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The Lasting Power of Performance Tasks

Just like the fashion industry, education is notorious for recycling ideas. Bell-bottom pants may not be the latest rage, but boot-cut and wide-leg pants are close to the once-frenzied fashion trend of the 1970s. Educational initiatives and strategies often suffer the same fate as they arrive on the educational scene, each expected to be the "silver bullet" that will enhance student learning, improve student behavior, close the achievement gap, strengthen math fluency, or refine student writing. Yet educational initiatives begin to lose favor with teachers and administrators for various reasons, such as that they take too much time, or the results touted for them do not come to fruition, and thus the initiatives fade into the sunset, only to rise again years later with new names and/or a few adjustments.

That has been the fate of performance tasks, which essentially came on the education scene in the 1980s in the form of performance assessment. Performance assessment gained popularity in the 1980s and 1990s as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) commenced pilot testing of performance assessments in mathematics and science in which students needed to demonstrate their learning and understanding, not just select responses. Several states dipped their toes into performance assessment, including Vermont, Kentucky, New York, and Maryland. Many states incorporated some form of

performance assessment, even if it involved constructed responses, into their assessment systems (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2014). These states were the groundbreakers for performance assessment.

Performance assessment is not a stranger to educators abroad either—Finland, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, and England all utilize some form of performance assessment. The assessments in these countries challenge critical thinking skills and force students to apply their knowledge and skills to solve problems, conduct inquiries, and create products. Most of these countries "use a combination of centralized assessments that feature mostly open-ended and essay questions and school-based tasks which are factored into the final examination scores" (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2010, p. 14). Interestingly, England requires students seeking a general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) to be evaluated through a combination of open-ended test items and classroom performance tasks during and at the end of two years of study in a course. The New York State Regents Exams and the International Baccalaureate, as well as the assessment systems of Singapore, Hong Kong, and Australia, learned from England's GCSE assessment system as they developed their own systems (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2010).

However, with the passage of No Child Left Behind and testing moved from once a grade span to each grade level 3–8, the number of constructed-response questions diminished in many state assessments or disappeared altogether, replaced by multiple-choice questions. The increased use of multiple-choice questions in high-stakes assessments in turn changed classroom instruction, while at the same time accountability for student and school performance increased. Performance assessments of any format were fading away unless they were a part of a high-stakes accountability assessment.

As a result of the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Assessments created by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)—the two organizations charged with developing assessment systems to measure student progress on the CCSS—performance assessments resurfaced as performance tasks. Just as some states opted out of the CCSS, they also opted out of the Next Generation Assessments, relying instead on their own state standards and assessments. Interestingly, performance tasks are now being welcomed with open arms as an alternative to selected-response items, especially in light of the need to prepare students to be college and career ready. Performance tasks serve as a powerful classroom practice that is beneficial for both students and teachers.

Performance tasks can serve as instructional learning experiences; as formative assessments for students, to adjust their learning tactics, and for teachers, to adjust their instructional practices and provide targeted feedback; as learning experiences for students, to help them develop the attributes of assessment-capable learners (a topic elaborated later in this chapter); and as a means for students to demonstrate what they have learned (summative performance tasks). Performance tasks have been on a roller-coaster ride over the past few decades, and they are currently experiencing a revival with the SBAC and PARCC Next Generation Assessments, which went online in 2015. However, change is in the air as a result of the Every Student Succeeds Act, with many states creating assessment plans to be ready for full implementation in the 2017–2018 school year. This could be the opportunity for educators to incorporate more performance tasks into classroom instruction as well as into assessment systems.

The Identity Crisis of Performance Tasks

Both performance tasks and performance assessments have been defined in numerous ways, and the definitions are often intertwined and have similar attributes. In some regards, it seems as if this is a nomenclature difference resulting from the rollout of the Next Generation Assessments and their incorporation of performance tasks in assessment models.

Mixed Messages

The multiple definitions of performance assessment and/or task can be problematic. In her book *Performance Assessment: Showing What Students Know and Can Do*, Susan Brookhart (2015) defines a performance assessment, which can be formative or summative in purpose, as an assessment "that (a) requires students to create a product or demonstrate a process, or both, and (b) uses observation and judgement based on clearly defined criteria to evaluate the qualities of student work" (p. 3). Larry Ainsworth (2015) defines performance tasks as "hands-on, active learning tasks that enable students to apply the concepts and skills they are learning by creating a product or performance that can be evaluated with a scoring guide" (p. 272). Jay McTighe (2015) defines a performance task as "any learning activity or assessment that asks students to perform or to demonstrate their

knowledge, understanding and proficiency. Performance tasks yield a tangible product and/or performance that serves as evidence of student learning." Another term that is used in place of *performance assessment/task* is *authentic assessment* or *authentic task*. Giselle O. Martin-Kniep (2000) emphasizes the importance of students being engaged with "real-life problems, issues, or tasks for an audience who cares or has a stake in what students learn" (p. 26). Besides educational practitioners, the two assessment consortia SBAC and PARCC provide descriptions rather than definitions of performance tasks. SBAC states: "A Smarter Balanced performance task involves significant interaction of students with stimulus materials and/or engagement in a problem solution, ultimately leading to an exhibition of the students' application of knowledge and skills, often in writing or spoken language" (Measured Progress/ETS Collaborative, 2012, p. 1). In its online glossary, PARCC (n.d.) describes performance-based assessments (PBAs) as follows: "PBAs in math will focus on reasoning and modeling and include questions that require both short and extended responses. In ELA [English language arts]/literacy, the PBAs will focus on both reading comprehension and writing when analyzing texts."

The broad array of definitions for performance assessments crosses over into performance tasks. The bottom line is that it is difficult to define the difference between a performance assessment and a performance task. Linda Darling-Hammond and Frank Adamson recognize the dilemma of defining the meaning of performance assessment in *Beyond the Bubble Test: How Performance Assessments Support 21st Century Learning* (2014). They also incorporate the language of performance tasks as they explain how they are going to define the two terms for use in their book.

Given this book's focus on performance tasks, it seems appropriate at this point to ensure that you understand how I define performance tasks:

> A performance task is a **real-world product or performance** in which students **apply the concepts and/or skills** they are learning (formative) or have learned (summative) through a **motivating context**.

Let me break this down a bit to be sure you understand the meaning of the definition. *Real* here is not intended to equate to authentic. A "real-world product or performance" refers to students creating or

performing what working people would do in their jobs and careers. A real-world product could be an accounting spreadsheet (accountant, business owner), a watercolor painting (artist, illustrator), or a short story (author). (A new volume of *The Best American Short Stories* is published every year, so don't think there are no authors writing short stories.) A real-world performance could be a debate (politician), an oral presentation (television reporter, marketing manager), a gymnastic routine (gymnast), or a cello performance (musician). The performance task needs to apply knowledge, skills, and understandings that students are learning or have learned. Students have to know something before they can apply it, but applying it can be in a formative situation and not a summative assessment.

Note that the definition specifies that performance tasks can be used as learning experiences in which formative feedback is provided or as summative assessments after students have learned the designated concepts and skills. The final component of the performance task is that there is a motivating context. Between the motivating context and the real-world product or performance, the learning becomes relevant to the students. So, if students taking the 11th-grade health elective course were to create a tasting menu for a farm-to-table restaurant, aiming to keep all entrées under 500 calories and appetizers under 300 calories, this would be considered a real-world performance. Restaurant owners, chefs, and caterers need to plan menus all the time and deal with special situations. Remember, in my definition, *real* is not intended to equate with authentic. If students in this 11th-grade health course were to attempt an authentic performance, they might work to revamp the school cafeteria's menu for the following year to meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture's standards for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. The class might research the food likes and dislikes of students, learn about federal nutrition guidelines, and create menu options to present to the cafeteria manager. The main difference between real-world and authentic tasks is that a real-world task involves a product or performance that someone in an actual position or occupation would complete, but the situation is constructed by the teacher. An authentic task, in contrast, is a real-time product or performance that presents itself and is not purposefully constructed. Truly authentic tasks are few and far between because of the restrictions of what is currently occurring in a particular school or community.

Chapter 5 discusses in depth the attributes of a performance task, of which there are many beyond the concepts within the definition. Collectively, high-quality attributes make for the development of powerful performance tasks.

Figure 1.1 Performance Task Continuum

Basic Task   Real-World Task   Authentic Task

Student relevance, engagement, motivation
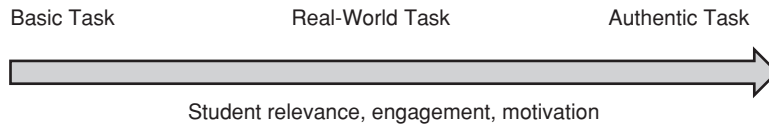
Performance Task Continuum

Given all of the varying definitions and descriptions of performance tasks/assessments, it seems that performance tasks fall along a continuum (see Figure 1.1). On one end of the continuum are completely authentic learning tasks. These are tasks in which a real-time situation in school or community is present, and the tasks become the vehicle for specific learning standards (as in the example above of the 11th-grade health class's menu options for the cafeteria). In the middle of the continuum are real-world performance tasks, in which situations are created that take into consideration actual jobs or occupations and products or performances that these positions would create (such as a caterer creating a menu for a private party with healthy, clean, and lean appetizer and entrée options). On the other end of the continuum are basic tasks requiring application of knowledge and skills, such as extended responses constructed from at least two sources of information. As performance tasks move along the continuum from basic tasks to authentic tasks, student relevance, engagement, and motivation increase. Single-word and simple single- or multiple-sentence responses do not constitute a performance task. At minimum, a performance task requires some type of application of knowledge and skills, not just knowing.

Reasons to Increase the Use of Performance Tasks

Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Assessments

As mentioned in the introduction, the Common Core State Standards are not only intended to prepare students for college and careers, but they are also "based on rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills" (Common Core

State Standards Initiative, n.d.). The SBAC and PARCC's Next Generation Assessments are intended to measure the level of student understanding and application of the CCSS. Powerful performance tasks require the application of knowledge, skills, and understandings, and that is why the Next Generation Assessments include performance task sections—to measure students' ability to apply their learning to unique situations.

The original design of the Next Generation Assessments involved a combination of formative assessments to be used during the year with a summative assessment at the end of the year, and the current assessments fulfill that goal. However, whether states, districts, and schools utilize the formative assessments in conjunction with the summative may depend on how many assessments they are already requiring. This is an issue that Rick Stiggins (2006) and Linda Darling-Hammond (2014) are combatting. Darling-Hammond recognizes that the Next Generation Assessments are a step in the right direction as one means to measure higher-order thinking as demanded by the CCSS. However, high-stakes tests have limitations in their ability to demonstrate some kinds of student learning. Thus, such demonstration has to happen in the classroom, with the measurement of student understanding and application of research, writing, and oral skills through engagement in extensive research projects and oral and digital presentation of the findings. The Next Generation Assessments cannot be the sole means of determining student progress and learning.

Some schools are entering the arena of using a combination of assessments to measure student learning. Specifically, as Darling-Hammond (2014) writes:

In addition to CCSS-aligned consortia exams, multiple measure could include:

- Classroom-administered performance tasks (e.g., research papers, science investigations, mathematical solution, engineering designs, arts performances);
- Portfolios of writing samples, art works, or other learning products;
- Oral presentations and scored discussions; and
- Teacher rating of student note-taking skills, collaboration skills, persistence with challenging tasks, and other evidence of learning skills.

These activities not only engage students in more intellectually challenging work that reflects 21st century skills, they also serve as learning opportunities for teachers, when they are involved in using the assessments and scoring them together. (p. 11)

The 48 schools in the New York Performance Standards Consortium have obtained permission to have students complete performance tasks, or "projects," rather than take most Regents Exams. The consortium has been in existence since the 1990s. For her projects, one East Side Community High School senior researched and wrote a paper on the Vietnam War and presented and defended her paper in a 60-minute presentation to a faculty team, wrote an analytical essay for English, conducted an experiment of her own design for science, and completed an applied mathematics project. Her performance on all of these projects determined whether she would graduate from high school.

Research conducted on the New York consortium's schools reveals that they have higher graduation rates and college enrollment rates than other New York City schools, even though most consortium students are considered low achieving. Specifically, the graduation rate for East Side Community High School is 82% (four years), compared to 68% on average across the city. However, there is a downside to the data for East Side students: They do not perform well on standardized tests such as the ACT, the SAT, and the one Regents Exam they have to take. The defense of these data is that such multiple-choice-dominated standardized tests represent a "mismatch between the deep learning in the network's classrooms and the kinds of knowledge that are tested on the SAT and Regents" (Gewertz, 2015, p. 8). It seems that striking a balance with multiple measures of assessment may be the best option, instead of going to one extreme or the other.

The following comes from a fact sheet released by the White House on December 2, 2015. This document summarizes and highlights some of the reform efforts in the new Every Student Succeeds legislation, which at the time was headed to the Senate for approval.

A Smart and Balanced Approach to Testing: The bill maintains important statewide assessments to ensure that teachers and parents can mark the progress and performance of their children every year, from third to eighth grade and once in high school. The bill encourages a smarter approach to testing

by moving away from a sole focus on standardized tests to drive decisions around the quality of schools, and by allowing for the use of multiple measures of student learning and progress, along with other indicators of student success to make school accountability decisions. It also includes provisions consistent with the Administration's principles around reducing the amount of classroom time spent on standardized testing, including support for state efforts to audit and streamline their current assessment systems. (para. 8)

In light of the Every Student Succeeds Act being signed into law, the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Assessments could be in jeopardy. Rigorous standards and yearly assessments in math and reading for grades 3–8 and once in high school are still required, but states now have control over what those will be, and they need to have their standards and assessments in place by 2017. Rick Stiggins and Linda Darling-Hammond might just succeed in promoting a resurgence of performance tasks as well as a focus on student learning versus student achievement.

Developing a Balanced and Thoughtful Assessment System

Stiggins and Darling-Hammond are the voices of reason in respect to the changes needed in national, state, and local assessment practices, and both have researched the topic for decades. In *Revolutionize Assessment* (2014), Stiggins pushes the envelope by stating, "Our testing practices are in crisis. They are currently doing as much harm as good for student learning" (p. 2). However, Darling-Hammond (2014) sees some glimmer of hope in the situation, as she expresses in her article "Testing to, and Beyond, the Common Core":

After more than a decade of test-driven, high-stakes accountability in the No Child Left Behind era, many educators and policymakers in the United States are looking to move toward a more thoughtful approach. Rather than maintaining a system that uses narrow measures of student achievement to sanction poorly performing schools, the push is now to implement next-generation learning goals that encourage higher-order thinking skills. (p. 10)

I am a proponent of performance tasks as instructional learning experiences, but such tasks have mainly been associated with summative

assessment, as is the case with the Next Generation Assessments. Thus, it is important that states, districts, and schools develop balanced assessment systems in which different types of assessments serve different purposes for different users of the resulting information. The multiple measures cited above could all be used as instructional learning experiences as well as summative assessments. When a student is engaged in writing a research paper, this is not an on-demand task completed over a few class periods. The student is guided through a process and provided with feedback along the way. The final product serves as the summative assessment.

Prevailing Research

As mentioned in the introduction, research related to the field of education has become increasingly abundant. We now know what works best for student achievement growth thanks to the compilation of research by John Hattie, so why isn't every teacher in North America focusing on what works best? As a colleague once stated, "You wouldn't go to a doctor who does not stay current on the research in order to provide you with an accurate diagnosis or the best care." It would be a difficult challenge to find any educator, whether a classroom teacher, a director of special education, or a superintendent of schools, who says that he or she doesn't want to help kids learn. However, educators who are not staying current with educational research, and the implementation of that research, are not doing the most they can to help students learn to their greatest potential. John Hattie has written three books—*Visible Learning* (2009), *Visible Learning for Teachers* (2012), and, with Gregory Yates, *Visible Learning and the Science of How We Learn* (2014)—that have had profound impacts on teaching and learning.

Research Connections to Performance Tasks

In the development and implementation of performance tasks, a number of steps are based on Hattie's research as reported in *Visible Learning* (2009). For instance, the starting point to the development of a performance task—or any type of formative or summative assessment, for that matter—is "what" students need to learn. Teachers should not be the only ones who are privy to what students are learning during any given lesson or unit; the students should be cognizant of what they are learning as well, and know when they have attained

the learning. Teacher clarity is an influence that Hattie describes in *Visible Learning*—it is about the teacher communicating to students the learning intention (what students are to learn) and its accompanying success criteria, to bring students into the learning process.

Effect Size

As noted above, a number of influences of Hattie's research are embedded in the planning and implementation of performance tasks. These include the concept of effect size, which is a means of measuring student achievement progress on a common scale. Hattie's determination to find out "What works best in education?" started his multiyear endeavor that resulted in the publication of *Visible Learning,* which synthesizes more than 800 meta-analyses concerning what influences student learning and to what extent. What is astonishing is that Hattie's research has been expanded to more than 1,000 meta-analyses and is still growing, while yielding the same results that were published in *Visible Learning* back in 2009.

Meta-analysis involves the combination of several research studies, in this case on educational influences. Hattie gathered hundreds of meta-analyses and analyzed various identified educational influences, such as "homework," to determine the impacts of those influences on student achievement. The statistical measure he used to compare all of these different influences is effect size. As Hattie (2012) explains, "An effect size is a useful method for comparing results on different measures (such as standardized, teacher-made tests, student work), or over time, or between groups, on a scale that allows comparisons independent of the original test scoring (for example, marked out of 10, or 100), across content, and over time" (p. 3).

What Hattie discovered in his original research was that if the bar for effectiveness is set at zero, about 95% of everything works. An additional finding was that the average effect size of the 800 original meta-analyses (plus the additional ones since the original research) was 0.40, and thus 0.40 became the "hinge-point" at which effectiveness of the influence is desired; this is considered to be about a year's worth of student growth (Hattie, 2012). Figure 1.2 provides an example of the "barometer of influences" developed by one of Hattie's colleagues to represent visually all the data he was compiling. It looks something like a protractor, with the arrow pointing to the effect size of a particular influence. In this case, the influence illustrated is teacher clarity, which has an effect size of 0.75. Note that effect sizes are broken into four quadrants: reverse effects (–0.20 to 0.00), developmental

Figure 1.2   Teacher Clarity Effect Size: "Barometer" Depiction
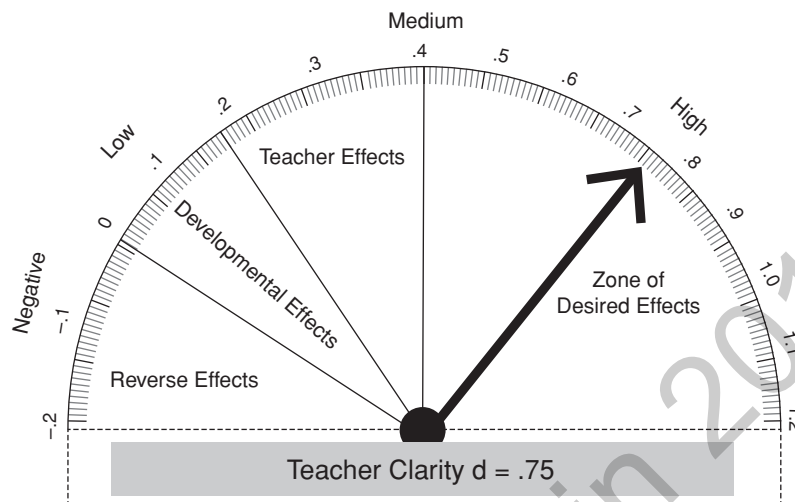
effects (approximately 0.10 to 0.18), teacher effects (0.19 to 0.40), and zone of desired effects (0.40 to 1.00+). Reverse effects are indicative of influences that result in student learning going backward rather than forward. Developmental effects are the effects students gain on their own based on maturity, and teacher effects are the typical influences that teachers have on student achievement. Finally, the zone of desired effects represents those influences that teachers should investigate further before making any final decisions (Hattie, 2012). As a teacher, what do you think your effect size is on student achievement?

Visible Learning is organized into contributions or educational influences from the student, home, school, teacher, curricula, and teaching approaches such as student motivation, home environment, retention, teacher–student relationships, reading, repeated readings, and reciprocal teaching. The book is a great resource, clarifying which influences work best to improve student achievement by placing all influences on the same scale—that is, effect size—but teachers should not use effect size alone to make decisions about influences; the text also offers important discussion on each influence and its effect size that further elaborates on different aspects of the research. For instance, homework has an effect size of 0.29. However, the summary of the research in *Visible Learning* explains that the effect size for homework at the elementary level is 0.15, while at the secondary level it is 0.64. It is essential that teachers not take effect size at face value, but dig deeper into the research, as it can reveal a tremendous amount of information (Hattie, 2009, 2012). Here are a few key points to keep in mind about effect size:

- The average effect size is 0.40, which equates to about a year of progress.
- The "hinge-point," or the point at which an influence is clearly affecting student learning, is an effect size of 0.40.
- An effect size of zero indicates no growth in student achievement.
- The zone of desired effects encompasses effect sizes of 0.40 and greater.
- A few influences have negative effect sizes, including summer vacation (–0.20), retention (–0.13), and mobility (–0.34).
- Teachers should read the research to discover the nuances within the effect sizes associated with particular influences.

Assessment-Capable Learners

Yes, in the United States the phrase *assessment-capable learners* is going to sound strange, except for those familiar with Hattie's work concerning visible learning. During my time as a remedial reading teacher, it was always more important to me that a student understood and could describe the meaning of a word than that he or she could just spew back a definition. This is the case with assessment-capable learners—that is, it is more useful to describe the characteristics of such learners than it is to give a definition. So, here goes—the characteristics of assessment-capable learners, as gleaned from the Visible Learning[plus] *Foundation Workbook* (n.d.-b) and *Building and Developing Visible Learners Workbook* (n.d.-a):

1. *Assessment-capable learners are aware of the learning intentions (what they are learning) and the success criteria (the criteria they need to demonstrate their learning and understanding of the learning intentions).* Students need to be aware of the learning intentions and success criteria so they can answer three key questions: "Where am I going?"; "How am I going?"; and "Where to next?" In many cases the performance task will be how students demonstrate the success criteria, so students will perform better if they know what they are learning and what success looks like.

2. *Assessment-capable learners use the success criteria and accompanying rubrics to self- and peer evaluate their progress in order to make adjustments if necessary.* Essentially, assessment-capable learners get, give, and act on feedback, and the scoring guides, or rubrics, that accompany performance tasks allow students to self- and peer evaluate progress and provide feedback. It is necessary to teach students how to give and get feedback from

peers as well as how to use the scoring guides as a means to self-evaluate.

3. *Assessment-capable learners use what James Popham (2008) would call "learning tactics" (p. 29) in order to progress in their learning as well as metacognitive strategies to monitor their learning tactics to ensure they are progressing*. It is necessary for students to plan their approach to the performance task and continually monitor and adjust as they progress through the task.

4. *Assessment-capable learners are actively involved in their learning and are eager to learn and progress*. They thrive on the challenge of learning and see mistakes as opportunities and not as failures. Performance tasks are intended to enable students to apply knowledge and skills, thus they need to be cognitively challenging. The self- and peer evaluations are opportunities for students to learn and go deeper with their learning.

Students are not receptacles into which we dump 13 years of education. They need to be active and engaged in their learning, and this has everything to do with the teachers they encounter in the classroom as well as the learning experiences those teachers plan and the instructional practices they utilize. If teachers use performance tasks as learning experiences and/or assessments and focus on developing assessment-capable learners, they will see achievement gaps close and students flourish in their classrooms.

The most exciting thing about assessment-capable learners is the fact that the development of such learners has had the highest effect size of any educational influence, 1.44, since 2009, only to be surpassed by collective self-efficacy (effect size 1.57) in the research released by Hattie in December 2015. Collective self-efficacy is the collective belief of the staff and students in a school that they can accomplish their common goals (Krownapple, 2015). Many different influences associated with performance tasks can help to develop assessment-capable learners, including collective self-efficacy.

Student Motivation and Relevance

Real-world performance tasks are powerful because they motivate students to learn; students see the relevance in learning and want to engage in the performance tasks. Motivation—defined by Merriam-Webster.com as "the act or process of giving someone a reason for doing something"—is an important aspect of the teaching and learning process. As teachers we have to give our students reasons to learn

or to do things. When students are younger their intrinsic motivation to learn is high. Infants are determined to learn how to walk; we don't teach them how to put one foot in front of the other or maintain balance—children have an innate desire to learn to move. However, at times parents as well as teachers need to use extrinsic motivation. "If you eat all your peas, you can have a cookie for dessert"; "If you finish the math problems, you can have five extra minutes of recess"; or "If you turn in your homework tomorrow, you will receive five bonus points on your next test." It seems that as students age, their intrinsic motivation to learn diminishes. As Martin-Kniep (2011) observes: "Issues of engagement and motivation diminish greatly when students can appreciate the meaningfulness and relevance of what they are learning. This is what schooling should do for students. It should deepen their awareness of issues that matter, provide them with tools to transfer what they are learning into real-world applications, and inspire them to do good deeds" (p. 1). This is exactly what performance tasks can do for your classroom. Real-world and authentic performance tasks provide relevance for students, which results in motivation and engagement in learning.

New Opportunities

Performance tasks are on the rise and can become an integral part of classrooms, schools, and districts. The Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Assessments brought performance tasks back to life after they had taken a backseat to the accountability measures of No Child Left Behind. Not only were the English language arts and math standards of the CCSS written as performance standards, the Next Generation Science Standards and the revised standards of the National Council for the Social Studies are now both written as performance standards. *Performance* means that the student creates or demonstrates a product or a performance in order to provide evidence of learning and progress. High-stakes assessments are administered once a year, and no matter the subject area, they are unable to measure many of the more involved standards. In addition to states being able to make decisions about rigorous standards, the Every Student Succeeds Act opens the door to the incorporation of multiple measures of assessment, including performance tasks, to determine students' levels of understanding and application of whatever standards are in place. Powerful real-world performance tasks can change a classroom, making it come alive. In such a vibrant environment, students are motivated and engaged in their learning. Both students and teachers are invigorated to learn!

Key Takeaways

- The early users of performance assessments forged the path for later revival of performance tasks.
- The CCSS and accompanying Next Generation Assessments have revived the use of performance tasks.
- Performance tasks and performance assessments have been defined in many ways, but the various definitions encompass many common characteristics.
- A performance task is defined in this book as a real-world product or performance in which students apply the concepts and/or skills they are learning (formative) or have learned (summative) through a motivating context.
- Real-world performance tasks are powerful tasks that provide relevance and motivation to learners.
- Performance tasks fall along a continuum that corresponds with student relevance, engagement, and motivation.

Figure 1.1   Performance Task Continuum

Basic Task   Real-World Task   Authentic Task

Student relevance, engagement, motivation
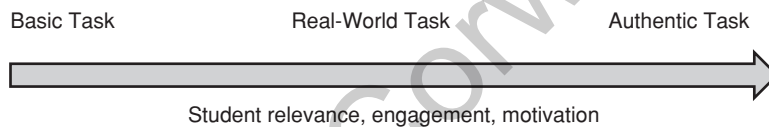
- The development and implementation of performance tasks supports the development of assessment-capable learners, which has an effect size of 1.44. The average effect size is 0.40.
- The Every Student Succeeds Act can open doors for an increase in the use of performance tasks.
- There is a need for balanced assessment systems that utilize multiple measures, including in-class performance tasks, instead of relying on one high-stakes assessment.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the extent of the use of performance tasks, along the continuum described in this chapter, in your classroom, school, or district?

2. Why are you interested in the use of performance tasks for instruction and assessment?

3. What roadblocks are currently in place preventing you from incorporating more performance tasks? What can you do to overcome the roadblocks?

4. What resonated with you the most in this chapter and why?