

Alternative Assessment

*Not the traditional
paper and pencil test*

How do we know that our students are learning what they are supposed to be learning?

Generally, we test them. Traditional paper and pencil tests are used as a device to audit our students' progress. These types of tests usually are not interactive. The students are not allowed to see the test before taking it nor are they permitted to see how they will be evaluated beforehand.

What is alternative assessment?

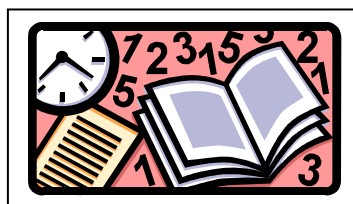
Alternative assessment is NOT a paper and pencil test. Rather, it is an interactive process between the teacher and the student.

Assignments are based on real life experiences. Most importantly, students are given grading criteria beforehand so that they know exactly how they will be assessed.



References:

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Alternative Assessment For The Foreign Language Classroom



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Why Alternative Assessments?

Why should we use Alternative Assessments?

Many teachers would agree that their goal is to teach their students how to use the language in meaningful, real life situations. If the goal is to develop communicative language skills, then teachers should be able to assess a student's performance using those skills.

Researchers such as Grant Wiggins (1994) and Charles Hancock (1994) have developed clear criteria for creating and implementing various forms of alternative assessments. They believe that a well-developed assessment includes reading, writing, speaking and listening in the target language. The activities should also be based on standards of learning such as the ACTFL standards.

Using an Alternative Assessment in the language classroom requires an **Authentic Task**, a **Scoring Rubric**, and plenty of **Feedback**. The authentic tasks mirror real life situations that appeal to all types of learning styles. With a rubric in hand, students know what they need to do to achieve success. Along the path to success, the teacher provides essential feedback.

Using Alternative Assessments

1. Authentic Tasks are:

- a. Performance Based and Pragmatic: the learner draws on personal experiences in order to perform a task in the target language
- b. Intergrative: the learner uses more than one skill at a time to perform a specific task.
- c. Interactive: often a task requires communication with other students or the teacher

Examples: essay writing, narrations, oral interviews and role playing

2. Steps for creating a Scoring Rubric are:

- a. Determine the criteria for judging performance.
- b. Describe exactly what justifies an excellent performance (A grade) and what justifies a poor performance (D or F grade)
- c. Create a description for each level or grade (the range) in between an A grade and a D or F grade.
- d. Give the rubric to the student well in advance of the project's due date
- e. Provide feedback throughout the task based on the criteria on the rubric.

Assessment and Standards

Integrated Performance Assessment

IPA's are assessments that are integrated with ACTFL standards. Students are given performance based tasks in the following order:

1. Interpretive Mode: students interpret authentic print or non-print material
2. Interpersonal Mode: students use the new material in a variety of real life tasks
3. Presentational Mode: students summarize what they learned by integrating the new material with previous knowledge

Closer to home...

Fairfax County Public Schools "Performance Assessment for Language Students"

The P.A.L.S. program was developed in 1995 by Ghislaine Tulou and Frances Pettigrew. The purpose of the program is to help Fairfax County foreign language teachers implement alternative assessments in their classrooms. For more information, visit the web site at:
<http://www.fcps.k12.va.us/DIS/OHSI/CS/forlang/PALS/>