of assessment practices by presenting a clear vision of classroom assessment that included a focus on teaching and learning and provided support for teachers to rethink their assessment practices in this context. In many places, classroom assessment and assessment for learning have become part of the policy landscape.

Often the opportunities embedded in large-scale reform are difficult to see, even when the reforms are well intentioned. Considering reforms dispassionately can be particularly hard when teachers feel denigrated, devalued, and under scrutiny. It seems that every intended outcome of a policy comes with its shadow of unintended outcomes and the eclipse caused by the shadow is sometimes more dramatic than the original image. This being the case, teachers and administrators have the power to act rather than react and to move the educational change agenda forward in ways that they believe can really benefit students.

Taking Up the Challenge

In the current climate, educators are uniquely positioned to make fundamental changes in the purposes and processes of assessment in their classrooms, but it will not be an easy road. There are powerful forces operating in several different directions. The push of large-scale reform is for more centralized control, with national or state standards and curriculums and concomitant testing systems. At the same time, the veneer over teachers' moral purpose is very thin. Most of them entered the profession to make a difference in students' lives, and they are routinely concerned about how to serve their students well. When students are at stake, many teachers are willing to consider new approaches. The public is still undecided and probably uninformed, as well. They need images of another way, of alternatives to what has always been.

Although the challenges are immense, this is not a time for inertia. As one of my favorite cartoon characters, Pogo, once said, "We seem to be confronted by insurmountable opportunities." Teachers and administrators have the potential to use assessment as an exciting and powerful means for enhancing learning. Getting classroom assessment right is proving to be much more difficult that was imagined. It is a complex mix of challenging personal beliefs, rethinking instruction, and learning new ways to assess for different purposes. It requires educators who are excited about learning, imaginative, and willing to formulate strategies of resistance that allow them to use assessment in productive ways in their classrooms and honor the complexity of learning and assessment.

Complexity is tiresome, but it's true.

Ideas for Follow Up

1. What was the purpose of classroom assessment when you were a student?
2. How is classroom assessment currently being used to enhance student learning in your school or district?

The good news in this story is that many other educators, researchers, and even policy makers have been thinking about, writing about, and talking about these ideas for some time. Strong voices have been emerging, with alternative visions for assessment in schools—visions that make purpose paramount and shift the focus from large-scale assessments for accountability to classroom assessment for teaching and learning. Still, the practices that are being advocated are more the exception than the rule and are not encouraged or supported in many educational settings. But the seeds have been sown for a genuine revolution, and ideas are there to be nurtured and to blossom. This assessment revolution is not happening in the halls of power, although some governments have done some things to assist in its development and hasten its influence. Instead, it is situated in schools and particularly in classrooms, as students and teachers work together. The shift that these various authors envision depends on teachers and others rethinking how and why assessment and teaching happen.

Lorrie Shepard (2000) worried aloud, in her Presidential Address to the American Educational Research Association, that external accountability testing can lead to deskilling and deprofessionalizing of teachers and will teach students and teachers that effort in school should be in response to externally mandated rewards and punishments, rather than the excitement of ideas. I agree. I also worry, however, that empowering teachers to take back assessment has resulted in reinforcement of traditions of teachers judging students using questionable methods, without the changes in assessment purpose or approach that will make it an integral part of learning. Just moving assessment back to teachers' control, on its own, is not a positive change. Returning to some fictional "golden age" will not move the agenda forward. A revolution in assessment that will influence student learning in deep and sustained ways is much larger than assessment, by itself. It is a revolution about learning. And the promise of assessment for learning is associated with the highest purpose—deep and authentic learning for all students. Approaching this vision of schools as learning institutions requires a dramatic change in the assumptions underlying education, and it requires a different view of schools, schooling, teachers, teaching, and particularly, assessment.

Assumption: Schools have the responsibility for preparing all students for tomorrow's world; teachers have the wherewithal to guide all students to high levels of learning; and, assessment, first and foremost, is part of student learning.

This seemingly straightforward shift requires dramatic changes in the way teaching and learning happen in schools. So changing classroom assessment is part of a revolution—a revolution in classroom practices of all kinds. A tall order, but not an impossible one. Educational change is a process of creeping incrementalism, with tiny changes, day after day, in many different and unpredictable ways and places. We have already taken many of these first steps and made many of the tiny changes. We are embarking on an evolutionary path toward the revolution. Over time, teachers, parents, and students can *reform* the nature of assessment in schools from a culture of judging and categorizing to one that fosters learning for all.

Classroom Assessment and Large-Scale Reform

Education is in the foreground of many legislative agendas and many governments have embarked on large-scale reform agendas designed to change entire systems. As Michael Fullan (2000) describes it, "Large-scale reform has returned with a vengeance," and it has been surprisingly similar around the world. Different countries have unique histories and contexts, but most have instituted policies that involve increased responsibility for individual schools, a reduction of power for district school boards or local education authorities; more power and responsibility to parents; changes to and centralization of curriculum; and the introduction of standards or expectations for student learning and centralized assessment schemes.

When governments mandate reform agendas, they are generally focused on first-order changes that are intended to put pressure on schools through external quality control, with scores from large-scale assessment as the ultimate measure of success. All too often, educators deplore and resist the changes or engage in superficial compliance to satisfy their masters. In my mind, this process is a diversion that takes us away from the work at hand. However, the current wave of large-scale reform contains much value that can be cultivated and colonized by educators to transform them into second-order changes, particularly in relation to the reforms that see student learning (not just test scores) as the most important outcome and that have introduced high-leverage approaches to teaching and learning (including assessment for learning) into the fabric of the reforms. In the first edition, I suggested that governments could assist in the transformation

Rethinking Assessment for Real Change

This book is about changing assessment in ways that will fundamentally challenge the status quo of assessment. As I write this edition, I am even more convinced that using assessment as a vehicle for learning suggests second-order changes that will influence how teachers view their work and act on a daily basis in their classrooms, not just a few superficial changes in delivery or resources. This kind of change is hard. As Cuban (1988) warned us, trying to implement second-order changes in schools can lead to a sense of impotence and pessimism. He also reminded us that fundamental changes can occur when teachers themselves believe that the changes are worth making and when there is a parallel change in the social and political structures that exist outside schools.

The history of assessment described previously shows a long line of first-order changes designed to inject quality control into education using a testing system designed to measure student performance and hold schools accountable. Government policies are routinely placing conflicting demands on schools. This is not an indictment of government. It is rather a genuine reflection of a society divided about what schools are for. Much of the debate (both overt and hidden) in education focuses on the purpose of schooling. Some legislation is premised on schools as instruments of social control that need to be controlled themselves. Large-scale assessment, standards, sanctions, and incentives for schools are a visible example. Other legislative directions identify schools as the mechanism for maximizing opportunities for all, with rhetoric about fairness and equity. With the increasing focus on accountability, there is also a societal push toward enhancing learning for all students. Schools and districts are caught between these contradictory purposes of "education for all" and "education as gatekeeper" with control on the nature of goals and rewards. Teachers and administrators are the instruments of these contradictory demands and are both recipients and perpetrators of these competing messages.

In this confused and emotionally charged assessment environment, the stakes are high to get it right. Educators find themselves in a difficult position. They are part of the transition, laden down with the burdens of the past, while contemplating the possibilities of the future. They know how it has always been and have a great deal invested in maintaining stability, but at the same time, many of them acknowledge that it just doesn't feel right. The time is right for rethinking assessment in schools, thinking about its various purposes and intentionally planning the most appropriate practices and approaches

for the different purposes. What better way to bring some clarity to a murky subject than to return to first principles. What is our purpose? What are we trying to accomplish? What is assessment for?

Purpose Is Everything

When I wrote the first edition, I was convinced that there was an important distinction to make among the various purposes for assessment. I, and others, had written about classroom assessment having a multitude of purposes, many of them contradictory. In a book about reinventing education for young adolescents (Hargreaves, Earl & Ryan, 1996), we discussed the multiple and competing purposes of assessment as motivating students, diagnosing difficulties, certification of achievement, and accountability to the public. Paul Black (1998) identified three broad purposes of assessment in schools—to support learning; to report achievement of individuals for certification, progress, and transfer; and to satisfy the demands for public accountability. He went on to point out that there are tensions among the purposes that involve choices about the best agencies to conduct assessments and of the optimum instruments and appropriate interpretations to serve each purpose. The emergence of assessment for learning as a major force in education has challenged teachers and school leaders to distinguish between the various purposes of classroom assessment. Different purposes require vastly different approaches and mixing the purposes is likely to ensure that none of them will be well served. It is becoming more and more obvious that we must first decide about the purpose and then design the assessment program to fit (Gipps, 1994).

> Using one assessment for a multitude of purposes is like using a hammer for everything from brain-surgery to pile driving.
>
> Walt Haney (1991)

Many of us, policy makers, researchers, and educational leaders, have had a naïve belief that if only teachers saw the differences and understood the value, they would happily and easily adapt their teaching and assessment practices to address the different purposes in different ways. Like learning and teaching, however, assessment is not a singular entity. It is complex and dynamic and deserves to be differentiated and understood in all of its intricacy. Educators need to think about the various purposes for assessment and make choices about the purposes that they believe are important and about how to realize these purposes every day in their classrooms.

> Assessment that is explicitly designed to promote learning is the single most powerful tool we have for raising standards and empowering lifelong learning.
>
> Assessment Reform Group (1999)

assessment, and teachers flock to professional development sessions to learn about new ways to assess students. Researchers have continued to focus on assessment for learning, or formative assessment, as a major innovation in education and have contributed to the evidence that assessment is, in and of itself, a powerful learning tool that teachers can use to enhance student learning and achievement (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2003; James & Pedder, 2006; Marzano, 2006; Popham, 2011; Stiggins, 2001; Wiliam, 2011).

This increased understanding about the power of assessment has not gone unnoticed by policy makers and practitioners. In the first edition, I suggested the need for policy makers to support teachers and school leaders in their ongoing assessment work to enhance student learning. Since then, many jurisdictions around the world have been influenced by the research on assessment for learning and incorporated it in to their directives to schools. England introduced the Assessment for Learning Strategy in 2008. Assessment for learning is a major plank in the New Zealand curriculum. Virtually every Canadian province and territory has a policy directive and/or has developed resources and offered professional development that supports assessment for learning. Norway has an extensive assessment for learning initiative. And the list goes on.

This attention to assessment for learning is very encouraging. It is exciting to see governments recognizing the value of the assessment that teachers do in schools and to give it primacy in policy. Unfortunately, the promise of assessment for learning has not materialized as some of us hoped. In recent years, I have had the pleasure and privilege of participating in international invitational assessment seminars focused on assessment for learning. This group is made of researchers, policy makers, professional development providers, and educational leaders from Australia, Canada, continental Europe, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, all of whom are involved in understanding and promoting high-quality assessment for learning in schools (Klenowski, 2007).

One of the recurring themes for the group is that assessment for learning is either superficial or not evident in most classrooms. So why is it that, after several decades of evidence and examples of how formative assessment can make such a difference for student learning and its adoption as a policy direction, it is not a fundamental part of

classrooms? The Learning How to Learn (LHTL) Project in England (James et al., 2007) has provided the international seminar group with a major source of evidence and fuelled our deliberations. In their work, the LHTL team found that teachers' who were involved in a project focused on implementing assessment *for* learning in their classrooms often reflected what they called "the letter" of formative assessment or assessment to promote student autonomy, focusing on the surface techniques, rather than "the spirit," based on a deep understanding of the principles underlying the practices. Only about 20% of the teachers in their LHTL study were using formative assessment in ways that were designed to help students develop as learners (James & Pedder, 2006).

In this edition, I revisit the ideas from 2003, ideas that are still salient, but view them through the lens of educational change, particularly change that requires the participants to engage in conceptual change.

Looking for Change in all the Wrong Places

As many authors have described, educational change is much more complex than most reform agendas have allowed for, and many reforms have had very little impact on practice (Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2000; Hargreaves Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001). Many years ago, Larry Cuban (1988) of Stanford drew attention to a fundamental puzzle in school reform. He pointed out that through a whole century of rhetoric about school reform, the basics of schooling have remained remarkably similar. His explanation for this paradox is that reformers have largely concentrated on first-order changes; *changes that try to make what already exists more efficient and effective.* Very few reforms focused on second-order changes; *changes designed to alter the fundamental ways in which schools operate.* The few second-order changes that did emerge (e.g., open space, team teaching, and flexible scheduling) were quickly diverted by teachers and administrators who saw minimal gain and much loss in embracing the changes and either adapted them to fit what existed or ignored them (Cuban, 1988). Nevertheless, second-order changes are probably necessary if schools are going to prepare young people for a future in which they are required to be competent, confident, and creative learners, as a starting point for dealing with the complexity of their lives.

designed not only to report the achievement of individuals to parents, other teachers, and the students themselves, but to make decisions about student placements and life choices. Students were given different programs, sorted into different tracks, and set on the voyage toward their various destinations. Assessment in schools became the local gatekeeper, emulating the external exam models and reinforcing the need to sort and select. Schools and teachers contributed to this process through a system of ongoing reporting, rewards and penalties, and program decisions.

Since the 1980s, there has been another dramatic shift in how results from large-scale assessment are used. In the pervasive standards-based policy context large-scale assessment has changed from an instrument for decision making about students to a lever for holding schools accountable for student performance in relation to standards that are set by policy. Assessment results have become the vehicle of choice for accountability. These policy directives make assessment results "high stakes" for students but, even more important, for teachers and school leaders. The range of uses of large-scale testing results has spawned a great deal of debate about large-scale reform and the implications of test use (Berliner, 2006; Elmore, 2004; Firestone, Schorr, & Monfils, 2004; Fullan, 2009; Haney, Madaus, & Lyons, 1993; Linn, 2008; OECD, 2012; Popham, 2001; 2002; Simon, Ercikan, & Rousseau, 2012). Challenges and counter challenges continue to keep many lawyers, bureaucrats, test makers, and educators employed and busy defending, devising, challenging, and changing standardized tests. Around the world, new national, provincial, state, or regional assessment systems were born. Some died early. Others have lived on. Some have been reversed and others have been replaced. Thousands of people have been involved in trying to get large-scale assessment right. Mountains of books and articles have been written about the various approaches to large-scale assessment and whether they work. I do not intend to try to capture the content of the arguments about standards-based reform and large-scale assessment. That would be another book. (For a review of international approaches to standards-based reform and assessment see Volante, 2012). I do want to note, however, that the sometimes heated and rancorous debates continue, and they often get in the way of conversations about how assessment can contribute to student learning.

Although core standards and external testing (of various kinds) dominate the policy landscape, there has been a renewed interest in the assessment that is done every day in classrooms and its potential to fundamentally change the process of learning for students. This is not a new

conversation, but the proponents often struggle to be heard. In 1971, Bloom, Hastings, and Madaus wrote a landmark book titled *Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning*, in which they described a view of education with the primary purpose that schooling was the development of the individual. In their view, assessment and evaluation were a part of learning and classroom teachers played a prominent role in using evaluation to improve and extend student learning. Although their work influenced a generation of teachers and administrators, their voices have often been overwhelmed by the power of testing as a mechanism for social control and social mobility. However, a new wave of researchers continued to work to understand formative assessment and how it works. Crooks (1988) made a strong research-based case that classroom assessment had both short- and long-term effects on learning. From the mid-1980s until the end of the 1990s, there was a steady stream of advocates for assessment being educationally useful (Black, 1998; Popham, 2001; Shepard, 1989; Stiggins, 1991; Sutton, 1995; Wolf, Bixby, Glenn, & Gardner, 1991; Wiggins, 1993).

The Assessment Reform Group's landmark paper, *Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment* by Black and Wiliam (1998) marked a milestone in attention to the potential of assessment as a mechanism for enhancing learning. They examined hundreds of studies to advance an argument that certain kinds of classroom assessment by teachers and students in their classrooms provide extremely effective ways to improve educational achievement. The Assessment Reform Group (1999), in England, described the findings this way:

> Assessment that is explicitly designed to promote learning is the single most powerful tool we have for raising standards and empowering life-long learning. (p. 2)

The Assessment Reform Group (1999) called this focus on assessment that is directly connected to helping students learn assessment *for* learning:

> [The] process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. (Assessment Reform Group, 1999 p. 2)

In the last decade, they, and many others, have focused on the importance and value of the assessment that teachers do every day in classrooms, as critical element in helping students learn. A great deal has already been written about these alternative images of classroom

revolution, people moved from rural communities to urban ones and large numbers of newcomers emigrated from many countries and cultures. This led to larger organizations and a need to absorb and educate many young people in urban centers with a different social structure and economic base. The notion of universal education was born to build the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

For most of the 20th century, and even now, factories dominated the economy and schools organized around a factory model were very consistent with the world around them. Kindergarten-sized units of raw material are put onto the first bench of the "plant" and sequentially moved through the "stations" (grades) on the assembly line. They spend a fixed amount of time at each one (a school year). If, at the end of the allotted time, they aren't "done," they are sorted into "streams" or "tracks" and moved to other parts of the building. This metaphor for schools has largely fit the times. Society has been content because it worked for most people. Many students left school for work at an early age, but this was not viewed as a problem and those who left were not called "dropouts." There were legitimate places for the majority of young people to go that did not require much schooling—places like factories, mines, farming, fishing, and the like. Assessment, in the form of classroom tests and final examinations, were the gates that students had to pass through, to move to the next level of education. Education, beyond the basics, was a scarce resource, only necessary for a few.

Not everyone agreed that schools should be organizations to serve economic imperatives. Dewey, as early as 1916, wrote eloquently about the need for education to serve all students and to address the need for education to allow society to continue to grow in democratic, social, and moral ways. However, the major model for schooling mimicked the industrial model of work, and teachers were the quality control agents who decided which of their students continued on to higher levels of schooling.

The rise of the middle class and an equity agenda in the middle of the century threw the social order in to flux, and many groups began to demand equity in the society. Schools were becoming the key to social mobility, and there was considerable pressure to ensure that decisions about access to advanced schooling were made based on merit, rather than social status. Assessment of achievement became the basis for awarding of privileges, with tests and exams as the process used to sort the students in a way that satisfied the expectations held by the mainstream society and that would be accepted as fair. This kind of sorting became an important function of schools (Stiggins, 2001).

Although teachers were often involved in the testing process, there was considerable pressure for mechanisms that were not biased by the teachers' subjective judgment. There was also tremendous optimism about social science in general and mental testing in particular (Lemann, 1999). Don't forget, the Army Alpha had been enormously successful in selecting officer candidates for the military in World War I (Popham, 2002), and a whole range of mental measurements were being developed in its image. It was time for an efficient mechanism in schools to identify and categorize students so that they were placed in the appropriate slots, something that was based on predictions about their likely success in a range of future endeavors.

In many countries, the focus moved to seemingly scientific and objective mechanisms for measuring student achievement. In some, examinations became the arbiter of admission to differential secondary education and to universities. In England, they established the 11+ examinations that consigned young people to their lifelong social fates at age 11. If they did well, they went to grammar schools. Otherwise, they stayed in the local comprehensive school. Entrance to university in England changed from a system of "friends at court" to success on A-level examinations. In Canada, provincial exit exams defined access to universities. The Baccalaureate in France did the same. In the United States, the SATs were developed for the same reasons. As Nicholas Lemann (1999) describes it, Henry Chauncey, the first president of Educational Testing Service (ETS) had a plan

> to depose the existing, undemocratic American elite and replace it with a new one made up of brainy, elaborately trained, public-spirited people drawn from every section and every background. (p. 5)

The mechanism for this transformation was administering a series of multiple-choice tests to everyone and, based on the scores, deciding what each person's role in society should be. The SATs were born. These external tests or examinations were the means by which the "gatekeepers" exercised power and gave the illusion, at least, of objective measurement. The important decisions about access to higher education were determined outside schools and classrooms, using so-called scientifically developed instruments.

Classroom assessment did not disappear. It continued to run alongside external tests or examinations. It is no surprise, however, that the control that was embodied in the examinations filtered down to affect those who were anxious to provide their students with access. Assessment in schools quickly took on the summative role,

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Situating Assessment Changes

There is no question that education, along with many other social institutions, is in a period of major transformation, with competing views about educational reform agendas playing out across the world. One way to understand how assessment is changing is to situate it in the social, economic, and political context of the times and to consider it in relation to other changes in education. This chapter provides a brief history of assessment and how it has been connected to the larger educational reform agenda over time and offers a glimpse of my preferred future for assessment.

A Brief History of Assessment

Formal and informal assessment of learning has existed for centuries—from the early Chinese civil-service exams for entry into high public office, to public presentations by students of Aristotle, to practical assessments for entrance to craft guilds. It wasn't until industrialization and universal schooling at the turn of the last century, however, that schools became significant social institutions and evaluation of student achievement, as we know it, became a dimension of schooling. For centuries, the young in a community learned traditional occupations and schooling was a luxury. With the industrial

mathematics provided, she had a major epiphany. Her experience was not the same as the experience of her students, and she did not know what they were encountering when calculus was not obvious to them, as it was to her. Helping them learn meant finding out what concepts, misconceptions, skills, and relationships make up "getting calculus" so that she could help them unpack their learning.

After being part of several graduate courses about classroom assessment and attending a range of workshops and conferences dedicated to the topic, this same teacher read the draft manuscript for this book. Another epiphany. "I've heard lots of people talk about ideas like connecting assessment to learning, giving feedback, encouraging students to talk about their thinking, but, you know what? I didn't get it. I kept saying to myself, 'I do that.' And I do, but not for the same reasons. At the end of the day, I still focused on what the information told me about how to give them a grade. Their learning was secondary."

Taken together, these realizations on her part are not only dramatic shifts in her thinking that are resulting in some serious changes to her practice and even her knowledge about the underpinnings of her subject area, but they also demonstrate how subtle and challenging making these changes can be. It seems so easy, even commonplace, to change the language and not the concepts, to believe that the work is done, when it has barely started.

Using This Book

I have not provided detailed directions for implementing classroom assessment strategies. Instead, I have tried to offer

- an understanding of the reasons behind the confusion and discomfort that surrounds classroom assessment by detailing the way that the changing role of schooling and our increasing knowledge about the nature of learning have made classroom assessment much more complex,
- insight into the powerful influence that classroom assessment can have on students' learning, and
- examples of mechanisms for effective use of assessment as learning in a variety of contexts, many of them drawn from actual examples provided by teachers that I have come to know through my work.

Teachers and school leaders can use this book as a focus for their discussions about what assessment means when it is considered a part of learning and as a stimulus for deciding how they might change their practices. But changing practices will not be enough. An important element of these discussions and reflections should be about beliefs, as well as practices—beliefs about the role of schooling and the role of educators in schools. Why? Because *assessment as learning* is a shift in thinking about what matters in schools that moves the focus from categorizing students to learning for students and challenges some longstanding and deeply held beliefs about what schooling is for and why teachers should collect information about how students are thinking and learning. Embedding changes into routine practices without this discussion is unlikely to have much influence.

Ideas for Follow Up

At the end of each chapter, I have included some ideas for follow up that might be useful as groups of educators read and think about *assessment as learning* together to offer a starting point for conversation and sharing. Here are the first ones.

1. How comfortable are you with your current approach to classroom assessment? What questions do you have about what you are doing?
2. What is your preferred future for education and for assessment? What is the probable future, given how things are now?

My preferred future is of a world in which young people not only possess competence and confidence in a broad range of areas, but also the tools to adapt to new knowledge as it comes along and the dispositions to function wisely and with civility in a fast-paced and unpredictable world. I also have an image of how assessment fits in this preferred future. I described it many years ago in an early book about classroom assessment (Earl & Cousins, 1995) like this:

> I can imagine a day, in the not too distant future, when assessment and evaluation are not viewed with foreboding and terror; not separated from teaching and learning; not used to punish or prohibit access to important learning; and, not seen as private, mystical ceremonies. Instead, assessment and teaching/learning will be reciprocal, each contributing to the other in ways that enhance both. Assessment will reveal not only what students know and understand, but will also capture how those new learnings came about and will provide a range in variety and quality of work that show the depth, breadth and growth of each student's thinking. This wealth of information will, in its turn, be used to provoke further learning and focused instruction. (p. 57)

My preferred future remains the same. I am still optimistic, but I am also very aware that getting to this preferred future is much more difficult than I first imagined. In the rest of this volume, I offer ideas, suggestions, and images to illustrate the potential of realizing this preferred future.

The book is organized into 11 chapters. This chapter has set the stage for considering a new view of learning and assessment that argues for connecting them as part of the same process. Chapter 2 is a brief history of assessment and the links between large-scale reform agendas and how teachers engage in classroom assessment. In Chapter 3, I make the case for considering assessment of learning, for learning, and as learning and make a concerted effort to rationalize shifting the existing balance among them in schools. Following on the discussion of the purposes of assessment in relation to learning, Chapter 4 is about learning, as the primary purpose of schools, and Chapter 5 details the links that exist between learning and assessment.

The next five chapters revisit what we know about learning and consider how assessment can contribute to deeper and better learning for students. Chapter 6 addresses using assessment to find out what students believe is true. The focus in Chapter 7 is motivation and the role that assessment can play in motivating students. In Chapters 8 and 9, I get to the heart of the matter—How can assessment enhance and extend learning? Chapter 10 addresses the essential role of reflection and self-assessment in learning.

Finally, in Chapter 11, I have tried to identify some of the specific demands that looking at assessment as learning will make on teachers and to offer glimpses of what teachers should think about as they work to get to assessment that maximizes learning for all students.

Assessment as learning is premised on a set of assumptions and beliefs that are simple in their articulation and very difficult in their application. Throughout the book, my assumptions and perspectives will become clearer. I have highlighted these assumptions by placing them in boxes. I also attempt to provide a rationale and support for choosing this route as a compelling one for moving toward the kind of schooling that I believe will serve us all well. To that end, I have tried to shed some light on the assessment dilemmas that teachers feel, provide some insights into the complexity behind these tensions, and offer some suggestions for consideration in classrooms.

> Assumption: In the 21st. century, everyone must learn. The primary purpose of schooling is optimizing learning for all students.

I invite you to consider your personal assumptions as you read mine and think about how your beliefs contribute to the way you engage in your work as a teacher. I have also included examples from my experience and the experience of colleagues, preservice candidates and graduate students with whom I have worked throughout the book. These are all identified as different cases. I find them all compelling and exciting images of the challenges and the possibilities that exist for making assessment work for students. I hope you do too. Here is the first one.

The Case of Understanding Mathematics Learning and Assessment

I had the pleasure, over several years, of working with a wonderful young secondary mathematics teacher who came to me because of an interest in learning more about assessment. During our association, she has given me insights into the difficulties associated with changing deeply held beliefs that are based on a lifetime of personal experience. At one point, she came to me with a new understanding on her part. "I know how to teach calculus," she said. "I just don't know what to do when they don't get it." After her time in school, always successful and delighting in the intellectual challenge that

assumption is that assessment can and should be much more than a check on learning that comes at the end. It is an integral part of the learning process that, all too often, has been ignored. Historically, educational assessment has largely been assessment *of* learning, designed to accredit or judge the work of students. Sometimes it has been assessment *for* learning, with feedback loops to ensure that students are given cues to review their learning and move forward. Assessment *as* learning goes even deeper, however, and draws on the role of personal monitoring and challenging of ideas that are embedded in the learning process and the role of both students and teachers in fostering this self-regulation process. When I wrote the original edition published in 2003, I introduced the notion of Assessment *as* Learning to

> reinforce the role of formative assessment by emphasizing the role of the student, not only as a contributor to the assessment and learning process, but the critical connector between them. The student is the link. Students, as active, engaged and critical assessors can make sense of information, relate it to prior knowledge, and master the skills involved. This is the regulatory process in meta-cognition. It occurs when students personally monitor what they are learning and use the feedback from this monitoring to make adjustments, adaptations and even major changes in what they understand. Assessment as learning is the ultimate goal, where students are their own best assessors. (Earl, 2003, p. 47)

I have been troubled, however. I was experiencing the same phenomena as other researchers. People didn't seem to get it. Even when the book was being used as a text for initial teacher training, formative assessment was being interpreted as having routine assessments throughout a course to track students' progress, or techniques such as exit cards or stoplights, without using the assessment to identify misunderstandings and misconceptions or to engage students in thinking about their learning. Teachers who espoused their belief in assessment for learning used many of the techniques associated with assessment for learning, including peer and self-assessment, but they were mostly being used as mini-assessments that were practice for a final summative assessment or classroom management tools. I have seen this pattern repeatedly in primary schools and in secondary schools, in many different places around the world.

This edition of *Assessment As Learning* comes from my consternation about the challenge of realizing the potential of assessment to

optimize learning. My purpose remains the same, to provide teachers and school leaders who are struggling with and trying to come to grips with the conflict that they feel in relation to assessment with some alternate perspectives and beliefs about the role that classroom assessment can play in the daily working of schools and classrooms, with real examples of how teachers are making assessment work to enhance student learning. Many of the images are unchanged. I have tried in the commentary to make the process clearer and to identify the conflicts that have to be resolved for them to be powerful catalysts for learning.

Assessment as learning is not superficial change. It is a fundamental shift in thinking about teaching and about assessment and about the relationship between them. I hope the ideas in this book can help ignite the conversations that can build a deeper understanding of the role that assessment can play in learning and what teachers need to know and to do to undertake the challenging task of using assessment to optimize student learning.

Navigating the nuances and challenges of making classroom assessment serve learning requires more than tinkering with practice. It means that teachers and administrators are having to rethinking their beliefs about issues as lofty as "What are schools for?" "Who do schools serve?" and "What is our professional role in creating the schools we need?"

Hedley Beare (2001), an Australian researcher, identified the following categories of futures for education and for societies as a whole:

- *Possible futures*—things that could happen, although many of them are unlikely
- *Probable futures*—things that probably will happen, unless something is done to turn events around
- *Preferred futures*—things that you prefer to have happen and/or what you would like to plan to happen

He also issued a challenge to educators everywhere when he stated that it is possible to take deliberate actions to maximize the chance of achieving preferred futures—for young people, for the teaching profession, for schools and for societies. We each need to take time to decide what it is that we believe education is for and what role assessment should play. Not because someone tells us, or the rules dictate, but because we believe it is right and just. Once we have an image of the future we prefer, getting there is possible. It may be difficult; we may have to change, to learn, to live in dissonance, and to stand firm on our beliefs. But it is possible.

The Educational World Has Changed

A great deal has happened since the first edition in 2003 that makes it even more critical for educators everywhere to understand the power that they hold to use classroom assessment for the highest educational purpose—learning for all students.

Assessment is not the only arena for change in education. Educational reform in the past several decades has been a roller-coaster ride for most teachers and schools. Schools reflect the changes that are occurring more broadly in the society, and there seems to be no end to the changes (economic, cultural, and political) that schools are expected to keep up with, or even lead. Education is at the center of most government reform agendas, with a focus on curriculum, standards, accountability, quality, equity, and many other contested areas. In particular, standards-based reform has taken hold around the world.

Teachers and administrators are caught in the middle of what often appear to be conflicting and countervailing demands, struggling to maintain their balance. They are expected to navigate their passage through the unrest and uncertainty about how schools should be organized, about whom should run them, about what should be taught, about how to teach, and about how assessment should occur. At the same time, they are expected to continue to exert their professional influence by staying abreast of advances in understanding human learning and effective schools. The prospects are daunting, but the possibilities are compelling.

In all of this change, assessment has become complicated, especially because there are many forms of assessment and myriad purposes that assessment is intended to serve. In this book, I am focusing on classroom assessment, the kind of assessment that happens every day in classrooms everywhere. Certainly, there are other kinds of assessment in education (some of which I talk about it Chapter 2), but the focus in this book is on what teachers and students do, what they can do, how they think, and how they might think about routine classroom assessment as an inextricable part of learning.

There is no single activity called "classroom assessment." It incorporates a constellation of purposes, formats, and audiences. Wilson's (1996) perspective on the purposes of assessment is still true. He maintained that classroom assessment must satisfy many goals—providing feedback to students, offering diagnostic information for the teacher to use, providing summary information for recordkeeping, proffering evidence for reports, and directing efforts at curriculum

and instructional adaptations. These purposes exist side by side, and some inherent tensions make contradictions in classroom assessment processes unavoidable. The challenge that teachers and administrators face is how to untangle the issues that are embedded in these tensions and formulate plans that honor the complexity of the assessment process, in ways that made sense to them.

The Power of Classroom Assessment

Why focus on classroom assessment? Very simply, because it has incredible potential to change teaching and learning. Repeatedly, research studies have demonstrated that, if learning is the goal, assessment for learning is very powerful.

> Recent reviews of more than 4,000 research investigations show clearly that when [formative assessment] is well implemented in the classroom, it can essentially double the speed of student learning . . . it is clear that the process works, it can produce whopping gains in students' achievement, and it is sufficiently robust so that different teachers can use it in diverse ways, yet still get great results with their students. (Popham, 2011, p. 2)

It is clear from this body of research that formative assessment, done well, is very powerful. But researchers are also finding repeatedly that this kind of assessment is not evident or is only superficial in most classrooms (James & Pedder, 2006; Popham, 2011). In this edition, I have tried to highlight the value of carefully planned assessment tasks and approaches for student learning and unpack why it is so hard to embed this kind of assessment into classroom practice.

Why a Second Edition?

This book is about classroom assessment—The ideas in this book come from my musings, observations, and conversations with students and teachers; from hours of reading the burgeoning research evidence; and from discussions with people around the world who are struggling with the same issues. Consequently, this book is premised on the beliefs and assumptions about the nature and purpose of schooling and the role of teaching and of assessment in the learning process that I have come to accept. The major and most dramatic

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The Promise and Challenge of Classroom Assessment

When I wrote the first edition of this book, I had worked for almost 30 years with teachers and administrators in schools and districts in the province of Ontario, Canada, as a colleague, researcher, and critical friend. My work took me into classrooms and staff rooms, into marking sessions and student-led conferences, into professional development sessions and teacher discussion groups. Since that time, I have been privileged to spend time in classrooms and schools in a wide range of countries. I have also worked in and for government in Ontario, England, and New Zealand, as well as in academe at the Ontario Institute for Education at the University of Toronto. In all of the venues, I have been a student of the ways and means of classroom assessment, trying to understand how it works and its value and place in teaching and learning. Each of these experiences has reinforced my conviction that classroom assessment, done well, is a very powerful tool for achieving high-level learning for all students. I also realize how important it is to get it right and how hard that is.

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