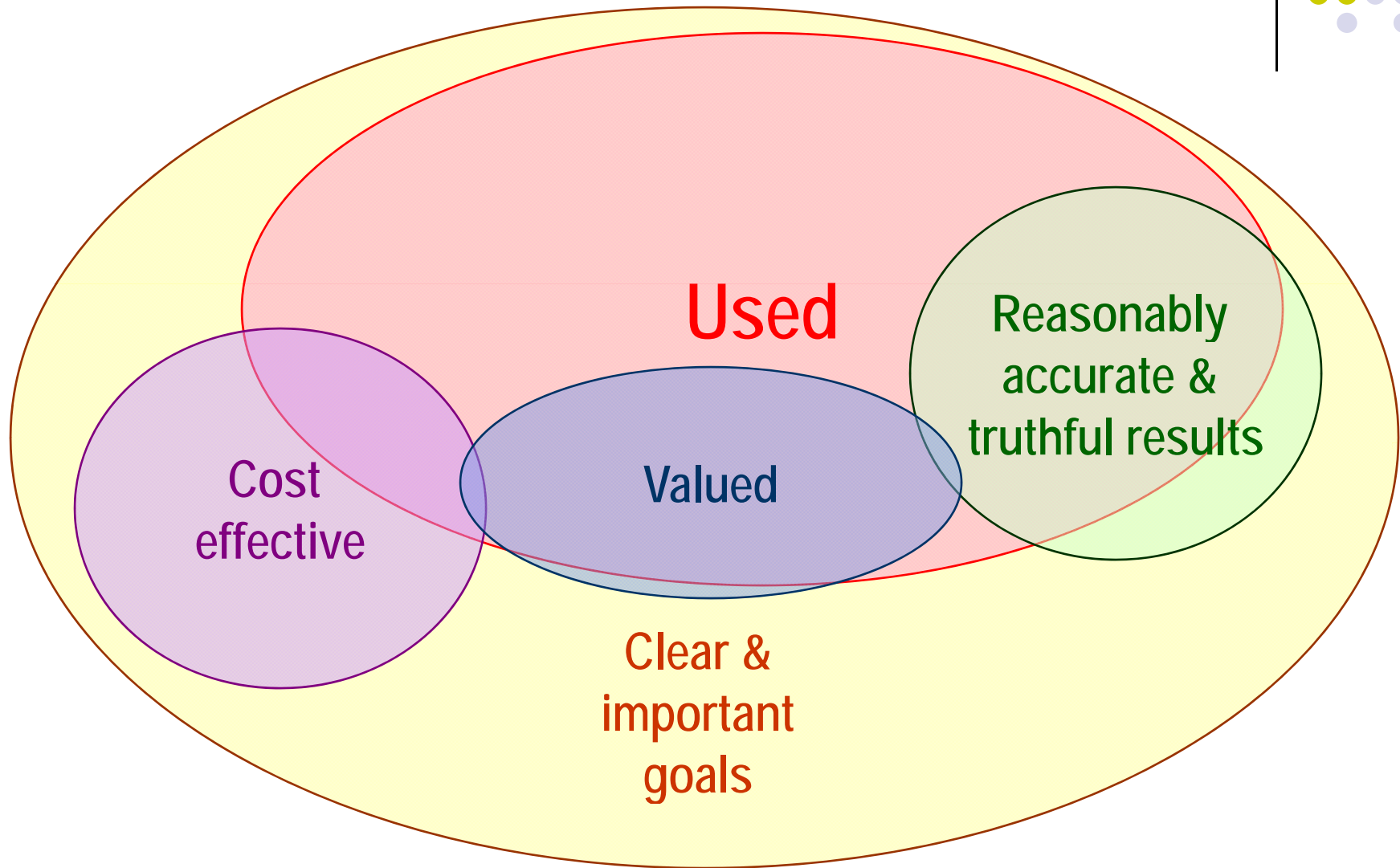


- State relevant General Education goals.
- Grid of General Education goals x assignments
- Reapprove all General Education courses regularly (every five years?).
 - *Check that classwork and assignments address relevant General Education Goals.*

4. The Assessment Toolbox



What is “Good” Assessment?

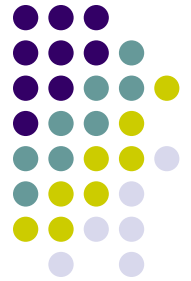


Build on Existing Learning Experiences and Assessments



- Focus on only the most popular Gen Ed courses?
- Ask faculty how students achieve your goals.
 - *Homework/classwork (e.g., lab reports)*
 - *End-of-course papers, projects, performances, presentations*
 - *Final exams in Gen Ed courses*
 - *“Capstone” experiences*
 - *Field experience evaluations*
- Surveys
- Create grid of Gen Ed goals x existing assessments?

Create New/Improved Tools As Needed



- Course-specific assessment
 - *All sections of each course have common assessment approaches.*

AND/OR

- Multi-course assessment
 - *All courses with common goals have common assessment approaches.*

AND/OR

- Institution-wide assessment
 - *Published tests & surveys*
 - *Portfolios*
 - *Capstone experiences*

Useful and Not Too Much Work



- Rubric (rating scales/grading criteria) to assess papers, projects, performances, presentations, portfolios
- Set of questions on final exams
 - *Identical on all exams in multiple courses*
 - *Identical on all exams in one course*

Assessing Values & Attitudes



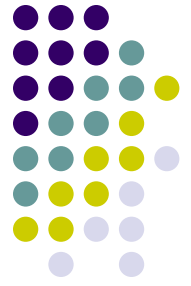
- Reflective writing
- If you met two alumni...
 - *One had achieved your goal; the other hadn't.*
 - *How would you tell them apart?*
- Proxy measures
 - *As the twig is bent, so grows the tree.*
 - *Do students now show signs of the dispositions we hope to instill?*
- Some goals aren't assessable.
- Some goals aren't teachable.

Useful But More Time & Work



- Portfolios
- Locally developed tests
- Locally developed surveys
- Interviews & focus groups

Published Tests and Surveys?



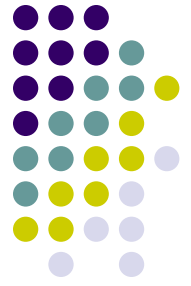
- **Published Tests & Surveys**

- Out of the ivory tower
- See growth over time
- Sometimes...
 - *Breadth of coverage*
 - *Good quality questions*
 - *Evidence of validity and reliability*
 - *Identify strengths and weaknesses*

- **Local Assessments**

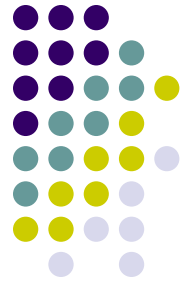
- Your learning goals don't match test goals.
- Your curriculum doesn't match test content.
- Good (validated) instruments aren't available.
- Motivating students to take a published test and give it their best effort

Published Tests May Have Value If and Only If



- They **match** our learning **outcomes**.
- They yield **useful** information.
- We give students compelling **incentives**.
- There is sound evidence of their **quality** (validity).
- They are part of a **multiple measures** approach.

Volunteer for Middle States Evaluation Teams!



- Go to our web site (www.msche.org)
- Click on “Evaluators.”
- Click on “How to Become an Evaluator.”
- Download the “Evaluator Biographical Data Form.”
- Complete it and send it to us with your resume.