A is for Assessment and Accountability
Glossary of Student Learning Assessment Terms

By Melodye Shore

New visions of effective curriculum, instruction, and learning demand new attention to systematic assessment.
(Herman, J.L., 1992, p. 12)

From state legislators to school administrators to the public at large, everyone is clamoring for tangible evidence of what students know and can do as a result of the time they spend in our learning environments. Before we can satisfy that request, however, we must agree on the vocabulary we will use to communicate the methods and results of student learning assessment.

This glossary collects and clarifies, using straightforward terminology, the words educators are using to discuss student learning assessment. It includes words used in a wide variety of learning communities, including K-12 and postsecondary settings.

It is a challenge to ferret out fine distinctions between similar terms and to determine which words and definitions work best. A few educators may balk at the connotations that some of these terms and their definitions evoke. Also, some readers may be surprised to find words that relate specifically to instruction and instructional design. Each of the words included here is considered integral to discussions about the overall assessment process and, as such, seem appropriate for placement in this glossary of assessment terms. It's a fast-changing field, however, and many of these definitions will need adjustments as the language and practice of assessment continues to evolve.

A is for Assessment and Accountability

Glossary of Assessment Terms

Abilities: Skills needed for effectiveness in the worlds of work, family, and civic community. The distinctive feature of an ability-based approach is that educators make explicit the expectation that students should be able to do something with what they know (Alverno College, 1998).

Accommodation: Any variation in the assessment environment or process. Accommodations include variations in scheduling, setting, aids and equipment, and presentation format. These variations should not change the level, content, or performance criteria and should not change the reliability and validity of the assessment. Accommodations are made in order to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate what they know (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, 1997, p. 1).

Accountability: Accountability systems provide information that tells policymakers, the public and others how well the education system – classrooms, schools, and districts – is doing. Information typically includes student assessment data and indicators such as dropout and graduation rates. Accountability information can be used in different ways: to provide information to the public, to help all the groups involved reach agreement on how to improve the system, or to provide rewards or sanctions for success or failure (Education Commission of the States, 1998, p. 36).

Accreditation: The review processes a school or district undergoes periodically to ensure that it meets state requirements and quality measures. The process usually involves the review of a district or school's evaluation procedures and improvement plans; the effectiveness of education programs and services; and other policies, practices and management processes. Recently, some states began using accreditation as a performance-based process focused on student achievement and school-improvement planning (Education Commission of the States, p. 36).

Affective Objective: A statement specifying the acquisition of particular attitudes, values, or feelings. Deals with the affective domain; also called "attitudinal objectives" (Piskurich, 1993, p. 29.20). *Also see* **Dispositions**.

Alignment: The process of linking content and performance standards to assessment, curriculum, and teaching and learning in classrooms (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p.1).

Alternative Assessment: Any type of assessment in which students *create* a response to a question or task. In traditional assessments, students *choose* a response from a given list, such as multiple-choice, true/false, or matching. Alternative assessments can include short-answer questions, essays,

performance assessments, oral presentations, demonstrations, exhibitions, and portfolios (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, 1994, p. 39). *Also see* **Authentic Assessment** and **Performance Assessment**.

Analytical Trait Scoring: Judging a performance several times along different important dimensions. An example might be the judging of a piece of persuasive writing for the author's attention to audience, correct use of grammar and punctuation, focus on the topic, and persuasiveness of argument (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 39). *Also see* **Primary Trait Analysis**.

Anchor Performances: Examples of student performance that serve as a standard against which other papers or performances may be judged. They are often used as examples of performances at different points on a scoring rubric for a particular grade [or course] level. In math problem solving, for example, anchor performances are selected from actual student work that are considered to exemplify the quality performance level of "1," "2,", "3," and so forth. If used with analytical scoring, there may be anchor or benchmark performances for each trait being assessed. The top anchor is sometimes called the exemplar (adapted from Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 39).

Assessment: An ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. When it is embedded effectively within larger institutional systems, assessment can help us focus our collective attention, examine our assumptions, and create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education (Angelo, 1995, p.7). *Also see* **Student Learning Assessment**.

Assessment Literacy: Possessing knowledge about the basic principles of sound assessment practice, including terminology, the development and use of assessment methodologies and techniques, and familiarity with standards of quality in assessment (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 1).

Attributes: Specific performances that provide evidence of a student's competency in meeting an outcome or objective.

Audience: Learners for whom an objective is intended (Piskurich, p. 23.7). *Also see* **Learner**.

Authentic Assessment: Assessment that both mirrors and measures student performance in "real-world" tasks and situations. For example, to assess authentically a student's ability to problem solve, the student is given a real-world problem and assessed on how he or she goes about solving it (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 39). *Also see* **Alternative Assessment** *and* **Performance Assessment**.

Behavioral Objectives: *See* **Instructional Objective** *and* **Learning Objective**.

Benchmarks: The designated points at which a student's performance may be assessed. Can be according to age, grade, or developmental levels. In addition, benchmarks define the accumulation of learning within a period of time (Maryland Assessment Consortium, 1993, p. 1 and Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 1).

Bias: An inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgement (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 1).

Capstone Assessment: A summative assessment project that requires integration and application of the specific tools, techniques, knowledge, resources, and attitudes associated with the entire sequence of study in a program or course.

Checklists: Lists of characteristics or behaviors. Checklists are used to guide evaluation of student performances by noting the presence or absence of any given characteristic or behavior (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 1).

Cognitive Objective: A statement specifying the acquisition of particular knowledge or information dealing with the cognitive domain (Piskurich, 29.21).

College Level: The level of skill attainment, reasoning ability, etc., associated with/required by courses of study designed to lead to a baccalaureate degree. Also known as "transfer level" in programs of a two-year institution (College Reading and Learning Association, 1990, p. 4). *Also see* **Developmental** and **Remedial**.

Competence: The individual's demonstrated capacity to perform, that is, the possession of knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics needed to satisfy the special demands or requirements of a particular situation (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 1).

Comprehension: Constructing meaning from text or other instructional methods and media.

Comprehensive Assessment System: A comprehensive assessment program provided for all important educational decisions relating to learning, instruction, program improvement, and public accountability (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 1).

Conditions: One of the three required parts of a learning objective that describes the circumstances under which the performance or outcome of learning will be observed or measured. The whom, what, where, and with what the performance can be accomplished (Piskurich, p. 29.21).

Content Standards: Statements that define what students should know and be able to do in various subject areas and at different points in their education (Education Commission of the States, p. 36).

Context (**of a Performance Assessment**): The circumstances within which the performance is embedded. Problem solving can be assessed in the context of a specific subject (for example, mathematics) or in the context of a real-life situation (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 39).

Course Description: A document that defines the why, where, when, how, for whom, and by whom a specific course will be given. It includes the course goal(s), objectives, and a course calendar (Piskurich, p. 29.21). Sometimes called a "syllabus."

Course Goal: A general statement that outlines what the student is to learn, in broad terms (not in measurable or behavioral terms) in a course (Piskurich, p. 29.21).

Course Map: A document that outlines a course and shows the various relationships between the lessons and modules, usually in the form of a diagram or flowchart (Piskurich, p. 29.21). *Also see* **Curriculum Framework** *and* **Plan of Instruction**.

Course Objectives: The actions, knowledge, and skills the learner is expected to have acquired at the end of a sequence of instruction (Piskurich, p. 29.21). Sometimes referred to as **Terminal Objectives**.

Criteria: One of the three required parts of a learning objective that states the minimum competency or performance level that the student must attain by the end of training for proficiency in the performance. Defines how well the student must perform the skills (adapted from Piskurich). *Also see* **Performance Criteria**.

Criterion-referenced Assessment: An assessment designed to reveal what a student knows, understands, or can do in relation to specific performance

objectives. Criterion-referenced assessments are used to identify student strengths and weaknesses with regard to specific knowledge or skills that are goals of the instructional program (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 40).

Criterion-referenced Instruction: Training or instruction designed around the mastery of established instructional objectives. It is usually performance- and skills-oriented, based on the criteria of the objectives (Piskurich, p. 29.21).

Criterion-referenced Test: An assessment designed to provide a clear picture of what a student knows and can do. It measures performance against an established criterion or standard, rather than in comparison to a norm group (Education Commission of the States, p. 36). *Also see* **Criterion-referenced Assessment**.

Curriculum Framework: An organized plan that defines content to be learned in terms of the general categories of skills, knowledge, and processes. Frameworks may be developed by content areas or [by] some other organizing principle (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg). *Also see* **Course Map** *and* **Plan of Instruction**.

Developmental: In the normal/expected sequence of learning. Usually used in counterdistinction to accelerated and/or remedial learning….Use of the term in college education assumes/takes cognizance of the notion that there is a gap that needs to be filled in for many students. The claim is, thus, that these students need to learn skills that they have not previously been taught (in high school) and that the fault is not with their ability, but with their preparation….[Also] Instruction designed to improve a student's competencies in the basic skills and allow increased mastery over the student's environment to facilitate effective learning and communication (College Reading and Learning Association, p. 5). *Also see* **College Level** and **Remedial**.

Dispositions: Affective outcomes such as responsibility, flexibility, perseverance, self-confidence, and a positive attitude. Some new assessments attempt to measure these outcomes (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 40).

Enabling Objective: A performance objective describing a skill or competence that is an essential element of a larger or more complex competence. Sometimes called "**Subordinate Objective**" or "**En Route Objective**" (Piskurich, p. 29.22). *Also see* **Learning Objective**.

Enhanced Multiple Choice: An enhanced multiple-choice item gives the student an opportunity to add something to the multiple-choice response. The student may add a reason why the item was chosen, an extension of the

information, supporting evidence, or any other enhancement that helps the examiner better understand the student's response choice (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 2).

Entry Evaluation: A specialized form of evaluation given to students at the beginning of the course that helps to determine the skills with which they are coming into the course. Also used to determine the emphasis and direction that the course will take. May be in the form of a pretest that indicates the knowledge and/or skills of the student prior to taking the course while defining the core competencies required of the student at the end of the course (adapted from Piskurich). *Also see* **Pretest**.

Essay Test: A test that requires the students to answer questions in writing is an essay test. Responses can be brief or extensive. The essay test usually measures knowledge as well as the ability to apply knowledge of a subject to questions about the subject (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 2).

Evaluation: The act of using assessment information to make decisions, choices or judgements. Based on criteria and evidence. Also refers to the basis and methods by which data are collected and analyzed to revise and improve overall performance (adapted from Piskurich and Washington State Commission on Student Learning).

Evaluation of the Student: The collection and reviewing of data about the student before, during, and after a course. Used to determine weak areas in a course and to improve the instruction. Can include entry evaluations, performance testing and written tests.

Exemplar: A model of excellence (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 2). *Also see* Anchor Performances.

Exhibition: A method of student assessment that requires students to demonstrate what they know and can do, as an alternative to traditional paper-pencil tests. Exhibitions may take many forms, including class presentations, speeches, readings, demonstrations and artistic performances. Teachers often videotape exhibitions for later review and as a record of student progress (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 2).

Formative Assessment: Ongoing diagnostic assessment that provides information to guide instruction and improve student performance (Maryland Assessment Consortium, p. 2). *Also see* **Summative Assessment**.

Goal: An intended outcome not stated in measurable terms. A general statement of intent; an expression of the desires and expectations of the

developers and/or consumers of an educational program (Piskurich, p. 29.22).

Holistic Scoring: Assigning a single score based on an overall assessment of performance rather than by scoring or analyzing dimensions individually. The product is considered to be more than the sum of its parts and so the quality of a final product might combine a number of elements on a single scale (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 2).

Indicator: A learner behavior or action toward accomplishing an essential learning requirement. A cluster of indicators forms the basis for development of performance tasks that may be used for [student learning] assessment (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 2).

Instructional Objective: A precise statement indicating the performance expected of the learner in terms of specific skills and concepts as a result of exposure to instructional material. The objective may include components that indicate what the learner should be able to do (performance), under what conditions (conditions), and at what level of competence (criteria). Instructional objectives address cognitive (knowledge) skills, affective (attitude) skills, and psychomotor (manual) skills at all levels (Piskurich, p. 29.22). *Also see* **Behavioral Objective**, **Learning Objective**, *and* **Performance Objective**.

Integration: Work that does not stand alone but is interrelated and connected. Refers to tasks that assess students' abilities to apply concepts, principles, and processes from two or more subject disciplines or course outcomes to a central question, theme, issue, or problem (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 2).

Item: A question or statement that poses a problem for a student. Typical test item types include multiple-choice, true/false, matching sets, short-answer items, and completion items. Short-answer items require students to furnish anything from words to a few sentences. Completion items (also called "fill in the blank" items) require students to supply a word to complete a sentence (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 2).

Learner: Any individual engaged in acquiring new skills, attitudes, or knowledge whether with a specified sequence of instruction or a random assortment of stimuli (Piskurich, p. 29.23).

Learning: Any change in [the learner's] knowledge, skill, or value system. Change can only be judged by assessment or evaluation (Cranton, 1989, p. 136).

Learning Objective: The component actions, knowledge, and skills a student must learn to attain the course (terminal) objective(s). The objective may include components that indicate what the learner should be able to do (performance), under what conditions (conditions), and at what level of competence (criteria). Learning objectives represent the learning difference between where the learner is now and where one wants them to be. Also referred to as "**Enabling Objectives**" (Piskurich, p. 29.23). *Also see* **Behavioral Objective**, **Instructional Objective**, *and* **Performance Objective**.

Lesson Objective: The **Primary** or **Terminal Objective** for any lesson (Piskurich, p. 29.23).

Lesson: Any block of learning designed around a specific skill. It may be made up of a number of modules (Piskurich, p. 29.23).

Lesson Plan: An outline of important points of a lesson arranged in the order in which they are to be presented, including: (a) activities of the student and instructor, (b) specific points to be made, (c) resources to be used, [and] when and how to use them. The lesson plan should be detailed enough so that instructors with similar backgrounds can conduct the same course with a minimum of preparation (Piskurich, p. 29.23).

Longitudinal Data: Data collected from the same cohort of students over time. Longitudinal data can take into account statistical determinants of achievement such as socioeconomic status and family background and are suited to determining "value added" by a teacher or school (Education Commission of the States, p. 36).

Major Course Objective: An objective that defines the expected outcome of a complete course. Sometimes called the **Terminal Objective** *or* **Outcome** for the course (Piskurich, p. 29.23).

Mastery Learning: An instructional learning theory based on the premise that given time and appropriate instruction, all students can learn well. Time is the critical variable among students, and learning is the constant.

Matrix-sampling: Giving a portion of the assessment to different, representative samples of students so that no student need take the entire assessment. The scores that are obtained are group rather than individual scores, and [they] are often used to look at the performance of a school or school district (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 40).

Metacognition: The ability to think about one's own thinking and affective responses.

Modification: An alteration of the assessment content or the assessment instrument. Modifications affect the reliability and validity of the assessment (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 2).

Module: A unit of instruction, usually designed for the achievement of one learning objective. A lesson may be made up of a number of modules (Piskurich, p. 29.24).

Norm-referenced Assessment: An assessment designed to reveal how an individual student's performance or test result ranks or compares to that of an appropriate peer group. More generally, it has come to refer to comparisons of performance among students, schools, districts or states. Also called "Norm-referenced Test" (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 40; Education Commission of the States, p. 36).

Objective: Intent communicated by a statement describing a proposed change in the learner (Piskurich, p. 29.24). *Also see* **Outcomes**.

On-demand Assessment: Assessment that takes place at a predetermined time and place. State tests, SATs, and most final exams are examples of on-demand assessments (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 40).

Open-ended Task: The kind of performance required of students when they must generate a solution to a problem or perform a task when there is no single, right answer (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 40). *Also see* **Open-response Task** *and* **Selected-response Task**.

Open-response Task: The kind of performance required of students when they are required to generate an answer, rather than select it from among several possible answers, but there is a single, correct response (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 40). *Also see* **Open-ended Task** *and* **Selected-response Task**.

Outcomes: "Outcomes" is shorthand for "**Intended Outcomes of Instruction**." Outcomes are operationally defined (measurable) educational goal statements for students, schools and school systems. To operationalize outcomes, there must be agreement on the specific "standards and measures": the tasks, criteria, and standards by which the outcomes will be assessed (Washington State Commission on Student Learning).

Performance: One of the three required parts of a learning objective that describes the task, activity, or attitude that a student must exhibit. It is an observable behavior (adapted from Piskurich).

Performance Assessment: Direct, systematic observation of an actual student performance or examples of student performances and rating of that

performance according to pre-established performance criteria. Such assessments are related to the performance of an educational objective (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 40). *Also see* **Authentic Assessment** *and* **Alternative Assessment**.

Performance Criteria: A description of the characteristics that will be judged for a task. Performance criteria may be holistic, analytical trait, general, or specific. Performance criteria are expressed as a rubric or scoring guide. Anchor papers or benchmark performances may be used to identify each level of competency in the rubric or scoring guide (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 41). *Also see* **Competence** *and* **Criteria**.

Performance Standards: Explicit definitions and concrete examples of how well students are expected to learn the material represented by content standards. Performance "levels" also may be used to define students' demonstrated proficiency at various points as they progress toward a standard (Education Commission of the States, p. 36). *Also see* **Benchmark** *and* **Anchor Performances**.

Performance Task: A performance task gives the student the opportunity to illustrate, perform, or demonstrate what he/she knows and can do (Education Commission of the States, p. 36). *Also see* **Task**.

Plan of Instruction: A document that outlines a course, broken down in to lessons and modules. It includes the lesson objective, learning objectives, presentation plan, resources, and an indicator of how the student will be tested (Piskurich, p. 29.24). *Also see* **Course Map** *and* **Curriculum Framework**.

Portfolio: A purposeful collection of student work showing effort, progress, or achievement in one or more areas. The usefulness (for assessment and instruction) of any portfolio is enhanced by performance criteria, student involvement, and student self-reflection (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 3). *Also see* **Portfolio Assessment**.

Portfolio Assessment: Portfolios can be assessed in a variety of ways. Each piece may be individually scored, or the portfolio might be assessed merely for the presence of required pieces, or a holistic scoring process might be used and an evaluation made on the basis of an overall impression of the student's collected work. It is common that assessors work together to establish consensus of standards or ensure greater reliability in evaluation of student work. Established criteria are often used by reviewers and students involved in the process of evaluating [the learning] process and [the] achievement of [learning] objectives (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 3). *Also see* **Portfolio**.

Posttest: An evaluation of the student done at the conclusion of instruction to determine if a student has achieved the course objectives (Piskurich, p. 29.24) *Also see* **Pretest**.

Pretest: An evaluation of students prior to instruction to determine what level of knowledge, skill, or aptitude they are bringing to instruction (Piskurich, p. 29.24). *Also see* **Entry Evaluation**.

Primary Trait Analysis: An explicit and systematic identification of those "traits" necessary for demonstration of competence on an assignment or in a course. Rubrics and other scoring instruments are established to reflect the relative significance of those traits. Under each trait, the instructor composes a 3- to 5-point rating scale. Students are awarded scores for each trait and given a composite score with the primary traits weighted (adapted from Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990). *Also see* **Analytical Trait Scoring**.

Problem-based Learning: Learning that is centered around a problem, a query, or a puzzle that the learner has to solve. An approach to curriculum which is problem centered rather than discipline centered (Boud, 1985, p. 13).

Problem Solving: Behaviors used by a learner to solve problems, answer questions, or solve a puzzle (Boud).

Prompt: An assignment or directions asking the student to undertake a task or a series of tasks. A prompt presents the context of the situation, the problem to be solved, and criteria or standards by which responses will be evaluated (Maryland Assessment Consortium, p. 6). *Also see* **Task**.

Rating Scale: A scale based on descriptive words or phrases that indicate performance. Qualities of a performance are described (e.g., advanced, intermediate, novice) in order to designate a level of achievement. The scale may be used with rubrics or descriptions of each level of performance (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 3). *Also see* **Criteria**, **Rubric**, *and* **Scale**.

Reliability: Reliability is the measure of consistency for an assessment instrument. The instrument should yield similar results over time with similar populations in similar circumstances (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 3).

Remedial: Instruction designed to remove a student's deficiencies in the basic entry or exit level skills at a prescribed level of proficiency in order to make him or her competitive with peers. Comments: The assumption is that students have already been taught (or at least been exposed to learning), but that the teaching was not effective and must be repeated (College Reading

and Learning Association, p.11). *Also see* **Developmental** and **College Level**.

Rubric: An established set of criteria for scoring or rating students' performance on tests, portfolios, writing samples, or other performance tasks (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 41). *Also see* **Rating Scale**.

Scale: The range of scores possible for the student to achieve on a test or an assessment. Performance assessments typically use a 4- to 6-point scale, compared to a scale of 100 or more with traditional multiple-choice tests (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 41). *Also see* **Rating Scale**.

Scoring Criteria: Rules for assigning a score or rating a student's performance on tests, portfolios, writing samples, or other performance tasks. Scoring criteria may include rating scales, checklists, answer keys, and other scoring tools (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 3). *Also see* **Criteria**.

Scoring Guide: A package of guidelines intended for people scoring performance assessments. May include instructions for raters, notes on training raters, rating scales, and samples of student work exemplifying various levels of performance (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 3).

Selected Response Task: Selected response tasks are those that give the student choice and the student must select a response. These include multiple-choice, true/false, and matching items. The index of achievement is the number or proportion of questions answered correctly (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 3). *Also see* **Open-ended Task** *and* **Open-response Task**.

Self-assessment: The process of doing a systematic review of one's own performance, usually for the purpose of improving future performance. Such assessment may involve comparisons with a standard, established criterion. Self-assessment may involve critiquing one's own work or may be a simple description of one's performance (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 3).

Skill: Any behavior or set of observable behaviors; an overt performance as opposed to a covert behavior. A subset of a task (Piskurich, p. 29.24).

Stakes: The consequences tied to performance on an assessment or test. A "low-stakes" test has few or no consequences tied to results; a "high-stakes" test has consequences related to performance. Stakes can include rewards for high performance, sanctions for low performance, promotion, or graduation. The rank- ordering of schools or districts when test results are

publicly reported can be considered "high stakes" (Education Commission of the States, pp. 36-37).

Standard: Defines what level of skill students must demonstrate on the learning outcomes (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 41).

Standardized Assessments: Assessments that are administered and scored in exactly the same way for all students. Traditional standardized tests are typically mass-produced and machine-scored and are designed to measure skills and knowledge that are thought to be taught to all students in a fairly standardized way. However, performance assessments can also be standardized if they are administered and scored the same way for all students. Standardization is an important consideration if comparisons are to be made between scores. Standardized tests may produce norm-referenced or criterion-referenced information. Also called "**Standardized Tests**" (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg, p. 41).

Student Learning Assessment: The measurement of what a student knows and is able to do, usually expressed in terms of progress toward a standard or mastery of a standard. Assessment can include diverse measures, such as multiple-choice tests, constructed response exercises, performance measures, and portfolios.

Summative Assessment: Culminating evaluation for a unit, grade level, or course of study. Provides a status report on mastery or degree of proficiency according to identified instructional or learning outcomes (Maryland Assessment Consortium, p. 7). Also see **Formative Assessment**.

Task: Anything from a discrete multiple-choice or short-answer item to a complex project requiring students to use many different types of learning to solve a problem, investigate a solution, write a story, or do any other real-world task. The task is a whole; within a task may be several dependent items (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 4). *Also see* **Performance Task**.

Terminal Objectives: The action, knowledge, or skills the learner is expected to have acquired at the end of instruction (Piskurich, p. 29.25). *Also see* **Course Objectives**, **Major Course Objectives**, *and* **Outcomes**.

Test: A set of questions, a situation, or a task designed to permit an inference about what a learner knows in an area of interest (Maryland Assessment Consortium, p. 7).

Thinking Skills: Thinking skills include thinking analytically, logically and creatively to form reasoned judgements and solve problems (Washington State Commission on Student Learning, p. 4).

Understanding: In an assessment context, this is the demonstrated capacity to apply facts, concepts, and skills in new situations in appropriate ways.

Validity: The extent to which the assessment measures the desired performance and appropriate inferences can be drawn from the results. A valid assessment accurately reflects the learning it was designed to measure. For example, a valid assessment of mathematics problem solving would be to measure the student's ability to solve a problem, and not the ability to read the problem (Bond, Friedman, & van der Ploeg).

Value Added: The amount of student achievement "contributed" by a teacher or a school during a school year or other set period of time. A school's contribution to students' achievement is the "value added" by the school. How much a school adds to students' learning can be calculated by assessing the differences in fall-to-spring (or fall-to-fall or spring-to-spring) testing of the same students (Education Commission of the States, p. 37).

Glossary References

Alverno College. "Ability-based curriculum." (1998, October 25). [Online]. Available URL: http://www.alverno.edu/educators/e_curriculum.html

Angelo, Thomas A., (1995, November) Reassessing (and defining) assessment. AAHE Bulletin. 48 (3). 7.

American Association for Higher Education. (1998, November 1). AAHE assessment forum. [Online]. Available URL: http://www.aahe.org/assessment/assess_faq.htm#define

Banta, Trudy W., Lund, J. P., Black, K.E., & Oblander, F. W. (1996). Assessment in practice: Putting principles to work on college campuses. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Bond, L., Friedman, L., & van der Ploeg, A. (1994). Surveying the landscape of state educational assessment programs. Council for Educational Development and Research *and* National Education Association.

Boud, D.J. (1985) Problem-based learning in perspective in Boud D.J. (ed.) Problem-based learning in education for the professionals. Sydney: Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia.

College Reading and Learning Association. (1990, December). A learning assistance glossary: Report of the College Reading and Learning Association Task Force on professional language for college reading and learning.

Education Commission of the States. (1998). Designing and implementing standards-based accountability systems. Colorado: Education Commission of the States.

Heinich, R., Molenda, M., & Russell, J. (1989). Instructional media and the new technologies of instruction. New York: Macmillan.

Herman, J.L., Aschbacher, P.R., & Winters, L.A. (1992). A practical guide to alternative assessment. Alexandria: VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Maryland Assessment Consortium, ed. (1993). Glossary of assessment terms. Frederick, Maryland: Maryland Assessment Consortium.

Moore, C.A. (1998, May-June). Helping teachers define and develop authentic assessment and evaluation practices. Assessment Update. 10. 3,10-11.

Newman, F.M., Secada, W.G., & Wehlage, G.G. (1995). <u>A guide to authentic instruction and assessment: Vision, standards, and scoring</u>. Madison, WI: Center for Educational Research.

Piskurich, G., ed. (1993). <u>The ASTD handbook of instructional technology</u>. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Walvoord, B. & McCarthy, L.P. (1990). <u>Thinking and writing in college</u>. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Washington State Commission on Student Learning. (1997, June 4), <u>Assessment toolkit glossary</u>. Olympia, Washington: Washington State Commission on Student Learning.

Wiggins, G. (1993). Assessing student performance: Exploring the purposes and limits of testing. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

An award-winning writer and presenter, Melodye Shore has given keynote speeches and seminars all over the United States and in Europe. Innovative and interactive, personalized and practical – her presentations and workshops go a step beyond conventional programs.

Melodye creates and customizes presentations on a variety of practical and policy-related subjects, including motivation, team-building, goal-setting, conflict management, leadership training, teaching techniques, student learning outcomes, and outcomes assessment. Recent clients include educational associations, community leadership groups, college trustees, teachers, and database marketers.

A credentialed writer, Melodye reviews book for authors and academic publishing houses. As well, she authors columns and articles for newsletters, journals, and other periodicals. Additional writing services include content and copy editing, ghostwriting, and proofreading.

Learn more at www.MelodyeShore.com or contact Melodye by email:
Melodye@MelodyeShore.com