

# CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN ENGLISH AND MATHEMATICS AT YEARS 5, 7, AND 9

Karyn Dunn, Ed Strafford And Chris Marston  
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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This study investigated current classroom assessment practices by surveying teachers at Years 5, 7, and 9 on what assessments they use in the areas of English and mathematics, the purposes of the assessment, and which assessments provide the most useful information.

A total of 676 questionnaires from 311 schools (response rate of 65%) were received from a stratified random sample of schools. Full primary, contributing, intermediate, composite, and secondary schools were all included in the sample, as were state, state integrated, and private schools.

Of the teachers who responded to the survey, 69 percent were female and 31 percent were male. Fifty six percent had been teaching for more than 10 years and 42 percent held either a middle or senior management position. Thirty five percent had curriculum responsibilities, the majority being responsible for a year group, sub-curriculum area, curriculum leadership, or Head of Department.

Overall in both English and mathematics, use of teacher or school developed tools and strategies was greater than that of externally developed tools. The only externally developed tools to have consistently high levels of use across all years were the Progressive Achievement Tests and Competition tests. However, in both English and mathematics, teachers in decile 1–3 schools used Competition tests significantly less.

For both English and mathematics, assessment was used most frequently for purposes within the classroom. For these classroom purposes, a mix of teacher or school and externally developed tools and strategies were used in English. In mathematics, more teacher or school developed tools and strategies were used. Less use was made of assessment information for purposes outside the classroom, but when it was used, it came more often from externally developed tools.

The greatest number of tools and strategies that were rated as being “useful” or “very useful” by more than 50 percent, were for teaching and learning and monitoring progress. Fewer tools and strategies, but still the majority, were rated as being “useful” for providing information to students and parents or caregivers, but fewer still for next year’s teacher, school management, and external agencies.

Teacher or school developed tools and strategies were the most highly rated in both English and mathematics for providing information for teaching and learning, monitoring progress, students, and parents or caregivers. Externally developed, more formal methods

of assessment, became more prominent for providing information for next year's teacher, school management, and external agencies.

Although in English the ratings of the most useful tools and strategies did not fluctuate greatly across the different purposes, this was not so in mathematics. There was a much more pronounced decrease in the mean rating of usefulness as the recipient of the information became more distant from the classroom.

Other findings included teachers indicating that they receive useful feedback about assessment results from a range of sources including students, parents, other teachers, and senior and middle management. The Board of Trustees was one source where little feedback was received, and what was received, was of limited use.

Teachers also reported that they consult widely on issues of assessment, with 51 percent indicating that they utilised at least one type of external professional development initiative, that is Advisors, Assessment for Better Learning Facilitators, or short courses, seminars, or workshops.

Teachers were asked if there was a difference in the amount of assessment they do for the different functions in English. Eighty seven percent of Year 5, 79 percent of Year 7, and 79 percent of Year 9 teachers indicated that there was. Year 5 and 7 teachers appeared to be relatively equally divided between reading and writing as being the most frequently assessed English function whereas at Year 9, writing was the most frequently assessed. At Years 5 and 7 the least assessed function was viewing and at Year 9 it was listening.

Seventy seven percent Year 5, 56 percent Year 7, and 36 percent Year 9 teachers indicated that there was a difference in the amount of assessment they do for the different mathematics strands. Number was identified almost exclusively as the most frequently assessed strand by Years 5 and 7 teachers.

Eighty two percent Year 5 and 72 percent Year 7 teachers responded that there was a difference in the amount of assessment they do for the different curriculum areas. Both English and mathematics were identified as being the most assessed curriculum area and the arts was identified by over half the teachers as being the least frequently assessed curriculum area.

Although the majority of teachers reported that they were doing more assessment in English and mathematics than they were three years ago, just over half perceived this amount as being about right.

The second phase of this study is documenting the assessment practices of 9 schools that have been identified as having good assessment practices. This will help give a better understanding of how some of the findings described in this report in fact influence the practices of the classroom teacher.

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