

Chapter 7

Ensuring Student Wellbeing and Learning via Effective Classroom Assessments: Teacher Presence, Practice, and Professionalism

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ABSTRACT

Teacher candidates reflect upon their most favorite and their least favorite classroom assessment experiences in K-12 and higher education. Through qualitative research methods, their vivid images, compelling influences, and enduring implications are analyzed to reveal clear indicators of teacher presence, practice, and professionalism. Evident in the immediate importance for advancing their understanding and application of their awareness, communication, and self-efficacy, teachers benefit greatly by connecting effective classroom assessments to ensure student well-being and learning for every student.

INTRODUCTION

Student well-being encompasses an ever-expanding issue receiving ever-increasing global attention (Marr, 2018). Advancing research has generated various models of well-being with the identification of interrelated components and the initiation of holistic actions that guide and support institutions and individuals both in K-12 and higher education. Although the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018) purports that currently “no consensus around a single definition of well-being” exists, or addresses student well-being specifically, the CDC concludes that “well-being includes the presence of positive emotions, ...absence of negative emotions, satisfaction with life, fulfillment, and positive functioning.”

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Building on this CDC statement, Nelson, Tarabochia, and Koltz (2015) created the PACES Model of Student Well-Being featuring five domains: Physical, Affective, Cognitive, Economic, and Social. A revised, expanded version of the PACES Model was used for this research study. The ACCEPTS Model of Student Well-Being and Learned (Gallavan, in progress) added two domains for a total of seven domains of student well-being and learning based on teacher effectiveness: Affective, Cultural, Cognitive, Economic, Physical, Traditions, and Social. The characteristics associated with each of the seven domains in the ACCEPTS Model, both intentional within the individual domain and integrated across the other six domains, are equally critical in the teaching and learning of the whole child of any stage of learning and any age of living.

Students' well-being greatly influences their abilities to learn (Spratt, 2016), especially their abilities to demonstrate their learning naturally and authentically when performance is assessed. When learning is assessed, formally or informally, by teachers or peers, many students experience an "absence of positive emotions, satisfaction with life, and/or positive functioning," three critical descriptors included in the CDC (2018) statement on well-being. When assessment of student learning does not monitor and measure natural and authentic performance, students' assessment scores may not comprehensively and accurately reflect their learning, manifesting an array of outcomes impacting the student not only in the present but long into the future.

While scant research is available directly related to students' well-being, learning, and their experiences with classroom assessments, the American Test Anxieties Association (ATAA) (n.d.) found that "the majority of (K-12 and higher education) students report being more stressed by tests and by schoolwork than by anything else in their lives" (n.d.). The ATAA adds that approximately 16-20% of students or 10 million children and adults experience high test anxiety, and 18% of all students experience moderately-high test anxiety. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) (n.d.) found that anxiety disorders affect an estimated 25% of students 13-to-18-years-of-age, and McDonald (2010) discovered that test anxiety affects as many as 40% of all students of all ages. Clearly, students' well-being affects their abilities to demonstrate their learning naturally, authentically, comprehensively, and accurately on tests along with all other classroom assessments. The effects imprint as enduring repercussions experienced throughout their lives impacting personal health, family stability, career success, and parenting patterns (American Psychiatric Association Foundation, 2019).

Much research has been conducted on the relationship of students' backgrounds and their home lives, i.e., race, ethnicity, economics, parental involvement, etc., on students' standardized assessment scores accompanied with suggestions focused on interventions for teachers where relevant. However, little research has been conducted on the relationship of students' well-being and learning on students' classroom assessments. The findings from this research study produced recommendations germane to classroom assessments applicable to every teacher in K-12 and higher education.

To this end, this qualitative research study (Creswell & Poth, 2019) investigated teacher candidates' reflections associated with their own classroom assessments experiences in their K-12 classrooms and higher education courses. Participants (N=304) responded to two open-ended prompts focused on (1) their *most favorite* classroom assessment experiences and (2) their *least favorite* classroom assessment experiences, and one open-ended prompt delving into connections between the teacher candidates' reflections as students to their careers as teachers. Specifically, the online course discussion entry instructions asked participants to describe each assessment, their thoughts and feelings accompanying each assessment, and their reasons that teacher candidates need to be aware of their past classroom assessment experiences.

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