

Conversations

TURNING POINTS TRANSFORMING MIDDLE SCHOOLS

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1
WINTER 2002

CENTER FOR
COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION

Inside



What is Authentic Assessment?



Reflection and Metacognition



Curriculum Mapping and Backward Planning



Defining Learning Goals and Essential Questions



Using Portfolios and Student-led Conferences



Authentic Assessment and Standardized Testing

Starting with the End in Mind: Authentic Assessment in the Turning Points School

by Amy Mednick

For weeks, eighth-grade students at Amherst Middle School, a Turning Points demonstration school in Massachusetts, have been conducting research to create a portrait of a character who might have lived during Revolutionary War times. Culminating several months of a Humanities study of Colonial America, the class is preparing for their final exhibition: students will create role-plays in which small groups of characters will grapple with a political problem of their time.

Each student's composite character fits into different social and political categories—for example, literate, free African American woman in New England; Loyalist shipping clerk in New York; or Son of Liberty in Lexington. Background research on the character, through books, journals, and the Internet, answers questions such as, What was daily life like? What are your character's religion, race, gender, and economic status? What does your character think about the key events leading up to the Revolution? By answering these questions, students are practicing research skills and demonstrating critical

understanding of the important themes and events of the Revolution.

During the exhibition, unexpected twists will bring added challenge to the role-play. For example, one problem states, "You have been asked to speak out publicly in support of the new Declaration of Independence. You have observed that the Declaration a) guarantees the right of 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' to White males only, and b) does not abolish slavery or indentured servitude." As the students role-play their different characters' views and explore multiple perspectives on issues of the day, they will receive a "news flash" of a new development and have to think through a response, on the spot. The group discussing the Declaration will be told that a slave insurrection is gathering force in the next town with Indians and White workers joining the fray. How does this news influence their response? Do individuals change their opinions?

The team of math, science, language arts, social studies, drama, and special education teachers have added the element of a "news flash" to this year's

exhibition to push students to higher levels of critical thinking—bringing knowledge to bear on a new and unfamiliar situation. Students will be evaluated, using a rubric that guided them in developing their work, both individually and as a group for their preparation (including writing) and presentation.

What is Authentic Assessment?

This exhibition models Turning Points' vision of how students should best be taught and assessed in middle schools. Authentic assessment and what students are learning are not distinct entities. The Turning Points' Guide to Curriculum Development offers helpful guidance: “[Authentic] assessment connects curriculum, instruction, and learning and enables teachers and students to measure how well they are doing in attaining learning goals. In a Turning Points school, students know the criteria by which they are being measured. Expectations are clear and are often developed with the students.” Authentic assessment requires students to work on performance-based tasks that cause them to use higher-order thinking skills, to improve their written and oral expression, and to use knowledge that they have acquired, according to Linda Darling-Hammond in her book, *Authentic Assessment in Action*.

Authentic assessment engages a wide range of learners, and to accommodate those differences in learning styles, teachers instruct using a variety of assessments that fall into two main categories: “ongoing” and “culminating” assessment. Reflection is a critical

component of authentic assessment as students are asked to reflect on their own learning and thinking. Ongoing assessment includes all of the work and opportunities for reflection throughout a course of study. A culminating assessment is a final project or exhibition that asks students to apply the knowledge



Conversations is a publication of Turning Points, Transforming Middle Schools. It is published twice a year.

Turning Points is a design for comprehensive middle school reform, coordinated by the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) in Boston Massachusetts, with regional centers across the country. Turning Points seeks to create high-performing schools, especially those serving high percentages of low-income students and students of color. The design is driven by one over-arching goal – ensuring success for every student.

Writer: Amy Mednick

Editor: Leah Rugen

Design: Conquest Design, Inc.

© 2001 by the Center for Collaborative Education, Boston, Massachusetts

For more information about Turning Points, or to subscribe to *Conversations* at \$15 a year (payable to CCE), please contact:

Center for Collaborative Education
1135 Tremont Street
Boston, MA 02120
617.421.0134 (p)
617.421.9016 (f)
www.turningpts.org

Turning Points—An Approved
New American Schools Design



and skills they developed through the unit or study. To accomplish both ongoing and culminating assessment tasks, students must explain, interpret, apply, analyze, synthesize, solve problems, and communicate information.

“We are creating an environment where all kids can be successful at the highest level. We expect 100% student participation in exhibitions like this one, and we find we are able to get it.”

Embedded in the description of Amherst Middle School’s exhibition are all of these facets of authentic assessment. The exhibition is an integral part of the unit. Students prepare for weeks as they do their research and writing assignments, and are required to demonstrate what they know and are able to do through a critical analysis of the problems faced by an historical character. Unlike traditional tests, the exhibition is not distinct from the curriculum or instruction, and it ties together what the students have studied over the course of several months. Because it is both engaging and public, the exhibition involves students more fully in their learning. As Amherst Middle School principal Mary Cavalier puts it, “We are creating an environment where all kids can be successful at the highest level. We expect 100% student participation in exhibitions like this one, and we find we are able to get it.”

Naturally, it takes years of collaborative work to get to the point of the Amherst Middle School team. This issue of *Conversations* will explore the small

Qualities of Authentic Assessment

In the Turning Points model, assessment:

- **Is transparent — students know the criteria, learning goals, and timing of assessment**
- **Drives curriculum planning and teaching — what students are asked to do depends on how they will be asked to demonstrate their learning**
- **Always includes opportunities for reflection and gives students the tools to understand the ways they learn best, and to identify when they are confused and how to resolve their confusion**
- **Takes many forms including projects, exhibitions, portfolios, and demonstrations**
- **Is ongoing, tied to learning goals, and used to inform curriculum planning, teaching, and professional development**

*** Adapted from the Turning Points Guide to Curriculum Development**

steps schools can take to realize this goal and describe examples of palpable progress students and teachers at Turning Points schools are making along the way.

Strategies to Get Started

Teaching Teams

Collaborating with other teachers is key to beginning work in authentic assessment. In planning curriculum and assessment, teachers can serve as springboards for one another. When one person does not have an idea about how to proceed on a particular project, another teacher might be inspired.

Ronald Hayes, principal of Lincoln Middle School in Peoria, Illinois, says

Unlike traditional tests, the exhibition is not distinct from the curriculum or instruction, and it ties together what the students have studied over the course of several months.

that once his school made the change from a larger junior high model to a school with smaller houses and teaching teams, students became less frustrated and teachers were happier. “As one of my teachers so aptly put it, ‘You know, this middle school is more work, but it is less stress.’ Another teacher noted, ‘I will never work in another building that does not team.’” In Hayes’ experience, working with individual teams is a good way to begin anything new.

One of the most important and practical tools for teaching teams who are beginning to use authentic assessment is time: teachers do best when they have collaborative planning time set aside during the week to create integrated projects that include culminating and ongoing assessments. Teachers need both ongoing, common planning time and a scheduled meeting time during the summer.

Finding the time is not always simple. Jeanne Sturges, a school change coach in Boston, Massachusetts, worked with sixth- and seventh-grade Social Studies and Language Arts teachers at Rogers Middle School in one of their first attempts to integrate project-based curriculum and develop authentic assessments. Initially, Sturges and the teams struggled to find the time to begin the work. The teachers were then given six, two-hour blocks of release time to plan the project and received stipends for their work outside of school. While six meetings was not nearly enough time to fully develop the units, as teachers became more familiar with interdisciplinary curriculum planning, and more comfortable working as part of a team, their efficiency grew, Sturges says.

At Eastgate Middle School in Kansas City, Missouri, teachers LaRe Allivato and Roberta Wermelskirchen began this year to work as a team with a diverse group of seventh-grade students. The students stay with the teaching team for the first five periods each day for integrated instruction in science, social studies, math, and communication arts. Allivato and Wermelskirchen have designed integrated projects on such topics as “Biomes” or “Adaptation and Evolution,” and differentiated their instruction to adapt to the needs of individual students or groups of students. They say students need to learn that life is not compartmentalized like traditional junior high schooling, and that they should be able to apply what they are learning to their daily lives. “Basically, the bulk of their day is spent exploring and trying to apply the information that they have to a new situation,” Wermelskirchen says. The students are also learning and are evaluated on how to get along with other people. “In real life, you are going to have to work with all kinds of people at various times,” Allivato says.

Wermelskirchen and Allivato also model that philosophy. The two have collaborated on various integrated projects for the past five years. While they spent many hours planning the year over the summer, Wermelskirchen says, “the amount of time and work and frustration it saves you on the teaching end makes it worth it.”

Reflection and Metacognition

In teaching reflection and metacognition, teachers simply ask students to reflect on their own learning and to

think about their own thinking. This mode of assessment is critical because it builds students' capacity to understand their own learning process, and to work through the confusions that come with learning. It should be embedded throughout curriculum and assessment. There are many strategies for reflection and metacognition that allow teachers to understand students' thinking informally without necessarily embarking on other changes to the curriculum. Teachers might integrate it into a portfolio process or simply use it as part of the daily teaching routine.

“For kids, that’s a really good way to assess whether they are getting it or not,” she says. “If they can hear a conversation in their heads, they are getting it.”

Mariah Dickson, Director of Teaching and Learning at the Public Education and Business Coalition in Denver, Colorado, a Turning Points regional center, coaches teachers in integrating metacognitive strategies into reading instruction and assessment. Most good readers are automatically metacognitive, she says, because interacting with the text is part of reading. But students need to practice those techniques, and they can be applied to reading in any subject area and more broadly to problem-solving in other disciplines.

For example, teacher Cris Tovani in her book *I Read It, But I Don't Get It*, describes practical strategies she uses to teach students how to think about their own reading. Teach students to listen to the two voices in their head as they read: the reciting voice and the

voice that keeps up a dialogue with the text, Tovani writes. Students respond well to this strategy, Dickson says, “For kids, that’s a really good way to assess whether they are getting it or not,” she says. “If they can hear a conversation in their heads, they are getting it.”

There are several strategies both Tovani and Dickson use to help students realize when they are confused or stuck and to help students learn to engage with the text:

■ Students place sticky notes or write in the margin when they come across a passage they do not understand.

■ Students keep double entry diaries in which they divide the page in half and write a phrase from the reading on the left side and “what it made me think of” on the right. This helps students learn to make connections with the text.

■ Students read a short passage and highlight in pink everything they understand well enough to explain to someone else in class, and highlight in yellow every passage that confuses them.

There are also simple techniques that help students learn to be responsible for taking stock of their own needs. For example, Dickson coaches teachers to take two minutes a day or every other day to check in with each student individually about his or her progress or struggle. This way the students know that the teacher expects them to be accountable and that she knows what they do and do not understand. “That’s a self-assessment moment and it’s also a great assessment moment for the

“By conferring with all the students in the class the teacher can discover what needs work the next day. She might need to go back to something, or she might need to pull out a small group of kids and work with them.”

The next step in curriculum mapping is to record what assessments are used to assess students' mastery over the concepts taught. This allows teachers to see visually if they are doing a good job in designing a variety of assessments across the curriculum.

teacher, because by conferring with all the students in the class he or she can discover what needs work the next day. She might need to go back to something, or she might need to pull out a small group of kids and work with them.”

Working Backwards

Rather than forcing middle school students to experience a fragmented education as they hop from one subject to another, Turning Points middle schools attempt to make the learning experience much more authentic by creating a coherent curriculum throughout the school. In curriculum “mapping,” teachers and administrators ask themselves these questions:

■
What do we want our students to know and be able to do?

■
What are we currently teaching?

■
Where are the redundancies and the gaps between what we should be teaching, and what we are teaching?

■
What will we do about these redundancies and gaps?

Schelli Kirby, a school change coach in Decatur, Illinois, uses curriculum mapping to help teachers find connections by topic, concept, or skill from one discipline to another in order to make the learning more meaningful and less disjointed for the students. “What we know about young adolescents is that they learn best when they can see connections and relationships within the curriculum, to themselves, and to the real world.”

The next step in curriculum mapping is to record what assessments are used to assess students' mastery of the concepts taught. This allows teachers to see if they are doing a good job in designing a variety of assessments across the curriculum. If every teacher sees a visual record of the fact that he or she is giving multiple choice tests all the time, there is impetus to change.

“What we know about young adolescents is that they learn best when they can see connections and relationships within the curriculum, to themselves, and to the real world.”

One way to begin work in authentic assessment is by asking yourself what you want your students to know and be able to do. Starting with learning goals or essential questions can lead naturally to a project that integrates curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In backward curriculum design, teachers begin by identifying what standards, habits of mind, and skills they want students to develop during the unit. Then, the teaching team or an individual teacher will plan backwards by beginning with the culminating assessment and working back to the beginning of the unit of study.

Tim Mattson, principal of Eastgate Middle School in Kansas City, Missouri, says the Missouri state standards help teachers design curriculum and assessments that connect to real-world settings. The overarching “show me” standards have four goals. Students in Missouri public schools will acquire the knowledge and skills to:

- Gather, analyze and apply information and ideas
- Communicate effectively within and beyond the classroom
- Recognize and solve problems
- Make decisions and act as responsible members of society

These overarching standards can apply to any academic area, and lead teachers to do meaningful work and assessments with the students, Mattson says. For example, students learn to identify bias in a newspaper article or to look at information in a new context. Now the textbook is merely one of many tools that teachers use, he says. “We understand from a teaching standpoint now that we need to measure things beyond the stated objective at the beginning of a chapter in the textbook.” The standards emphasize the importance of communication, and have pushed the school to prioritize and focus on essential skills.

At Parker School in Devens, Massachusetts, the entire faculty understands that students need to demonstrate what they know and can do in real and meaningful ways, says Heather Douglas, program director of the New England Turning Points network. Douglas, who taught an integrated seventh-grade math, science, and technology class at Parker for three years, says asking students to show what they know yields results that better reflect what they have learned than more traditional tests.

The entire school established “Criteria for Excellence”—broad standards that give students consistent expectations across grade levels and subject areas. Parker School standards are oriented toward specific skills and habits of mind. Focusing on such standards allows teachers to be more flexible, Douglas says. If students learn these basic skills or habits of mind, they will be able to apply them in other situations.

In *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century*, Anthony Jackson and Gayle Davis say another natural way to start is with an essential question. Organizing a unit of study around an essential question, drawn from the standards, helps students remember the content, because what might seem like unrelated facts are suddenly organized into meaningful patterns. “Young adolescents are ready to seek out patterns, to make connections, to try to figure out the world around them and their place in it as part of their journey toward adulthood. With the big ideas guiding their learning in school, they can see how historical precedents could affect their own futures, how mathematics can help them make sense of the seemingly random, and how literature provides insight into the state of humanity,” Jackson and Davis write.

Matt Jacobson, a Turning Points school change coach in Decatur, Alton, and Collinsville, Illinois, says he finds that introducing the idea of essential questions is a good way to begin to integrate curriculum and assessment, and to begin team teaching. “It seems to be a good ‘entry point’ for those who are more apprehensive about changing their practices,” he says. “We’re hoping this

If students learn these basic skills or habits of mind, they will be able to apply them in other situations.

Organizing a unit of study around an essential question, drawn from the standards, helps students remember the content, because what might seem like unrelated facts are suddenly organized into meaningful patterns.

The Language of Critique

Teachers who assess their students in an authentic way develop explicit criteria, often detailed in rubrics or scoring guides, as a tool for assessing students' progress. Such criteria describe what makes a given assignment successful and offer students language for talking about their work. When students are included in developing the list of criteria, they understand them more deeply and become more effective at assessing their own work and their peer's work.

Kathy Greeley, a middle school teacher at Graham and Parks School in Cambridge, Massachusetts that has embraced many Turning Points practices, has enriched classroom discussions around student work by helping her students learn the "language of critique." She writes about it in *The Web*, April 1996. After participating in an activity at a workshop by Linda Rief, a New Hampshire teacher who wrote *Seeking Diversity: Language Arts with Adolescents* (Heinemann 1991), Greeley decided to try it.

Greeley began by handing out six pieces of anonymous student writing that varied by topic, genre, and quality. After reading each piece aloud, the students jotted down informal written responses to three questions:

■
What do you like about this writing (be specific about one thing, e.g. a phrase used, use of dialogue, organization, etc.)?

■
What is one question you would like to ask the author?

■
What is one suggestion you would make to the author for improvement?

Greeley then divided the students into small groups and asked them to rank the pieces from best to worst, giving their reasons and evidence for their choices. After the class reconvened, each group presented their findings, and Greeley encouraged them to deduce, in their own words, what the findings showed about good writing. She listed these responses on newsprint divided into two columns: "what works" and "what doesn't work." As each group presented, the list grew.

Through the exercise students came to realize that good writing always "has real meaning and purpose, and it connects to human experience in some way," Greeley writes.

Greeley then typed up the list of 20 descriptors and called it "Elements of Good Writing." Students kept the list in their writing folder and used it to give one another concrete critique of their work.

will bring about increased communication and collaboration among teachers from across subject areas."

Teachers or schools can begin on a small scale. Start by asking yourself several broad questions, Douglas coaches: What are the skills you want your students to develop over the course of the year? What are the ways of thinking (habits of mind) you want to develop in your students? What content do you want your students to know? Once you begin developing a unit of study that encompasses these skills and habits of mind, figure out a "meaty, no one-right-answer" essential question to guide the study. If you can define the question at the heart of the study, then the skills, habits of mind, and content necessary to the study will fall into place. You are then ready to ask the next set of questions: What are the best ways to assess students' learning growth throughout the study? What culminating assessment will assess their mastery of the content, skills, and habits of mind?

Using Portfolios and Student-led Conferences

Portfolios are a valuable structure for both ongoing and culminating assessment as students create a collection of work, select pieces for different purposes, and reflect on their learning both in writing and in conferences.

Portfolios give students the opportunity to accumulate, over the course of a year or more, a record of their learning and to pause to periodically reflect on their progress. They prompt students to think about their work and to set goals for their future learning based on what they have accomplished so far.

At Eastgate Community High School, a middle and high school in New York City, students create yearlong portfolios of their exhibitions which are conducted every six weeks. Students are required to select a few pieces of work from several categories, including drafts and final pieces. For example, says Eastgate's principal Mark Federman, a portfolio might include an essay, an exam, and the documentation of a presentation.

“Schools spend lots of time giving kids tests and attaching a number onto them that goes into their file, but this gives them a chance to think, ‘what are the habits, skills, and ways we learn best.’”

They also have pieces that require students to reflect on their learning. In every portfolio, for example, students write pieces that compare and contrast their learning in two exhibitions. In addition, every quarter, students write a reflection on the year so far, what they have accomplished, what they are most proud of, and what they need to work on. “Schools spend lots of time giving kids tests and attaching a number onto them that goes into their file, but this gives them a chance to think, ‘what are the habits, skills, and ways we learn best,’” says Federman.

Many schools use portfolios as the foundation for student-led conferences. Schools differ in how they approach such conferences. At the Leadership and Community Service Academy in New York City, sixth-grade teacher Mildred Kasavalia's students participate in round-table discussions with a parent, other

students, and a visitor from the community. The students present their work collected in a portfolio and explain how the studies reflect on their own lives. “Everything they do has to have a connection with their lives in order for them to really understand and learn.”

Authentic Assessment and Standardized Testing

Peggy Higgins, who teaches social studies at Trewyn Middle School in Peoria, Illinois, creates units of study that assess students using performance and product assessment. For example, students created an evening news show on the Civil War, and another class wrote and produced a Colonial newspaper. Collaborating with the language arts and technology teachers, Higgins developed a project in which the students produced PowerPoint presentations on the Civil War. Rather than write a traditional research paper, students conducted substantial research and writing, and included music, work with a digital camera, and a final presentation. Higgins said that on these more meaningful, real-life assignments her students become actively engaged. “They realize they have control over what they do. This type of assessment lets them have success and allows them to realize they have knowledge in an area.”

Good authentic assessments are just as challenging, if not more, challenging, than the traditional test. In a well-prepared assessment, students must demonstrate their understanding of key ideas, content, and skills.

These projects, Higgins says, require all the students to become involved because the students work in groups in

Good authentic assessments are just as challenging, if not more, challenging, than the traditional test. In a well-prepared assessment, students must demonstrate their understanding of key ideas, content, and skills.

Progressive educators must advocate for systems of authentic assessment because they will be more equitable in evaluating what students know and are able to do.

Backward Curriculum Planning: Building Plans Around Assessment

Theme: The theme is the concept that the study is centered around. It is open enough to be explored across disciplines, eras, and cultures.

Essential Questions: Substantive questions that help focus students on the most important aspects of the theme throughout the unit.

Learning Goals: These three goals describe what students should learn and be able to do as a result of the unit of study:

Habits of mind: The ways of thinking and being that the school values.

Skills: What students will be able to do by the end of the unit.

Content Standards: The knowledge that students will acquire during the unit.

Assessment: Assessment is designed so that students and teachers know how they are doing and what they have to do to improve. It is divided into three areas:

Ongoing Assessments: Assignments that show how students are doing as the unit progresses.

Culminating Assessment: A project or performance that asks students to apply the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind they develop throughout the unit.

Reflection and Self-assessment: During ongoing assessment and at the end of the unit, students and teachers look back to see what worked well and what could be improved.

Sequence of Learning Experiences: Teachers choose the learning activities, and ongoing and culminating assessments that will enable students to learn the content and develop the skills and habits of mind.

*Adapted from the Turning Points Guide to Curriculum Development

which each student has a role to play. “I really see this type of evaluation as helping to foster accountability.” For each project, Higgins creates rubrics that delineate the expectations for each ongoing assessment and the culminating assessment. Students know what they are accountable for during the unit. These performance-based projects also

help develop social skills, writing, and public speaking skills, which Higgins believes need to be taught in every subject area.

“They realize they have control over what they do. This type of assessment lets them have success and allows them to realize they have knowledge in an area.”

Tom Sullivan, a coach at Leadership and Community Service Academy in New York City, and others agree that this type of teaching and learning helps students on the state assessment tests. Students learn to collect their thoughts and present them in a coherent way, so that they will not freeze when confronted with a 30-minute writing section of an exam.

Allivato and Wermelskirchen, of Eastgate Middle School in Kansas City, say authentic assessment actually better prepares students for high-stakes tests because it gives them a better sense of what they do and do not know. “If they truly learn something and do not simply memorize it, then they are going to be more self-assured that they can do almost anything.”

While portfolios and other performance-based assessments require all students to synthesize what they have learned and to communicate that either verbally or in written form, standardized tests and other traditional multiple choice-style tests simply test what the student remembered on a given day, at a given time. “With standardized tests, if you have a bad night’s sleep, don’t eat a good breakfast, you don’t do well under

pressure, or you're simply having an off day, it can affect your scores," says Dan French, executive director of the Center for Collaborative Education in Boston, the National Turning Points Center. Standardized tests—which are on-demand and secret—measure only a very narrow range of skills and knowledge because they do not take into account students' growth over time, or their ability to apply or demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways, French notes. In the long run, he says, progressive educators must advocate for systems of authentic assessment because they will be more equitable in evaluating what students know and are able to do.

“If they truly learn something and do not simply memorize it, then they are going to be more self-assured that they can do almost anything.”

Meanwhile, French says, in the age of high-stakes testing and standardization, schools have two ways to help students succeed on the exams such as the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), the statewide test. One is to adopt a “less is more” curriculum. Students learn to think deeply, make connections, and apply knowledge to other content areas that might not be familiar. Second, schools should teach some test preparation strategies and do content review on a limited basis, right before the test.

But, French warns, schools should not focus on test preparation for extended periods of time. Authentic ways of assessing students will reach a greater diversity of students and better prepare

Ongoing Assessment

A sixth-grade team new to integrated learning, at Rogers Middle School, a Turning Points school in Boston, designed authentic ongoing assessments for their Faces of Courage study after planning the culminating project—a talk show in which students debated as a historical character. Pinpointing those skills and habits of mind helped the teachers work backwards in an integrated way to plan the work and assignments that would allow students to progress to the culminating event.

In Language Arts, the book *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry provided a means to study character analysis, focusing on the freedom fighters, the Jews and the Nazis of the Holocaust. As they studied these historical figures, the Language Arts class kept a “character file” of any completed assignment on character analysis.

The teachers also asked the students to write letters from the persona of their assigned character to another character as practice for the talk show. They also staged a mini-debate in which they had to argue from the perspective of their character and use historical and/or textual evidence.

After planning all the ongoing assessments and the culminating assessment, Jeanne Sturges, the Turning Points coach, asked the teachers to go back to the original learning goals listed on their curriculum planning template to check if they were all covered in the plans.

them for their life ahead. “They will encounter more situations where they are going to have to demonstrate what they know and are able to do than they would, say, taking a standardized test,” French says. “Whether it’s arguing a case in front of a jury, or driving, if you think of the daily tasks in peoples’ lives and in their occupations, it’s all performance-based. What better way to prepare them for performing in life than to have them perform through means of authentic assessment.”

Students learn to collect their thoughts and present them in a coherent way, so that they will not freeze when confronted with a 30-minute writing section of an exam.

■

Amy Mednick, an education writer and editor based in Rochester, New York, is the writer of Conversations, newsletter of the Turning Points national network.

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1
WINTER 2002

Center for
Collaborative Education
1135 Tremont Street
Boston, MA 02120
www.turningpts.org

Resources and Readings

Chittenden, E. (1990)
“Authentic Assessment,
Evaluation, and
Documentation of
Student Performance,”
California ASCD
Symposium.

Darling-Hammond, L.,
Ancess, J., and Falk, B.
(1995). *Authentic
Assessment in Action*.
New York: Teachers
College Press.

Greeley, K. (1996)
“Building the Language of
Critique,” *The Web*, Vol.
IV, No. 4. April: 3-5.

Jackson, A. and Davis, G.
(2000). *Turning Points
2000: Educating
Adolescents in the 21st
Century*. New York:
Teachers College Press.

Lummis, B. (2001).
*Turning Points Guide
to Curriculum
Development*. Boston:
Center for Collaborative
Education.

O’Brien, M. and Rugen, L.
(2001). *Teaching
Literacy in the Turning
Points School*. Boston:
Center for Collaborative
Education.

Rief, L. and Atwell, N.
(1991). *Seeking
Diversity: Language Arts
with Adolescents*.

Portsmouth, NH:
Heinemann.

Tovani, C. (2000). *I Read
It, but I Don’t Get It*.
Portland, ME.: Stenhouse
Publishers.

Wiggins, G. (1990) “The
Case for Authentic
Assessment,” *Eric
Digest*, ED328611.

Websites:

www.middleweb.com
www.essentialschools.org
www.lasw.org