**Alternative Assessment**

My belief, from the perspective of a secondary teacher is that there is room for both traditional and alternative assessment. From a junior perspective I think that is very true as well. The important bit is that Teachers across the system should use assessment to drive the teaching in order to respond to student learning. I don’t think that that is an easy task however. In secondary we have done a poor job of making teachers feel good about the transition over the past 10 or so years.

In both of the assigned articles there are a several significant points that I would like to discuss

In the Tanner article he states:

*“The assumption that there can be a meaningful nationwide, state-wide, district-wide, or even school-wide consensus on the goals of schooling and on what students should learn and how they should learn is untenable. In a multicultural society which values difference consensus is undesirable.” (2001)*

I think that Tanner, in his dissection of the movement toward authentic assessments, is quite prescient. Recently I read an article that called for a kind of assessment based on a badge system. Like the social networking badges (FourSquare etc) students would gain small granular achievements (badges) in a highly customized and decentralised learning environment. A link to the article

*So while no one argues against determining what must be accomplished to demonstrate learning, it is, in Berlak’s (1992) logic, potentially a different outcome for each state, district, school, and by extension for each learner. (Tanner, 2001)*

This idea of decentralised and customised learning objectives is really interesting and it is great deal different from the industrial curriculum that we now are required to teach. The questions that remain are whether or not this widely diverse or disparate school experiences will affect social cohesion. Maybe the flipside is: does the current curriculum actually create social cohesion? Does the curriculum across the province actually mean that students in Toronto are achieving the same in Thunder Bay? Or is this notion an ephemeral dream

*“Teachers may be unsure of how to combine quality assessment techniques in the classroom, implementing them is difficult,” (Corcoran, Dershimer, Tichenor, 2004)*

I have found that in my role as a curriculum coach—teachers often have the greatest difficulty in the area of assessment and evaluation. They have really not be well supported (by folks like me sadly) in transitioning to assessment practices more respectful of student learning.

*“One of the most difficult assessment changes for teachers to implement is a willingness to encourage students to choose any medium through which to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the concepts or objectives.” (Corcoran, Dershimer, Tichenor, 2004)*

In my classroom several years ago I was gung ho for DI. As an English teacher I felt that I was strongly positioned to differentiate in the areas of content and product. So I made a list of about fifty ways the students could prove they met the expectation. The problem was this was a college level class and they really got bogged down with the choice. They were paralysed by it. Since then I have found that offering a limited number (3-6) of different choices that are tried tested and true is a better method. Of course if a student wants to do something differently and proposes it—then I almost always say sure.