**Interviews With a K-5 LRT & Grade One Teacher**

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ECS 401: Educational Assessment

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March 31, 2022

**Introduction**

           Assessments are a very important part of education that does not seem to be portrayed a lot. Between this class and being able to interview teachers, it will help show why it is so important. This interview will give a great look at the ups and downs that are done by assessments. The two interviewing teachers are completely different in their ways. The first interview is done by a first-year LRT teacher and the second interview will be done with a grade one teacher of ten years. I found that the first-year teacher had a lot more to say about assessments than the ten-year teacher. During the two interviews, I feel as if I learned more about assessments from the first-year LRT than from the ten-year grade one teacher.

**Interview One**

           My first interviewed teacher, I will be addressing her as Miss. M throughout the interview. Miss. M is a first-year LRT, she primarily works with first nation students. She graduated knowing she did not just want to be a teacher, but she wanted to make sure she was helping out students that needed it the most. She started in September by taking over her aunts’ classroom while she was still on maternity leave. Once her aunt was back, she was offered an LRT position at the same school to work with first nations students. She works with kids between kindergarten to grade 5. Since Miss. M works with multiple grades, I am really curious about how different or similar her answers will be to my cooperating teacher, who teaches grade one.

           The first question I asked Miss. M was “every student is different with their ways of learning and reactions to assessments, what is the best way to learn how each student needs to be assessed?”. She answered it very short but very educational. She mentions that a good assessment can be used on a variety of students and can be adapted for individual students’ needs. A good way of approaching this would be to try out different assessments at the beginning of the year and then set a standard assessment that you consistently utilize throughout the year but adapt based on the unit/lesson. I believe she did a great job at answering the question asked and also gave some great advice. Assessment should be more about what works better for each student, than the class as a whole.

           I then asked Miss. M how can students use the assessment as a learning tool and teachers use it as a support for learning. Miss. M mentioned that students can use assessments as a learning tool because they help inform them where they are in their learning and where they need to go. Schools have their assessments to be able to pass grades and classes, but assessments are much more than that. She goes on to say through opportunities to engage in assessments such as self or peer assessment students can get instant feedback as to where they are in their learning. Students can also use assessments as a learning tool because it provides them with a bigger picture of what they will be learning and what they need to accomplish to meet a goal (the outcome). A good example of this would be utilizing a checklist method, students essentially can use this as a “to-do” list when creating their work and know exactly what they must do to obtain marks. On the other end of the spectrum, teachers can utilize assessment tools to see exactly what the student is missing or learning. This can help teachers to alter learning plans and future assessments.

           The next question was about the roles the students play when it comes to assessments and if it is more beneficial to have the students involved she believes students play the main role when it comes to assessment. Students see a lot more success when they are included in the assessment process as they have a greater opportunity to understand and reach the learning goal. Allowing the students to be a part of the process, allows the teacher to see what the students find helpful from assessments and how they prefer to be marked.

           I wanted to know what Miss. M believed was the most important part of the assessment. She mentions how assessment is extremely important in her classroom as it is a tool for not only her but also for her students. Through differentiated assessment tools, she can inform herself about her teaching and where she needs to go moving forward with it. Assessment is essentially the data that every teacher needs to have in their back pocket. This data becomes relevant and can be utilized during parent/teacher conferences, IIP meetings, meetings with admin, etc.

           For my final question, I was very curious about her favourite part about assessments. Her favourite part about assessment is how it is constantly evolving. Many educators stick to rubric, or 5 scale rating assessments and do not always get the outcome from their students they were hoping for. Through familiarizing and staying up to date with the craft of assessment she has been able to use a variety of differentiated assessment tools to provide her students with more informed opportunities to reach their learning goals. Assessment is an important part of her teaching process as it helps me group students based on their individual needs, she is then able to work with these groups one on one and create assessment tools for that group's specific needs.

**Interview Two**

           The second teacher I interviewed was my pre-internship cooperating teacher. I will be addressing her as Mrs. P during this interview. I feel as if I did not learn enough from Mrs. P during my eight weeks then three-week block with her just recently. She kept a lot of the assessments to herself and we would only see her teach for maybe an hour a day. Both my partner and I were able to be there while she got ready for conferences. We were able to watch and help make students' portfolios to show the parents their progress and how they were doing in school. When interviewing Mrs. P, she did not give long answers, she kept them shorter and straight to the point.

           In question one, I asked, “every student is different with their ways of learning and reactions to assessments, what is the best way to learn how each student needs to be assessed?”. She responded by saying observation during each lesson and activity. Being able to observe each lesson and activity will allow you to make a clearer professional judgment than a one-time “test” will. Be sure to record observations so that it isn’t a forgotten day today. While she mentioned that, I feel as if I did not witness her do that outside of observing my partner and I’s lesson.

           I then asked Mrs. P “how can students use the assessment as a learning tool and teachers use it as a support for learning?”. She replied with, talking to students about the expectations of each lesson and making sure that they understand the instructions will help both the student and the teacher. During our lessons, she told us from the beginning to make sure the students know what they are expected to do during each lesson. They should know what to do and also know how they are being assessed as well. Every student is different in how they prefer to be assessed and being able to share what you are expecting from them, may help them in the long run.

           For the next question, I asked Mrs. P “what roles do students play when it comes to assessments? Is it more beneficial for students to be involved in the assessment process?” When she answered my question, I feel as if she only answered the second one. She said that yes, students should be aware of what the teacher is looking for and also be part of the conversations so that they understand their goals. I completely agree as teachers need to have full communication with their students for their lessons to be successful. She mentioned to me at a different time that during her 10 years of teaching, she has forgotten many times to communicate the assessment aspect and that has caused lessons to be unsuccessful.

           For my second last question for Mrs. P, I asked her “how important do you believe the assessment is? Why?”. She believes that assessment is important to show growth and to lead both the students and teacher to success. She does not believe that a formal assessment is superior to an informal and rather informal assessment over a period of time will give more evidence of learning. Give students different ways to show their learning and if one way isn’t working well for them, see if they understand the concept when asked in a new way. For example; if they cannot show their learning on paper, perhaps an oral assessment would be a better indicator of learning. I agree with this as I had witnessed this during my pre-internship. I had many students who had a very hard time with just hearing the instructions and needed visuals to help them understand what was being expected of them.

           For my last question, I asked her “what is your favourite part about assessments? Why?”. Her all-time favourite assessment is looking at writing and reading progress over time. In grade 1, she loves to compare writing samples from the beginning of the year to mid-year to the end of the year because there is always so much growth and seeing the proud smile of a child recognizing his/her learning is just the best feeling. I was very grateful to see how the student's writing had changed tremendously between the writing assessment in October to the one that we recently did in March. After the students were done with their March one, they were able to compare and identify the mistakes they made during their first one.

**After Thoughts**

Before both interviews, I didn’t have a big understanding of assessments as I was just learning how to assess. I feel as if I still don’t know a whole lot about assessments but I do know a bit more now. There is still a lot to learn about assessments, that even Mrs. P said she is still learning new assessments each day. Getting familiar and comfortable with assessments can take some time and I am ready to keep learning about it. I enjoyed having these discussions with the two teachers, and feel as if I learned information from both, but do not think I learned enough. As I was able to have a discussion with both teachers, they had different answers for both and was able to learn how each of them perceive assessments. I do wish that I could have gotten more details on a few questions from Mrs. P, as for questions 1-3, she gave me one sentence answers for each question.

**Conclusion**

After both interviews, I feel as if I have left with knowledge from both. As Miss. M was very insightful with her answers, for me, Mrs. P was able to show me in a day-to-day setting. I enjoyed being able to interview Miss. M and I feel as if it has helped me a lot. Being pre-service teachers, we are still learning about assessments and their importance of them. I enjoyed being able to interview a first-year teacher and get her opinion on this topic. I believe she did a great job of explaining the simplest ideas. Being able to have all of this information before pre-internship arrives again, will help me a lot. I was able to interview Mrs. P at the end of my three weeks, so I was able to watch how she assessed as well as the two prep teachers that came into the classroom. I feel as if I have more knowledge about assessments than I did before pre-internship. I also feel as if I have more ideas on assessments than I did before starting pre-internship. This was a great learning experience and I am excited to continue my learning about assessments.