

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course: Assessment and Grading for Student Achievement

Presenters: Damian Cooper and Ken O'Connor

Credits: 3 Graduate Credits

Recommended Reading:

Cooper, D. (2010). *Talk About Assessment: High School Strategies and Tools*. Scarborough, ON: Nelson Education

Cooper, D. (2007). *Talk About Assessment: Strategies and Tools to Improve Teaching and Learning*. Scarborough, ON: Thomson Nelson

Available at <http://www.nelsonschoolcentral.com/cgi-bin/lansaweb?webapp=WBOOKSITE+webtrn=booksite+F%28LW3ITEMCD%29=9780176289164>

Course Overview

Expert educational consultants Damian Cooper and Ken O'Connor argue the necessity of rethinking assessment practices to help all students learn and to become more efficient. Participants will analyze their current practice and begin to implement improvements based on careful distinction between assessment *for* learning vs. assessment *of* learning.

Mr. Cooper's strategies will facilitate for teachers such critical tasks as routinely sharing learning goals with students, providing examples of excellence (e.g., through rubrics), promoting collaborative work and self- and peer-assessment, and providing feedback that both informs students how to improve and allows them the time and space to do so.

Ken O'Connor joins Mr. Cooper in the final two units of the course to explore the critical distinctions between formative assessment and summative grades and to ask and answer such questions as whether grades promote learning at all; when, what, and how to grade; and what functions grades can serve in a standards-based system.

Interviews with teachers and classroom footage punctuate the presenters' key points throughout and provide examples of their theories in practice.

Presenters' Bios

Damian Cooper, who has a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Education, as well as a Master of Education in Curriculum, is an independent education consultant who specializes in helping schools and school districts improve their instructional and assessment skills. In his varied career, Cooper has been a secondary English, special education, and drama teacher; a department head; a librarian; a school consultant; and a curriculum developer. He has specialized in student assessment for more than twenty years and served as assessment consult to the School Division of Nelson Education where he worked on



the development of assessment principles and strategies for a wide variety of K-12 resources. Prior to that appointment, he was Coordinator of Assessment and Evaluation for the Halton District School Board in Burlington, Ontario. Cooper's current work focuses on helping teachers and administrators connect curriculum, instruction, and assessment in ways that improve learning for all students. He is the author of *Talk About Assessment: Strategies and Tools to Improve Learning* and *Talk About Assessment: High School Strategies and Tools*, as well as co-author, with Nanci Wakeman, of *Getting Assessment Right: Language* and *Getting Assessment Right: Mathematics for Data-Based Directions*.

Ken O'Connor, who earned his Master's of Education at the University of Toronto in 1973, has been an independent consultant since 1996. His 23 year teaching career includes experience as a geography teacher and department head. He has been a staff development presenter and facilitator on assessment, grading, and reporting throughout North America, presented at myriad conferences, and served as a curriculum coordinator for the Scarborough Board of Education and the Toronto District School Board. O'Connor is the author of a number of books, including *How to Grade for Learning: Linking Grades to Standards* and *A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades*.

Course Objectives

After completing this course, educators will know:

- Formative assessment vs. summative assessment
- What makes formative assessment facilitative of learning
- What constitutes essential learning
- Backward design
- The zone of proximal development
- What balanced assessment looks like
- The relationship between instruction and assessment
- The benefits of standards-based grading
- The role of grades in learning
- What makes grades quality

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, educators will apply the following skills:

- Employ formative assessment to improve student learning
- Use backward design principles to design effective instruction and assessment
- Teach to students' zones of proximal development
- Provide effective feedback to students
- Balance their assessment plans
- Embrace standards-based grading over norm-referenced grading
- Produce quality grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning

Unit 1: Rethinking Assessment for the 21st Century

In this unit, Damian Cooper outlines his two critical goals for assessment in the 21st century: to use assessment to help all students learn and to render the practice of assessment more efficient for



teachers. Participants will consider their current processes and begin to analyze how and whether those processes advance student learning and are consistent with their missions as educators. They will learn the definitions and different uses of different assessment types, including pre-assessment (or diagnostic), formative, and summative. They will prepare themselves to improve their practice in terms of providing effective feedback to students, adjusting their instruction in response to assessment, recognizing the influence of assessment on students' motivation and self-esteem, and preparing students to self-assess to effect their own improvement.

Unit 2 : Program Planning with the End in Mind

In this unit, Damian Cooper offers Wiggins and McTighe's backward design model as the foundation for developing and employing affective assessment. Backward design, Cooper notes, enables teachers to share the process of developing assessment with their peers (making it less private, more public, and therefore both more accurate and more consistent for students). Participants learn to identify what's essential for students to learn and to design assessment tasks and assessment tools accordingly. They consider the different kinds of data (or evidence) students can produce to illustrate their understanding of the essential knowledge and skills.

Unit 3 : Balanced Assessment

In this unit, Damian Cooper guides participants in the crafting of a balanced assessment plan, in which students write, do, and say to illustrate what they are learning. Participants will study how to assess their learning targets with tasks that involve students in authentic, real-world problem solving. They will learn to improve their performance tasks by incorporating interaction into activities, as well as on-the-spot thinking and application of the knowledge and skills students are developing.

Unit 4: Connecting Assessment with Instruction

Damian Cooper begins this unit by exploring assessment in differentiated classrooms, including those containing struggling students. He introduces the notion of the zone of proximal development to help participants develop instruction and assessment that sufficiently challenges all children, without overwhelming them. He outlines how to differentiate for students' different skill levels or interests, in order to help all students achieve proficient or exemplary achievement at their grade level.

Unit 5 : Assessment that Promotes Learning

In this unit, Damian Cooper introduces six questions about assessment for learning critical to the teacher's success at promoting student achievement. Participants watch classroom footage to help highlight how answering "yes" to those questions improves a teacher's practice and student learning.



Unit 6 : Article: Collaborating with Students in the Assessment Process

Participants read the article "Collaborating with Students in the Assessment Process," available under Resources, and address the questions that follow.

Unit 7 : Communicating Performance Standards to Students

In this unit, Damian Cooper explores rubrics, moderated (or collaborative) marking, and summative conferences for their benefits to students, particularly as methods of communicating performance standards both within individual classes and from class to class and grade to grade. Rubrics provide a descriptive roadmap to excellence, moderated marking develops consistent grading practices from teacher to teacher, and summative conferences enable teachers and students to do a careful analysis of a student's achievement in relation to standards over the course of a semester or year.

Unit 8 : Article: Not Everything that Counts Can Be Counted

Participants read the article "Not Everything that Counts Can be Counted," available under Resources, and address the questions that follow.

Unit 9 : Grading and Reporting, Part 1

In this first unit devoted to grading and reporting, Ken O'Connor joins Damian Cooper for a dialogue that concerns such questions as whether grading is essential to learning, what needs to be communicated to parents in a standards-based system, and how not only to engage all students in learning, but how to get them to complete all relevant tasks. They explore what makes grades quality (accuracy, consistency, meaningfulness, and supportive of learning) and how to achieve that quality both singly and with one's peers.

Unit 10 : Grading and Reporting, Part 2

In this unit, Damian Cooper and Ken O'Connor continue their in-depth consideration of the role of grading in students' education. They delve deeper into the issue of consistency and its impact on student learning; discuss when grades measure growth, progress, or achievement; and explore what specifically makes grades meaningful to students and supportive of their learning. They also consider provocative questions about what to grade, whether and when to consider behavior, whether to give zeros, whether to allow late work, and other issues that can plague teachers in the classroom.



Unit 10 : Article: “Redefining ‘Fair’”

In this unit, Damian Cooper and Ken O’Connor continue their in-depth consideration of the role of grading in students’ education. They delve deeper into the issue of consistency and its impact on student learning; discuss when grades measure growth, progress, or achievement; and explore what specifically makes grades meaningful to students and supportive of their learning. They also consider provocative questions about what to grade, whether and when to consider behavior, whether to give zeros, whether to allow late work, and other issues that can plague teachers in the classroom.

Methods of Instruction

- Videos (presentations consisting of lecture, interviews, and classroom footage)
- Readings
- Reflection questions (open-ended questions at intervals throughout the video presentations where participants are asked to reflect on the course content, their own practice, and their intentions for their practice)
- Quizzes (selected-response quizzes to assess understanding of the video presentations)
- Discussion forum (prompts after each unit that engage participants in online dialogue with their cohorts)
- Midterm (a project intended to get teachers to begin to develop their practice by putting to work in the classroom what they have learned)
- Final (a project that enables educators to reflect on their practice and assess their students’ work through the lens of what they have learned)

Plagiarism Policy

KDS recognizes plagiarism as a serious academic offense. Plagiarism is the passing off of someone else’s work as one’s own and includes failing to cite sources for others’ ideas, copying material from books or the Internet (including lesson plans and rubrics), and handing in work written by someone other than the participant. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade and may have additional consequences. For more information about plagiarism and guidelines for appropriate citation, consult plagiarism.org.

Percentage of Course Credit

- Reflection questions 25%
- Quizzes 15%
- Midterm 25%
- Final 35%

In order to complete the requirements of the course, the participant must complete all course work (e.g., reflections, quizzes, and any midterm and/or final), including watching all videos and participating in all discussion forums. We do not award partial credit.



Grading Policy

A: 3.4 – 4.0
 B: 2.7 – 3.3
 C: 2.0 – 2.6
 F: >2.0

Reflection/Quiz Rubric

Activity	Distinguished (4)	Proficient (3)	Basic (2)	Unsatisfactory (1)
Quizzes	90-100%	80-89%	70-79%	69% or below
Reflection Question	<p>Participant has provided rich detail and supporting examples from the course content.</p> <p>Participant has made responses to prompts personally meaningful and relevant to his or her teaching practice.</p>	<p>Participant has included appropriate content from the course content.</p> <p>Participant has made thoughtful comments in direct response to the prompts.</p>	<p>Participant has included little that indicates consideration and comprehension of course content.</p> <p>Participant has answered most questions directly but some too briefly.</p>	<p>Participant has included little to no content indicating consideration and comprehension of course content.</p> <p>Participant has not addressed the specific questions posed.</p> <p>Participant has not responded to all reflection questions.</p> <p>Participant has copied from the course transcript without synthesis or analysis.</p>

Midterm

Plan a unit of study using Wiggins' and McTighe's backward planning model. Be sure to review the course to date to ensure that your essential outcomes are indeed essential, that you have a number of ways for students to communicate what they are learning (i.e., balanced assessments), and that you have developed different learning experiences to help students achieve each of the three essential outcomes.

Please do the following:

1. Describe the unit of study in general terms. Describe the unit of study in general terms- i.e., what is the overall subject at hand—e.g., poetic language—and what are the specific targets—e.g., how metaphors, personification, and amplification affect meaning in poetry.
2. Identify three essential outcomes related to the unit of study—i.e., what students need to learn—being careful to identify not concepts or topics alone but either broad generalizations about the



topic or relationships between 2 or more relevant topics (aka “big ideas” or “enduring understandings”).

3. Determine appropriate assessments for each of those outcomes—i.e., assessments that will provide you evidence that your students have achieved the desired understandings.
4. Plan learning experiences for each of those outcomes and assessments that make such understanding possible.
5. If possible, implement the plan in the classroom.

Midterm Rubric

Step	Distinguished (4)	Proficient (3)	Basic (2)	Unsatisfactory (1)
Describe the unit of study in general terms- i.e., what is the overall subject at hand—e.g., poetic language—and what are the specific targets—e.g., how metaphors, personification, and amplification affect meaning in poetry.	Participant has identified a unit of study, clearly described the unit, and identified specific and appropriate targets.	Participant has identified a unit of study, described the unit, and identified some targets.	Participant has identified a unit of study, partially described the unit, and identified some targets that may not be appropriate.	Participant has not identified a unit of study, and/or has provided little to no description of the unit, and/or has not identified any appropriate targets.
Identify 3 essential outcomes related to the unit of study— i.e., what students need to learn— being careful to identify not concepts or topics alone but either broad generalizations about the topic or relationships between 2 or more relevant topics (aka “big ideas” or “enduring understandings”)	Participant has identified 3 essential outcomes clearly and directly related to the unit of study. These 3 essential outcomes are broad generalizations about the topic or relationships between 2 or more relevant topics that are key to understanding.	Participant has identified 3 essential outcomes related to the unit of study. These 3 essential outcomes are broad generalizations about the topic or relationships between 2 or more relevant topics.	Participant has identified fewer than 3 essential outcomes insufficiently related to the unit of study and/or offered topics or concepts rather than broad generalizations or relationships between 2 or more relevant topics.	Participant has identified fewer than 3 essential outcomes insufficiently related to the unit of study and offered concepts rather than broad generalizations of relationships between 2 or more relevant topics.



<p>Determine appropriate assessments for each of those outcomes—i.e., assessments that will provide you evidence that your students have achieved the desired understandings.</p> <p>Plan learning experiences for each of those outcomes and assessments that make such understanding possible.</p>	<p>Participant has determined highly appropriate and detailed assessments for each of 3 outcomes.</p> <p>Participant has planned 3 appropriate learning experiences aligned to the assessments, marked by high expectations and by challenging students to engage in higher order thinking</p>	<p>Participant has determined appropriate assessments for each of 3 outcomes.</p> <p>Participant has planned 3 learning experiences aligned to the assessments, though how those learning experiences challenge students and engage them in higher order thinking is not wholly clear.</p>	<p>Participant has determined insufficiently detailed assessments that may or may not be appropriate for 2-3 outcomes.</p> <p>Participant has planned 1-2 learning experiences vaguely aligned to the assessments, and/or they may not be sufficiently challenging and/or engage students in higher order thinking.</p>	<p>Participant has not determined appropriate assessments for any or all of his or her outcomes.</p> <p>Participant has planned 0-1 than 3 learning experiences, not clearly aligned to the assessments, and/or insufficiently challenging, and/or not clearly designed to engage students in higher order thinking</p>
<p>Formal issues</p>	<p>Participant has made no grammatical errors.</p> <p>Participant has organized paragraphs around clearly articulated main ideas.</p> <p>Participant has written in an effective and eloquent style—i.e., has varied his or her sentence structure and made careful word choice.</p>	<p>Participant has made a few grammatical errors.</p> <p>Participant has organized most paragraphs around clearly articulated main ideas.</p> <p>Participant has written in an effective and eloquent style—i.e., has varied his or her sentence structure though not always found the right word.</p>	<p>Participant has made some distracting grammatical errors.</p> <p>Participant has organized some paragraphs around main ideas but not others.</p> <p>Participant has written in a style that communicates his or her thoughts but with no marked eloquence and insufficient attention to word choice.</p>	<p>Participant has made multiple grammatical errors.</p> <p>Paragraphs are not organized around main ideas.</p> <p>Participant has written in a style that does not effectively communicate his or her thoughts.</p>



Final

For your midterm, you planned a unit of study using Wiggins' and McTighe's backward planning model. For your final, you will take on three additional tasks in relation to that same unit of study. First, design a rubric to accompany that unit that can serve as both formative and summative assessment. Be specific about the criteria being measured, the levels of proficiency, and their descriptors. Second, after reviewing the course carefully, develop a plan to enhance your practice at providing feedback for students throughout the course of study. Third, propose how you would efficiently communicate information to parents and guardians about students' growth, progress, and/or achievement in relation to the unit of study.

Please do the following:

1. Design a rubric to use as both formative and summative assessment for the unit of study. Please note, your rubric must be self-designed and fit your particular unit of study. A rubric taken from elsewhere will be unacceptable.
2. Develop a plan to enhance your providing feedback throughout the unit of study.
3. Propose how you would efficiently communicate information about students' growth, progress, and/or achievement related to the unit of study.
4. Write a reflection addressing the following:
 - a. How did the different tasks from the midterm and final affect your instructional choices?
 - b. If you implemented the plan in the classroom, how did the plan affect your students' learning? If you did not implement the plan, how do you expect it to?
 - c. How might this course help you change your overall assessment and grading practice?

Final Rubric

Step	Distinguished (4)	Proficient (3)	Basic (2)	Unsatisfactory (1)
Design a rubric to use as both formative and summative assessment for the unit of study.	Participant has designed a rubric with clear and highly appropriate categories and detailed descriptors at each level of achievement. The rubric is clearly designed for both formative and summative assessment.	Participant has designed a rubric with clear categories and descriptors at each level of achievement. The rubric is appropriate for both formative and summative assessment.	Participant has designed a rubric but without sufficient categories and/or vague descriptors. The rubric is designed for only formative or summative assessment.	Participant has not designed a rubric or has done so without categories or descriptors. Participant may have submitted a checklist rather than a rubric.



<p>Develop a plan to enhance your providing feedback throughout the unit of study.</p>	<p>Participant has articulated a systematic plan, richly detailed, for providing feedback throughout the unit of study.</p>	<p>Participant has articulated a systematic plan for providing feedback throughout the unit of study.</p>	<p>Participant has articulated a plan for providing feedback, but the plan is neither systematic nor sufficiently detailed.</p>	<p>Participant has not articulated a plan for providing feedback.</p>
<p>Propose how you would efficiently communicate information about students' growth, progress, and/or achievement related to the unit of study.</p>	<p>Participant has proposed a means of efficient communication about students' growth, progress, and/or achievement in language appropriate for students.</p>	<p>Participant has proposed a means of communication about students' growth, progress, and/or achievement.</p>	<p>Participant has proposed a means of communication about students' growth, progress, and/or achievement, but the plan lacks evidence that it will be efficient.</p>	<p>Participant has not proposed a means of communication about students' growth, progress, and/or achievement, and/or the plan appears inefficient.</p>
<p>Write a reflection addressing the following:</p> <p>a. How did the different tasks from the midterm and final affect your instructional choices?</p> <p>b. If you implemented the plan in the classroom, how did the plan affect your students' learning? If you did not implement the plan, how do you expect it to?</p> <p>c. How might this course help you change your overall assessment and grading practice?</p>	<p>Participant has addressed how all the different midterm and final tasks (i.e., articulating the essential outcomes, designing assessments, and developing a rubric) affected his or her lesson design.</p> <p>Participant detailed how the plan affected or should affect his or her students' learning with specific examples.</p> <p>Participant described with specific detail how the course might change his or her practice.</p>	<p>Participant has addressed how some of the different midterm and final tasks (i.e., articulating the essential outcomes, designing assessments, or developing a rubric, but not all three) affected his or her lesson design.</p> <p>Participant described how the plan affected or should affect his or her students with a few examples.</p> <p>Participant described how the course might change his or her practice.</p>	<p>Participant has addressed how one of the different midterm and final tasks (i.e., articulating the essential outcomes or designing assessments or developing a rubric) affected his or her lesson design.</p> <p>Participant described how the plan affected or should affect his or her students but with few to no examples.</p> <p>Participant listed how the course might change his or her practice but offered no detail to support that list.</p>	<p>Participant has not addressed how any of the different midterm and final tasks (i.e., articulating the essential outcomes or designing assessments or developing a rubric) affected his or her lesson design.</p> <p>Participant did not describe how the plan affected or should affect his or her students.</p> <p>Participant did not indicate how the course might change his or her practice.</p>



Formal issues	<p>Participant has made no grammatical errors.</p> <p>Participant has organized paragraphs around clearly articulated main ideas.</p> <p>Participant has written in an effective and eloquent style—i.e., has varied his or her sentence structure and made careful word choice.</p>	<p>Participant has made a few grammatical errors.</p> <p>Participant has organized most paragraphs around clearly articulated main ideas.</p> <p>Participant has written in an effective and eloquent style—i.e., has varied his or her sentence structure though not always found the right word.</p>	<p>Participant has made some distracting grammatical errors.</p> <p>Participant has organized some paragraphs around main ideas but not others.</p> <p>Participant has written in a style that communicates his or her thoughts but with no marked eloquence and insufficient attention to word choice.</p>	<p>Participant has made multiple grammatical errors.</p> <p>Paragraphs are not organized around main ideas.</p> <p>Participant has written in a style that does not effectively communicate his or her thoughts.</p>
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