

Designing a book project

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Introduction

Alternative assessment, as opposed to traditional testing, is an on-going strategy which not only monitors pupils' learning, but which also involves pupils in decision making about the degree to which their performance matches their ability. Therefore, assessment should be viewed as an interactive process that engages both teacher and pupil in monitoring the latter's performance. This leads to the need for authentic assessment, in which the criteria and standards are made clear to pupils. Since both purpose and context influence language use, it is important to provide pupils with varied opportunities for flexible and frequent practice.

This paper describes a performance-based task, within real life and work contexts, structured specially for a ninth grade class. It was used as an alternative assessment of the acquisition and application of English studied as a foreign language in Israeli schools.

Task design

The book project was designed using the steps detailed below:

1. *Focus*: The task focused on the creative writing abilities of the pupil, what s/he should know and be able to do. A performance task assessment list was drawn up with the help of the pupils, which made clear to them what they were responsible for.
2. *Context*: A context was created by discussing different types of genres in literature, after which pupils chose a context meaningful to them. Developing a context for the task is important because it explains why the task is worth doing.
3. *Directions*: The directions were explained clearly to pupils and a detailed assessment list was given them. Pupils then decided on a genre, a literary voice and appropriate language. They discussed

their idea with a friend or parent and wrote a first draft, which was corrected by the teacher, returned for further revision and corrected again until the final product was reached. The work was then edited, bound and "published."

4. *Audience*: The audience was a class of sixth graders who read the books and provided the "authors" with literary criticism and a creative response.
5. *Scoring*: The scoring guide consisted of writing criteria that were used for assessment by the pupils themselves, their peers and the teacher. There were 20 items, each worth five points; theoretically, even a weak pupil could receive a grade of 100, providing s/he fulfilled all the necessary criteria.
6. *Review*: Task review indicated that pupils required more practical experience with computers in order to meet the desired standard.

Procedure

Pupils were given instruction on creative writing and exposed to different genres (ghost stories, romance, mysteries and legends), after which they wrote their first draft. Teacher-pupil dialogues ensued so that pupils could identify and correct their errors. Between three and five dialogues were held, depending on the level of the pupil.

Final product

The edited books were typed and bound. The title, the author's name and a picture appeared on the front cover. Inside was a dedication, and on the back cover, information about the author and a photo, if available. The whole process took about four months and culminated in a festive celebration where the ninth grade authors met with the sixth grade critics.

Conclusion

Pupils enjoyed doing the book project. They reported that the writing skills learned and the on-going teacher-

Focus on Projects

pupil contact were of great importance. They indicated the need for more practical computer help. This project was as fulfilling for me, the teacher, as it was for my pupils. Their enjoyment and increased self-esteem testify to the value of the project.

APPENDIX A
Performance task assessment list
 (Maximum of five points for each item)

	Self	Peer	Teacher
Author's name and name of the story appear on the front cover	_____	_____	_____
Story is bound and typed	_____	_____	_____
A well-designed cover	_____	_____	_____
A written dedication	_____	_____	_____
Information about the author	_____	_____	_____
Story has beginning, middle and end	_____	_____	_____
Story was brainstormed and researched	_____	_____	_____
Author discussed idea with a parent or friend	_____	_____	_____
Work was revised	_____	_____	_____
Work was edited and checked for spelling, punctuation and grammar	_____	_____	_____
Use of foreshadowing	_____	_____	_____
Use of suspense	_____	_____	_____
Use of weather to express situations	_____	_____	_____
Use of the five senses	_____	_____	_____
Characters are real	_____	_____	_____
Use of much detail	_____	_____	_____
Story title captures the reader's interest	_____	_____	_____
The main idea of the story is clear	_____	_____	_____
Use of pictures	_____	_____	_____
Use of a literary "voice"	_____	_____	_____
TOTAL	_____	_____	_____

Comments: _____



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Focus on Projects

APPENDIX B
Book project reflection

1. I enjoyed/didn't enjoy doing the book project because _____
2. The most important thing I learned while doing this project was _____
3. What helped me most was _____
4. I could have improved my story writing if I had:
 - a. had more time
 - b. had more help from the teacher
 - c. brainstormed
 - d. written an outline (most important points of the story) as a story guide **before** writing the story
 - e. had technical help with the computer
 - f. other _____
5. I would recommend doing this project again next year with the improvement _____

APPENDIX C
Assessment sheet for readers

(designed by W. Wildawski, sixth grade teacher, Rigler High School)

APPENDIX D
Assessment sheet for sixth graders
(designed by W. Wildawski)

Book Title:	
The Author:	
My Name:	

Judging a book by its cover...	
The cover design is attractive.	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
The letter fonts used are easy to read.	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
The author's name and book title are clear.	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
The title caught my interest.	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
Pictures are nicely used in the book.	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Judging the book by its content...	
The story has a beginning, middle and end.	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
The characters are real and believable.	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
The story is logical and easy to follow.	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
The main idea of the story is understood.	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
There are few spelling and grammar mistakes.	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

My overall opinion of the book:	
5 stars	I couldn't put it down! It was so good!
4 stars	It was pretty good! I wish the book didn't end so soon.
3 stars	I really enjoyed it but parts of it could have been better.

Design will be different if the book will only be sold on Amazon as a thumbnail. Text has to be larger and more eye-catching as a consumer scrolls through hundreds of titles on a screen. A print book will live on a shelf in a bookstore where the consumer can pick it up, flip through it, and have a more tactile experience. Christmas book cover design for graemesb. Via B&J.Â The final file for a book project will be one flat file that has all the pertinent graphic and text information for the front and back covers, spine, and flaps (if your project has them). The printer will want this as one wide file that they can print and either cut or fold to fit the final book. Most printers prefer high-quality PDFs but others take .ai or .eps.