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Assessment FOR Learning Practices In The Near East Professional Network Centre

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Introduction

An OECD Study (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2005)¹ confirmed that all provinces and educational jurisdictions in Canada are involved in formative assessment strategies to guide student learning. They further reinforced that assessment for the purpose of enhancing learning must generate information for teachers and students that relates to the learning process. Black and Wiliam (1998)², and McDonald and Bond (2003)³ identified that student improvement on standardized tests is directly linked to Assessment FOR Learning (AfL) strategies within the classroom.

Given the promise of AFL, the North East Region Professional Network Centre (NEPNC) identified Assessment for Learning (AfL) as their focus to collectively improve student learning and achievement. To better understand the current situation in their schools, the NEPNC contracted with Aporia Consulting Ltd. ("Aporia") to examine teacher-level use of classroom assessment practices within the nine boards and school authorities. The findings are intended to be used to celebrate successful practices, to identify areas that need work, and to develop appropriate professional support for teachers in this region. In other words, it is intended to support the NEPNC in promoting student achievement through the practice of linking teacher instruction to student assessment.

The report on AfL in the NEPNC is presented in five sections intended to be informative and useful. First, we present the theoretical background explaining the AfL principles on which we based the survey. Second, we present the method for the administration of the survey. Third we present the results of the survey for the whole sample and for key comparative groups. Fourth, we present some of our observations and the questions that arose in looking at the findings. Finally, we present recommendations given these findings.

The Properties of Assessment FOR Learning

Assessment FOR learning is a promising concept where assessment is embedded within the teaching and learning process. It is well supported as a focus to promote an innovative knowledge community. The Aporia team has used the theoretical work on AFL (Broadfoot & Black, 2004)⁴, current AFL models (Black & Wiliam 1998, Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall & Wiliam, 2004), and their own work with boards around the globe to develop a set of AfL properties that support an understanding of teacher AfL practices. We employed 7 properties that are defined below when developing the survey.

1. **Clarity of purpose:** AfL as a purpose of classroom assessment is clear to students and teachers. Students and teachers are aware that AfL is used as a mechanism for feedback and for progress rather than for summative purposes. These purposes are explicitly understood and communicated by the teacher to the students. (Black & Wiliam, 1998, Leahy, Lyon, Thompson & Wiliam 2005).
2. **Explicit learning progression:** Explicit links to learning expectations define the road to proficiency. There are clear and explicit links to curriculum expectations and the learning progression towards understanding (e.g., exemplars) so that students understand what is expected and teachers can target the nature of the instructional "scaffolds." (McNamee & Chen 2005).

¹ Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. (2005). *OECD Study on Enhancing Learning through Formative Assessment and the Expansion of Teacher Repertoires: Canadian Report*. Retrieved: February 21, 2007 from:

http://www.cmec.ca/international/oced/OECD_Formative.en.pdf

² Black P. & Wiliam D. (1998) Working inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment. *Phi Delta Kappa*, 80, 139 -148.

³ McDonald B. & Boud, D. (2003). The impact of self-assessment on achievement: The effects of self-assessment training on performance in external examinations. *Assessment in Education*, 10, 209-220.

⁴ Broadfoot, P. & Black P. (2004). Redefining assessment? The first ten years of *Assessment in Education*. *Assessment in Education*, (11), 7-27.

3. Intended transparency of current knowledge: Students' current knowledge is made transparent to allow both teachers and students to identify where students are on particular learning progressions. Crevola, Hill and Fullan (2006) describe "mapping the learning journey" where learning occurs as students move from being pre-emergent to a stage when concepts which were relatively unfamiliar become second nature. The "mapping the learning journey" is a matrix that identifies a place where each student is in their learning and where they need to go to next, based on curriculum expectations, learning progressions, and developmental readiness.

4. Pedagogical next steps informed by evidence: The pedagogical next step is informed by reflection on evidence from student understanding. This means that teachers use the evidence they collect from student learning to leverage their pedagogical know-how to support a student to achieve the next step in the learning continuum.

5. Students' next steps as informed by evidence: The students' next step is informed by reflection on evidence so that feedback is descriptive and not evaluative. This approach considers errors as information that can be used for learning.

6. Assessment supports meta-cognitive development: AfL supports meta-cognitive development. It cultivates the conditions for students to both know what they know and what they don't know, and to engage in the kinds of behaviours that will move them towards understanding. Laveault (2006) states that regulating a learning activity requires a feedback loop where learners can compare their progress with an achievement goal.

8. Multiplicity and Intentionality: AfL methods are multiple and intentional. Multiple assessment strategies are needed to generate evidence about children's learning that is both reliable and valid (Volante, 2006; WNCP, 2006, Earl 2003). The selection of assessment method should be an intentional decision based on the requisite purpose (WNCP, 2006).

9. Assessment differentiates: Assessment differentiates learning to target different children at different phases of understanding and at different levels. Hargreaves (2001) talks about how allowing for differentiation in assessment can lead to successful teaching in mixed-level classes as strategies for learning become enhanced.

These 9 properties of AfL were used to develop the survey questions. In the results section below, we report on the findings in terms of these 9 properties.

Method

The survey was developed in the spring of 2007 by Aporia Consulting Ltd. Teachers from the North East region and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association reviewed the survey items to ensure that they were relevant, appropriate, and useful. In August, the survey was launched online and the NEPNC leadership team coordinated the invitation to all teachers in the region. Each board and school authority was given a login and password that was sent to all teachers. The participants completed the survey from June 4 – August 4, 2007. Out of the 4676 teachers in the region, 680 teachers participated in the study representing 14.5% of the population. The table below presents the population of teachers, the number of participants, and the percentage of participation for each board in the PNC. A closer look at Table 1 indicates that out of the nine participating boards, there are six boards with participation rates under 30%.

Authority/Board	Population of Teachers	Number of Participants	Percentage of participants in population
ADSB	841	4	< 1%
HSCDSB	372	13	%
NEOSA	103	45	44%
NECDSB	208	73	35%
DSBONE	639	90	14%
SCDSB	414	40	10%
RDSB	1051	356	34%
NPCDSB	240	9	4%
NNDSB	808	50	6%
TOTAL	4676	680	14.5%

The survey results were merged into a single data file and the analysis was conducted using data analysis software.

Results

The results in this section are presented for the whole sample. First, we describe the sample and then present the reported practices of the teachers by property of AfL. It is important to note that each property was described by a series of questions. The responses to these series questions are expected to be connected statistically. When they are not, there is a discrepancy in how the teachers reported their practices that proves to be informative. You will find these discrepancies highlighted in a box at the end of the subsections when they exist. This is important to understanding how teachers understand and practice classroom assessment.

The Sample of Teachers

The sample of teachers consisted of 451 elementary and 229 secondary teachers. Of the 680 teachers, there were 152 males and 526 female teachers. This means that there are proportionally more females and elementary teachers in the sample than in the population.

Most of the teachers (66%) had over 5 years of teaching experience and only 14% of them had 2 years or less of teaching experience. Interestingly, almost 50% of the sample reported having leadership responsibilities in their school that directly involved classroom assessment.

The Properties of AfL

The results are presented by property of AfL that were previously presented. Each property is represented by a series of questions on the survey. Those items were analyzed together to reduce the data into information. In the analysis, there were some questions whose results did not fit in with the descriptive series of questions for the property. These items are presented at the end of each section and highlight that teacher misconception and inconsistent practices with respect to AfL.

The results presented below indicate that the teachers are reporting that some of their assessment practices are more regular than others. The teachers reported *regular* practices in (1) recognizing the clarity of purpose of assessment, (2) making students' current knowledge transparent to identify where they are on a learning progression, (3) using assessments that differentiate student learning for targeting teaching, and (4) using assessment information to help students better understand what they know and don't know.

The teachers reported that their classroom practices were *less regular* with respect to (1) intentionally using multiple assessments, (2) making explicit links to learning expectations, and (3) using evidence to figure out what to do next in their teaching to better support student learning.

These results suggest that the teachers appreciate and use assessment practices that focus on student understanding and helping students move forward individually. But that the teachers are not as good when it comes to thoughtfully developing multiple assessments that are tightly connected to learning expectations. Finally, teachers reported fewer practices taking the information from assessments to figure out how to make their teaching more effective for their students.

The rest of this section presents the results of the survey for each of the properties of assessment for learning.

Clarity of Purpose

There were three concepts that made up clarity of purpose:

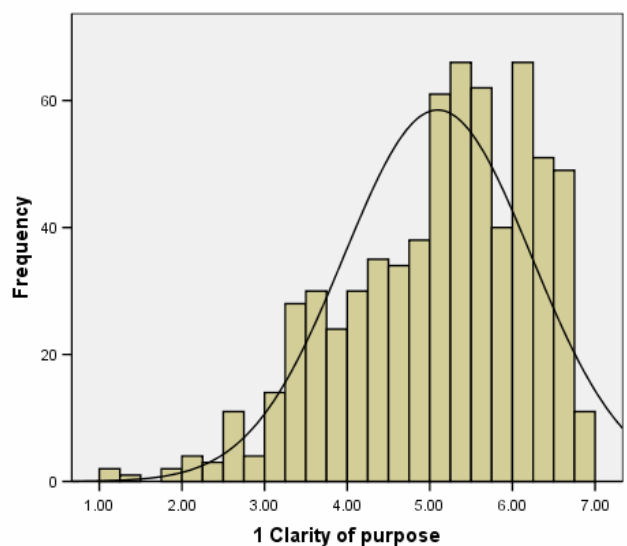
- 1) Being clear about using assessment for improving teaching
- 2) Being clear about using assessment for improving student learning
- 3) Being confident in knowing which assessment strategies to use for these two purposes

Clarity of purpose was described in terms of a score from 1 – 7. The lowest score is 1 and the highest score is 7. The table below presents the results from the survey.

Clarity of Purpose	Mean Score (out of 7)	Standard Deviation
Clarity of Purpose	5.1	1.1
Being clear about using assessment for improving teaching	5.4	1.5
Being clear about using assessment for improving student learning	5.0	1.3
Being confident in knowing which assessment strategies to use for these two purposes	5.0	1.0

The teachers assessment practices fell within the full range of being clear about the purpose of assessment.

The majority of teachers reported they were clear about the purposes of assessment. However, teachers were less confident when asked about identifying which strategies are suited for each purpose.



Noteworthy in this section, there were four questions that were left out of the reported scores. When the teachers reported on these questions, the results did not fit with the rest of their answers regarding this property.

To provide feedback to students on their learning

To diagnose a student's learning problems.

To collect information that I can share with parents/guardians about student achievement

To provide students with grades or marks

This means that teachers did not connect these purposes with the rest of their assessment practices that promote clarity of purpose of assessment. Interestingly, the responses to these four questions were not connected to one another either.

Explicit Learning Progression

There were three concepts that made up explicit learning progression:

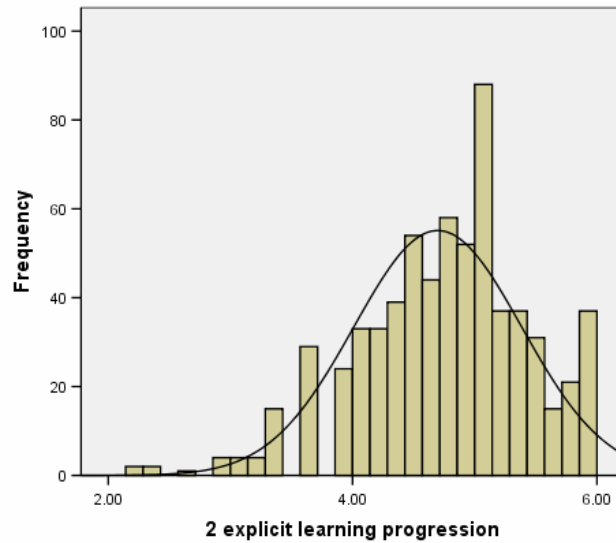
- 1) Using explicit learning progression to develop assessments
- 2) Using homework as an indicator of the learning progression
- 3) Showing students the learning progression

Explicit Learning Progression was described in terms of a score from 1 – 6. The lowest score is 1 and the highest score is 6. The table below presents the results from the survey.

Explicit Learning Progression	Mean Score (out of 6)	Standard Deviation
Explicit Learning Progression	4.7	0.7
Using explicit learning progression to develop assessments	5.0	0.8
Using homework as an indicator of the learning progression	4.4	1.1
Showing students the learning progression	4.8	0.9

The majority of teachers reported that they make explicit links to the learning expectations and how students progress to proficiency. There was a higher score for using the learning expectations when developing assessment rather as compared to using homework as an indicator of learning progression.

Most of the teachers reported that they incorporated the use of explicit learning outcomes to support students through a learning progression that is clear and well developed.



Noteworthy in this section is that there were two questions that were left out of the reported scores. When the teachers reported on these questions, the results did not fit with the rest of their answers regarding this property.

I provide students with examples of student work from previous years to present to my students.

I interpret information from classroom assessments to inform my use of the curriculum learning expectations.

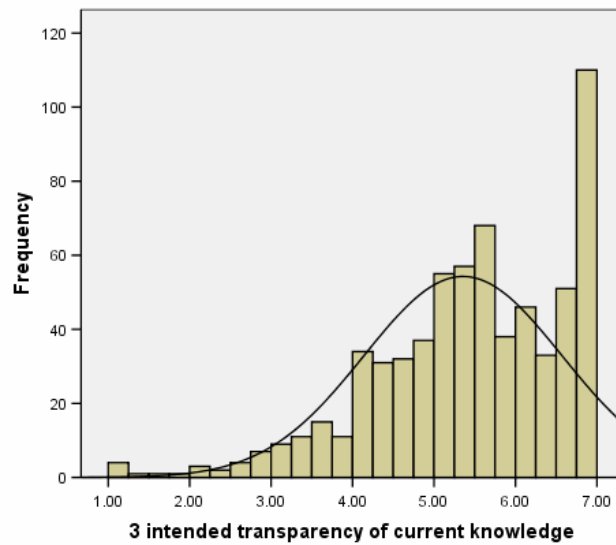
This means that teachers did not connect these practices with the rest of their assessment practices that make the learning progression explicit.

Intended transparency of current knowledge

The intended transparency of current knowledge represents teacher efforts to understand and help the student understand where they are on the learning continuum. It is described in terms of a scores from 1 – 7. The lowest score on the scale is 1 and the highest score is 7.

The teachers reported a mean score of 5.4 out of a possible score of 7. The standard deviation was 1.2.

Most teachers reported that they made regular efforts to understand and help students understand where they are on the learning continuum.



Pedagogical Next Steps Informed by Evidence

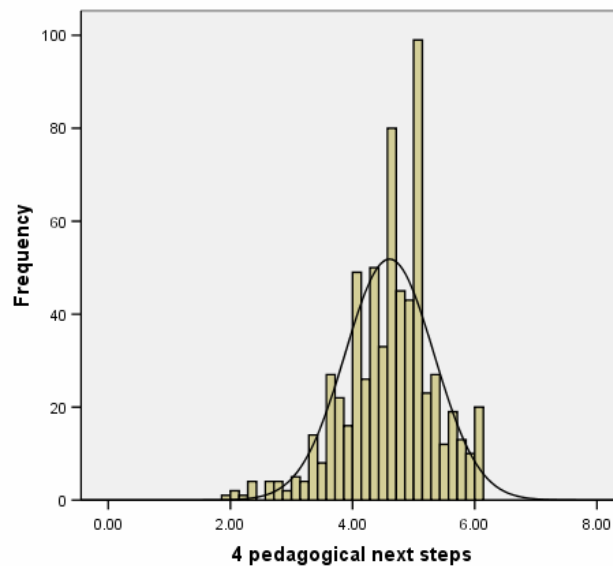
There were three concepts that made up the property of the pedagogical next step of teachers to move students forward were informed by evidence.

- 1) The use of classroom assessment information
- 2) The use of provincial assessments information
- 3) The use of informal assessment information

Pedagogical next steps was described in terms of a score from 1 – 6. The lowest score on the scale is 1 and the highest score is 6. The table below presents the results from the survey.

Pedagogical Next Steps Informed by Evidence	Mean Score (out of 6)	Standard Deviation
Overall	4.6	0.7
The use of classroom assessment information	4.8	0.8
The use of provincial assessments information	4.0	1.3
The use of informal assessment information	4.8	0.7

Most of the teachers reported that they inform their pedagogical next steps using information from assessments. There were no teachers who reported that they did not use classroom assessment or informal assessments in their classroom. But there were teachers who did report that they did not use the provincial assessment information to help them decide on their next steps in teaching.



Noteworthy in this section, there were three questions that were left out of the reported score. When the teachers reported on these questions, the results did not fit with the rest of their answers regarding this property.

I explicitly connected the results of classroom assessments to my instructional practices

I know what to do when a student is not learning a concept

I can make the connection from assessment results to my instructional practices

This means that teachers did not connect these practices with the rest of their assessment practices that inform their pedagogical next steps. Interestingly, the responses to these three questions were not connected to one another either.

Assessment Supports Meta-Cognitive Development

There were two concepts that made up the concept of teachers cultivating the conditions for students to both know what they know and what they don't know, and to engage in the kinds of behaviours that will move them towards understanding.

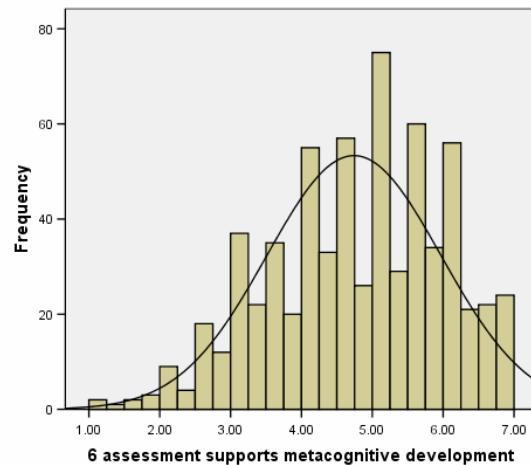
- 1) Teacher interactions with students at the individual student level
- 2) Teacher interactions with students at the class level

Assessment supports meta-cognitive development was described in terms of a score from 1 – 7. The lowest score is 1 and the highest score is 7. The table below presents the results from the survey.

Assessment Supports Meta-Cognitive Development	Mean Score (out of 7)	Standard Deviation
Overall	4.7	1.2
Teacher interactions with students at the individual level	5.4	1.4
Teacher interactions with students at the whole-class level	4.0	1.6

The teachers reported that they engaged in promoting meta-cognitive development at the individual student level more than at the level of the whole class.

The teachers reported that they did use assessment practices that promote student meta-cognitive development. However, there was a fair number of teachers that reported engaging modestly in this kind of practice in their classrooms.



Students' Next Steps as Informed by Evidence

There were three concepts that made up the property of students' next steps as informed by evidence where student learning is supported through evidence that is not evaluative but descriptive.

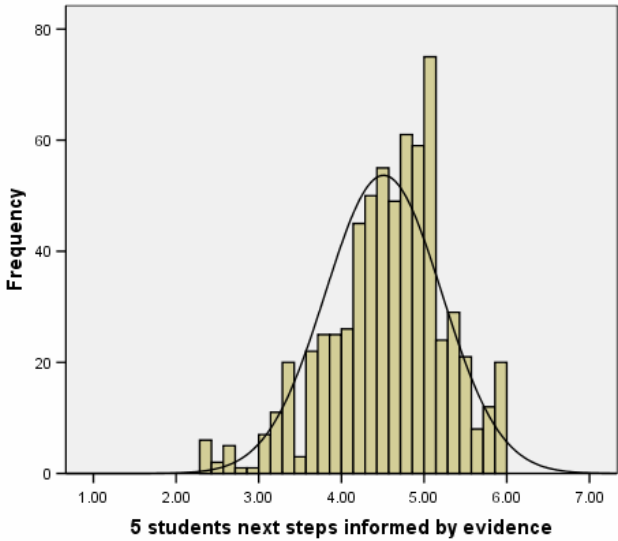
- 1) Developing classroom assessments that will inform student learning
- 2) Getting students to explain their reasoning
- 3) Synthesizing assessment data to improve student performance

Students' next steps as informed by evidence was described in terms of a score from 1 – 7. The lowest score is 1 and the highest is 7. The table below presents the results from the survey.

Students' next steps as informed by evidence	Mean Score (out of 7)	Standard Deviation
Overall	4.5	0.7
Developing classroom assessments that will inform student learning	3.9	1.2
Getting students to explain their reasoning	4.8	0.7
Synthesizing assessment data to improve student performance	4.6	1.0

The teachers reported that they were moderate in their demands on students to explain their reasoning and in their practice of synthesizing assessment data to improve student learning. But, they reported having difficulties with developing classroom assessments that would yield information that could be used for supporting student learning.

The teachers reported that they were moderate in their use of formative assessment information to help student in their next steps to move forward in their learning progression.



Noteworthy in this section is that there was one question that were left out of the reported scores. When the teachers reported on these questions, the results did not fit with the rest of their answers regarding this property.

I required students to review their work and compare it to what they need to accomplish.

This means that teachers did not connect this practice with the rest of their assessment practices that support students in moving forward.

Multiplicity and Intentionality

There were two concepts that made up multiplicity and intentionality. This property represents that multiple assessment strategies that are intentionally employed to ensure that the information about student learning is reliable and valid.

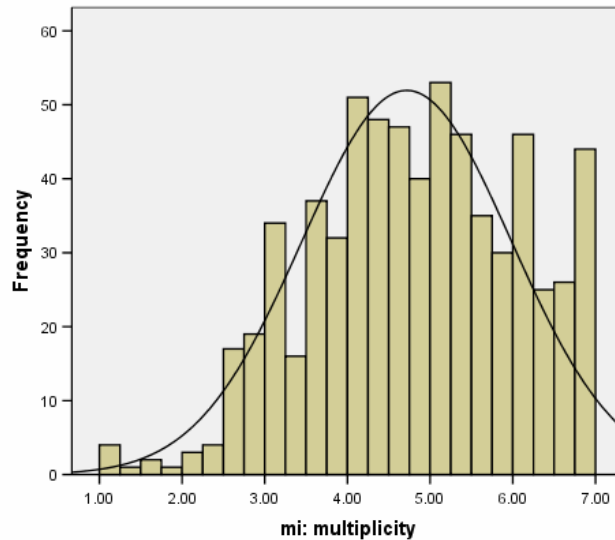
- 1) Multiple assessments are employed
- 2) Assessments are employed intentionally

Multiplicity and intentionality was described in terms of a score from 1 – 7. The lowest score is 1 and the highest is 7. The table below presents the results from the survey.

Multiplicity and Intentionality	Mean Score (out of 7)	Standard Deviation
Overall	4.2	1.1
Multiple assessments are employed	4.7	1.3
Assessments are employed intentionally	3.0	1.4

The teachers reported assessment practices that scored lower on this property of AfL as compared to the other properties. Interestingly, the teachers reported little intentional use of assessments even though they reported using multiple forms of assessment.

The assessment practices of teachers fell within the full range of this property. Most teachers reported a high use of multiple assessments to understand student learning.



Noteworthy in this section is that there were three questions that were left out of the reported scores. When the teachers reported on these questions, the results did not fit with the rest of their answers regarding this property.

I think about the different purposes of classroom assessment as I develop my teaching plans.

I combine learning for several topics to have a better understanding of student learning.

I developed the classroom assessment strategies I used for a unit while I was developing the unit for a class.

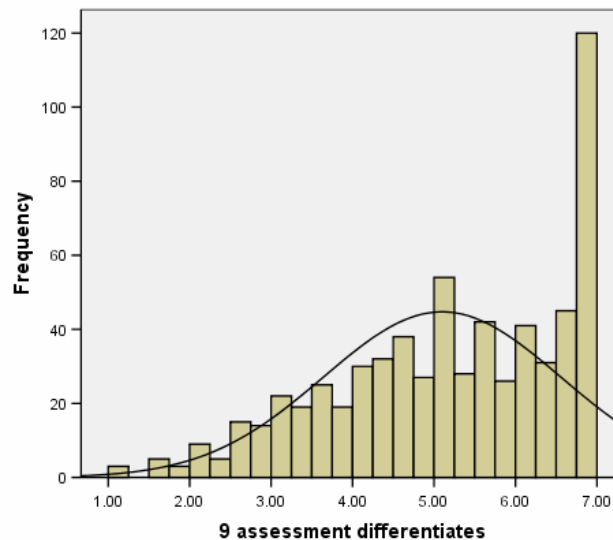
This means that teachers did not connect these practices with the rest of their assessment practices that promote the intentional use of multiple assessments. Interestingly, these are practices that highlight intentionality.

Assessment Differentiates

Using assessment to differentiate learning to better support students was represented by one concept. It is described in terms of a score from 1 – 7. The lowest score is 1 and the highest score is 7.

The teachers reported a mean score of 5.1 out of a 7 point scale.

The teachers reported that they were regular in their use of using assessment to differentiate learning in their classrooms.



Teachers and Better Assessment

This section reports on some questions that were asked on the survey regarding teacher support for classroom assessment practices and their beliefs on the need for improvement. The results in this section indicate that there are inconsistencies between what teachers indicate they need, their perceived proficiency, and their practices with respect to AfL.

Most teachers reported that the degree of professional development addressing classroom assessment practices and assessment resources were limited. Teachers rely on their professional community to help them improve their classroom practices, which is perceived to be sufficient since most teachers reported that they did change their classroom assessment practices, that they know what to do to connect assessment information to their instructional practices, and that they know what to do when a student is not learning a concept. Given the teacher confidence in these key AfL capacities, it is surprising that most teachers ranked AfL within the top 3 of their learning needs.

The rest of this section presents the results of the survey that describes teachers' beliefs regarding support and improvement.

Professional Development

When asked if they had participated in professional development sessions that addressed classroom assessment practices in the last five years, most teachers responded that they had done so in the last five years. Specifically,

- 18% of the teachers reported they had done so once in the last five years
- 45% of the teachers reported they had done so once a year
- 9% of the teachers reported they had done so once a month
- 21% of the teachers reported they had done so once a term
- 7% of the teachers reported that they *did not participate at all*

Resources

When asked about the resources to which they have access that supports their classroom assessment practices, most teachers felt that they were not enough of them. Specifically,

- 3% of teacher reported that they did not exist or were too old
- 65% of teachers reported that they were *too limited*
- 19% of teachers reported that they were *too new*
- 14% of teachers reported that they did not know what kind of resources they had to support classroom assessment.

Interestingly, when asked specifically if [there are too few readily available assessment activities that they could use in their classroom](#), the mean response from all the teachers was neutral. Specifically,

- 50% of the teachers disagreed that there were not enough resources
- 50% of the teachers agreed that there were not enough resources

Professional Community

When asked if they had a professional community that helps them improve their classroom assessment practices, most teachers agreed. Specifically,

- 85% of teachers *agreed*
- 14% of teachers *disagreed*
- 1% of teachers did not know

Changed my assessment practices

When asked if they had changed their classroom assessment practices over the last five years, most teachers felt that they had changed their practices a lot. Specifically,

- 38% of teachers answered that they had changed their assessment practices *a little or not at all*
- 60% of teachers answered that they had changed their assessment practices *a lot*
- 2% of teachers reported that they did not know if they had changed their assessment practices

Need to Improve

When asked how they ranked the need to improve their classroom assessment practices, most teachers ranked it as a priority. Specifically,

- 7% of the teachers reported it ranked *first*
- 59% of the teachers reported it ranked in the *top 3*
- 28% of the teachers reported it ranked in the top *10*
- 5% of the teachers reported it was not something that they needed to improve

Interestingly, when asked specifically if they felt that **they could make the connection from assessment results to their instructional practices**, most teachers agreed. Specifically:

- 85% of teachers agreed
- 12% of the teachers reported that they did not agree
- 3% of the teachers did not know

When asked if **they knew what to do when a student is not learning a concept**, most teachers agreed. Specifically:

- 90% of teachers agreed,
- 8% of the teachers reported that they did not agree
- 2% of the teachers did not know

The Properties of AfL: Secondary and Elementary

The results in this section indicate that the elementary teachers reported more regular practices that are aligned with assessment for learning as compared to their secondary colleagues. The only AfL property where there was *no* significant difference between the two groups was with respect to making links to learning expectations to define the learning required for proficiency (Explicit Learning Progression).

Clarity of Purpose

The elementary teachers reported practices that were higher than their secondary colleagues with respect to making sure the purpose of classroom assessment is clear to students and to themselves. The biggest difference between the two groups is that elementary teachers scored higher on being clear about using assessment for improving teaching as compared to secondary teachers. Both group of teachers felt adequate in their confidence to know which assessment strategies to use for different purposes. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Clarity of Purpose	Mean Score (out of 7)		Standard Deviation	
	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary
Overall	5.2	4.9	1.1	1.1
Being clear about using assessment for improving teaching	5.6	5.1	1.5	1.6
Being clear about using assessment for improving student learning	5.1	4.9	1.4	1.3
Being confident in knowing which assessment strategies to use for these two purposes	4.5	4.5	1.0	0.9

Explicit Learning Progression

Overall, the elementary and secondary teachers were the same in their reported assessment practices making explicit links to learning expectations to promote student understanding. There were small differences between the two groups that are noteworthy. First, that overall, the secondary teachers were more uniform in their reported practices. This means that there was more variation in the practices of elementary teachers. Second, secondary teachers reported a higher use of homework as an indicator of learning progression. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Explicit learning progression	Mean Score (out of 6)		Standard Deviation	
	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary
Overall	4.7	4.6	0.7	0.6
Using explicit learning progression to develop assessments	5.1	4.9	0.7	0.8
Using homework as an indicator of the learning progression	4.2	4.5	1.2	1.0
Showing students the learning progression	4.9	4.7	0.8	0.8

Intended transparency of current knowledge

The elementary teachers reported practices that were a higher than their secondary counterparts with respect to making student knowledge transparent so that the teacher and student can identify where they are in a learning progression. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Intended transparency of current knowledge	Mean Score (out of 7)		Standard Deviation	
	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary
Overall	5.4	5.1	1.2	1.2

Pedagogical Next Steps Informed by Evidence

The elementary teachers reported practices that were higher than their secondary colleagues with respect to using evidence from assessments to inform their teaching so as to move students to the next step of the learning continuum. The biggest difference between the two groups was in the use of the provincial assessment information as evidence to inform their pedagogical practices. Secondary teachers did not use the provincial assessment results as much as their elementary colleagues. In addition, there was a higher variance in the use of informal assessment as information that informs teaching practices amongst the secondary teachers as compared to their elementary colleagues. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Pedagogical next steps informed by evidence	Mean Score (out of 6)		Standard Deviation	
	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary
Overall	4.7	4.3	0.7	0.8
The use of classroom assessment information	4.9	4.7	0.8	0.8
The use of provincial assessments information	4.2	3.7	1.2	1.2
The use of informal assessment information	4.9	4.6	0.6	0.8

Students' Next Steps as Informed by Evidence

The elementary teachers reported assessment practices that were higher than their secondary colleagues with respect to reflecting on evidence to provide descriptive supportive feedback to students. Notwithstanding this difference, both groups scored higher on getting students to explain their reasoning and moderate on developing classroom assessments that will inform student learning. The greatest difference between the two groups was in their synthesis of assessment data to improve student performance. In this last category, the practices of the elementary teachers were reported to be higher than those of the secondary teachers. The table below summarizes the results. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Students' next steps informed by evidence	Mean Score (out of 7)		Standard Deviation	
	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary
Overall	4.6	4.3	0.7	0.7
Developing classroom assessments that will inform student learning	3.9	4.0	1.2	1.1
Getting students to explain their reasoning	4.9	4.7	0.7	0.8
Synthesizing assessment data to improve student performance	4.7	4.3	0.9	1.1

Assessment Supports Meta-Cognitive Development

The elementary teachers reported practices that were higher than their secondary colleagues with respect to using assessments that promotes the use of feedback so that students can compare their progress with an achievement goal. Interestingly, the difference between the two groups was at the level of teacher-student interactions rather than at the level of the whole class. The two groups of teachers reported the same level of assessment practices regarding whole-class interactions, but there was more variation amongst the elementary teachers as compared to their secondary colleagues. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Assessment Supports Meta-Cognitive Development	Mean Score (out of 7)		Standard Deviation	
	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary
Overall	4.8	4.5	1.2	1.2
Teacher interactions with students at the individual level	5.6	5.1	1.4	1.5
Teacher interactions with students at the whole-class level	4.0	4.0	1.8	1.3

Multiplicity and Intentionality

The elementary teachers scored higher than their secondary colleagues with respect to practices of intentionally using multiple assessments to better understand student learning. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Multiplicity and Intentionality	Mean Score (out of 7)		Standard Deviation	
	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary
Overall	4.2	4.0	1.1	1.1
Multiple assessments are employed	4.8	4.5	1.2	1.2
Assessments are employed intentionally	3.0	3.1	1.5	1.4

Assessment Differentiates

The elementary teachers scored higher than their secondary counterparts with respect to using assessments that differentiates student learning so that they can better individualize their teaching strategies. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Assessment differentiates	Mean Score (out of 7)		Standard Deviation	
	Elementary	Secondary	Elementary	Secondary
Overall	5.5	4.4	1.3	1.4

Teachers and Better Assessment

The teachers in the elementary panel reported higher levels of support for assessment, prioritized it higher, and felt they changed their practices more than their secondary counterparts.

Professional Development

When asked if they had participated in professional development sessions that addressed classroom assessment practices in the last five years, there was little difference between the elementary and secondary teachers. There were slightly more elementary teachers who had participated in professional development sessions more regularly over the last five years as compared to their secondary counterparts.

Elementary	Secondary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 15% of the teachers reported they had done so once in the last five years. ➤ 46% of the teachers reported they had done so once a year. ➤ 21% of the teachers reported they had done so once a term. ➤ 12% of the teachers reported they had done so once a month. ➤ 6% of the teachers reported that they <i>did not participate at all</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 24% of the teachers reported they had done so once in the last five years. ➤ 42% of the teachers reported they had done so once a year. ➤ 22% of the teachers reported they had done so once a term. ➤ 3% of the teachers reported they had done so once a month. ➤ 9% of the teachers reported that they <i>did not participate at all</i>.

Resources

When asked about the resources to which they have access that supports their classroom assessment practices. The elementary teachers felt that there were more new resources than their secondary counterparts. This difference may be because elementary teachers acquire new resources at the professional development sessions they attend more regularly. Specifically,

Elementary	Secondary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 2 % of teacher reported that they did not exist or were too old. ➤ 61% of teachers reported that they were <i>too limited</i>, ➤ 25% of teachers reported that they were <i>too new</i>, and ➤ 12% of teachers reported that they did not know what kind of resources they had to support classroom assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 5% of teacher reported that they did not exist or were too old. ➤ 73% of teachers reported that they were <i>too limited</i>, ➤ 7% of teachers reported that they were <i>too new</i>, and ➤ 16% of teachers reported that they did not know what kind of resources they had to support classroom assessment.

Interestingly, when asked specifically if [there are too few readily available assessment activities that they could use in their classroom](#), the mean response from all the teachers was neutral for both panels. Specifically,

Elementary	Secondary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 48% of the teachers disagreed that there were not enough resources ➤ 52% of the teachers agreed that there were not enough resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 51% of the teachers disagreed that there were not enough resources ➤ 49% of the teachers agreed that there were not enough resources

Changed my assessment practices

When asked if they had changed their classroom assessment practices over the last five years, more elementary teachers felt that they had changed their practices a lot as compared to their secondary counterparts. Specifically,

Elementary	Secondary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 34% of teachers answered that they had changed their assessment practices <i>a little</i> or <i>not at all</i>. ➤ 63% of teachers answered that they had changed their assessment practices <i>a lot</i>. ➤ 2% of teachers reported that they did not know if they had changed their assessment practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 44% of teachers answered that they had changed their assessment practices <i>a little</i> or <i>not at all</i>. ➤ 56% of teachers answered that they had changed their assessment practices <i>a lot</i>. ➤ <1% of teachers reported that they did not know if they had changed their assessment practices.

Professional Community

When asked if they had a professional community that helps them improve their classroom assessment practices, more elementary teachers agreed as compared to their secondary counterparts. Specifically ,

Elementary	Secondary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 89% of teachers <i>agreed</i>, ➤ 10% of teachers <i>disagreed</i>, and ➤ 1% of teachers did not know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 77% of teachers <i>agreed</i>, ➤ 21% of teachers <i>disagreed</i>, and ➤ 2% of teachers did not know

Need to Improve

When asked how they ranked the need to improve their classroom assessment practices, more elementary teachers ranked it amongst the top 3. The secondary teachers reported it was less of a priority. Almost 10% of secondary teachers felt it was not something that they needed to improve.

Elementary	Secondary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 8% of the teachers reported it ranked <i>first</i>, ➤ 63% of the teachers reported it ranked in the <i>top 3</i>, ➤ 25% of the teachers reported it ranked in the <i>top 10</i>, and ➤ 4% of the teachers reported it was not something that they needed to improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 3% of the teachers reported it ranked <i>first</i>, ➤ 52% of the teachers reported it ranked in the <i>top 3</i>, ➤ 36% of the teachers reported it ranked in the <i>top 10</i>, and ➤ 9% of the teachers reported it was not something that they needed to improve

When asked specifically if they felt that [they could make the connection from assessment results to their instructional practices](#), more elementary teachers agreed with the statement than secondary teachers. In addition, more secondary teachers reported that they did not know that elementary teachers. Specifically:

Elementary	Secondary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 84% of teachers agreed, ➤ 14% of the teachers reported that they did not agree ➤ 2% of the teachers did not know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 71% of the teachers agreed ➤ 24% of the teachers reported that they did not agree, ➤ 5% of the teachers did not know

When asked if [they knew what to do when a student is not learning a concept](#), more secondary teachers agreed with the statement than elementary teachers. Specifically:

Elementary	Secondary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 88% of teachers agreed, ➤ 9% of the teachers reported that they did not agree ➤ 3% of the teachers did not know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 92% of the teachers agreed ➤ 7% of the teachers reported that they did not agree, ➤ 1% of the teachers did not know

The Properties of AfL: Looking at Assessment Leaders

Clarity of Purpose

The teachers with leadership responsibilities for assessment scored slightly higher than their colleagues with respect to making sure the purpose of classroom assessment is clear to students and to themselves. The assessment leaders scored slightly higher on all of the concepts. Interestingly, the teacher leaders reported less confidence in knowing the difference between the types of assessment. In addition, there was a slightly higher variation in reported practices amongst the teacher leaders. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Clarity of Purpose	Mean Score (out of 7)		Standard Deviation	
	Teachers	Assessment Leaders	Teachers	Assessment Leaders
Overall	4.9	5.2	1.0	1.2
Being clear about using assessment for improving teaching	5.3	5.6	1.4	1.6
Being clear about using assessment for improving student learning	4.9	5.2	1.3	1.4
Being confident in knowing which assessment strategies to use for these two purposes	4.4	4.6	0.8	1.0

Explicit Learning Progression

Overall, the teachers and the teachers with leadership responsibilities in assessment scored slightly higher than their colleagues on making explicit links to learning expectations to promote student understanding. There were small differences between the two groups. The assessment leaders reported a slightly higher use of homework as indicator of learning progression. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Explicit learning progression	Mean Score (out of 6)		Standard Deviation	
	Teachers	Assessment Leaders	Teachers	Assessment Leaders
Overall	4.6	4.7	0.7	0.7
Using explicit learning progression to develop assessments	5.1	5.0	0.7	0.8
Using homework as an indicator of the learning progression	4.2	4.5	1.2	1.0
Showing students the learning progression	4.8	4.9	0.9	0.8

Intended transparency of current knowledge

The teachers with leadership responsibilities in assessment reported practices that were about the same as their teacher colleagues with respect to making student knowledge transparent so that the teacher and student can identify where they are in a learning progression. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Intended transparency of current knowledge	Mean Score (out of 7)		Standard Deviation	
	Teachers	Assessment Leaders	Teachers	Assessment Leaders
Overall	5.2	5.4	1.2	1.2

Pedagogical Next Steps Informed by Evidence

The teachers with leadership responsibilities in assessment reported practices were about the same as their teacher colleagues with respect to using evidence from assessments to inform their teaching so as to move students to the next step of the learning continuum. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Pedagogical next steps informed by evidence	Mean Score (out of 6)		Standard Deviation	
	Teachers	Assessment Leaders	Teachers	Assessment Leaders
Overall	4.5	4.7	0.8	0.7
The use of classroom assessment information	4.8	4.9	0.9	0.7
The use of provincial assessments information	4.0	4.1	1.3	1.3
The use of informal assessment information	4.8	4.8	0.8	0.6

Students' Next Steps Informed by Evidence

The teachers with leadership responsibilities in assessment scored slightly higher than their teacher colleagues with respect to reflecting on evidence to provide descriptive supportive feedback to students. The table below summarizes the results for both groups.

Students' next steps informed by evidence	Mean Score (out of 7)		Standard Deviation	
	Teachers	Assessment Leaders	Teachers	Assessment Leaders
Overall	4.4	4.6	0.7	0.6
Developing classroom assessments that will inform student learning	3.7	4.1	1.2	1.1
Getting students to explain their reasoning	4.8	4.9	0.7	0.7
Synthesizing assessment data to improve student performance	4.5	4.7	1.1	0.9

Assessment Supports Meta-Cognitive Development

The teachers with leadership responsibilities in assessment scored slightly higher than their teacher colleagues with respect to using assessments that promotes the use of a feedback loop where students can compare their progress with an achievement goal. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Assessment Supports Meta-Cognitive Development	Mean Score (out of 7)		Standard Deviation	
	Teachers	Assessment Leaders	Teachers	Assessment Leaders
Overall	4.6	4.8	1.3	1.2
Teacher interactions with students at the individual level	5.3	5.6	1.4	1.4
Teacher interactions with students at the whole-class level	4.0	4.1	1.7	1.6

Multiplicity and Intentionality

The teachers with leadership responsibilities in assessment scored slightly higher than their teacher colleagues with respect to practices of intentionally using multiple assessments to better understand student learning. The difference was mostly because the assessment leaders reported using employing multiple assessments to a higher degree. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Multiplicity and Intentionality	Mean Score (out of 7)		Standard Deviation	
	Teachers	Assessment Leaders	Teachers	Assessment Leaders
Overall	4.0	4.3	1.1	1.1
Multiple assessments are employed	4.5	4.9	1.3	1.2
Assessments are employed intentionally	3.0	3.1	1.4	1.5

Assessment Differentiates

The teachers with leadership responsibilities in assessment scored slightly higher than their teacher counterparts with respect to using assessments that differentiates student learning so that they can better individualize their teaching strategies. The table below presents the results for both groups.

Assessment differentiates	Mean Score (out of 7)		Standard Deviation	
	Teachers	Assessment Leaders	Teachers	Assessment Leaders
Overall	4.9	5.3	1.5	1.4

Teachers and Better Assessment: Looking at Assessment Leaders

The results below indicate that the teachers with responsibilities in assessment are more aware of the resources available and receive slightly more support than their teacher colleagues. Interestingly, the difference is small and there is little difference in the prioritization of assessment between the two groups.

Professional Development

When asked if they had participated in professional development sessions that addressed classroom assessment practices in the last five years, the teachers with leadership responsibilities in assessment reported that they had participated in professional development sessions more regularly over the last five years.

Teacher	Teacher Assessment Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 21% of the teachers reported they had done so once in the last five years. ➤ 44% of the teachers reported they had done so once a year. ➤ 19% of the teachers reported they had done so once a term. ➤ 7% of the teachers reported they had done so once a month. ➤ 10% of the teachers reported that they <i>did not participate at all</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 15% of the teachers reported they had done so once in the last five years. ➤ 46% of the teachers reported they had done so once a year. ➤ 24% of the teachers reported they had done so once a term. ➤ 10% of the teachers reported they had done so once a month. ➤ 5% of the teachers reported that they <i>did not participate at all</i>.

Resources

When asked about the resources to which they have access that supports their classroom assessment practices, The teachers with leadership responsibilities in assessment reported were more aware of the resources and more of them felt that they were too new. Specifically,

Teacher	Teacher Assessment Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 2 % of teacher reported that they did not exist or were too old. ➤ 63% of teachers reported that they were <i>too limited</i>, ➤ 15% of teachers reported that they were <i>too new</i>, and ➤ 20% of teachers reported that they did not know what kind of resources they had to support classroom assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 4% of teacher reported that they did not exist or were too old. ➤ 68% of teachers reported that they were <i>too limited</i>, ➤ 23% of teachers reported that they were <i>too new</i>, and ➤ 8% of teachers reported that they did not know what kind of resources they had to support classroom assessment.

Interestingly, when asked specifically if [there are too few readily available assessment activities that they could use in their classroom](#), the mean response from all the teachers was neutral for both groups. Specifically,

Teacher	Teacher Assessment Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 49% of the teachers reported that there were enough resources ➤ 51% of the teachers agreed that there were not enough resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 50% of the teachers reported that there were enough resources ➤ 50% of the teachers agreed that there were not enough resources

Changed my assessment practices

When asked if they had changed their classroom assessment practices over the last five years, teachers with leadership responsibilities in assessment reported changing their practices more than their teacher colleagues. Specifically,

Teacher	Teacher Assessment Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 41% of teachers answered that they had changed their assessment practices <i>a little</i> or <i>not at all</i>. ➤ 58% of teachers answered that they had changed their assessment practices <i>a lot</i>. ➤ 2% of teachers reported that they did not know if they had changed their assessment practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 35% of teachers answered that they had changed their assessment practices <i>a little</i> or <i>not at all</i>. ➤ 64% of teachers answered that they had changed their assessment practices <i>a lot</i>. ➤ 1% of teachers reported that they did not know if they had changed their assessment practices.

Professional Community

When asked if they had a professional community that helps them improve their classroom assessment practices, more teachers with responsibilities for assessment agreed as compared to their teacher colleagues. Specifically,

Teacher	Teacher Assessment Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 73% of teachers <i>agreed</i>, ➤ 15% of teachers <i>disagreed</i>, and ➤ 2% of teachers did not know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 87% of teachers <i>agreed</i>, ➤ 12% of teachers <i>disagreed</i>, and ➤ <1% of teachers did not know

Need to Improve

When asked how they ranked the need to improve their classroom assessment practices, there was little difference between the two groups.

Teacher	Teacher Assessment Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 6% of the teachers reported it ranked <i>first</i>, ➤ 57% of the teachers reported it ranked in the <i>top 3</i>, ➤ 30% of the teachers reported it ranked in the <i>top 10</i>, and ➤ 6% of the teachers reported it was not something that they needed to improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 7% of the teachers reported it ranked <i>first</i>, ➤ 61% of the teachers reported it ranked in the <i>top 3</i>, ➤ 28% of the teachers reported it ranked in the <i>top 10</i>, and ➤ 5% of the teachers reported it was not something that they needed to improve

When asked specifically if they felt that [they could make the connection from assessment results to their instructional practices](#), the results were about the same. There were only 3% more assessment leaders who agreed with the statement as compared to the teacher group. In addition, 3% of teachers in each group reported that they did not know. Specifically:

Teacher	Teacher Assessment Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 83% of teachers agreed, ➤ 14% of the teachers reported that they did not agree ➤ 3% of the teachers did not know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 86% of the teachers agreed ➤ 11% of the teachers reported that they did not agree, ➤ 3% of the teachers did not know

When asked if [they knew what to do when a student is not learning a concept](#), there was the same degree of agreement between the two teacher groups. Specifically:

Teacher	Teacher Assessment Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 89% of teachers agreed, ➤ 9% of the teachers reported that they did not agree ➤ 2% of the teachers did not know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 91% of the teachers agreed ➤ 7% of the teachers reported that they did not agree, ➤ 2% of the teachers did not know

Observations and Questions

The results of this survey provided a lot of information on teacher practices in the PNC with respect to assessment for learning practices. This section contains a summary of the important points that we noted when looking at the overall results, the comparison between elementary and secondary teachers, and the comparison between assessment leaders and regular teachers. There were six noteworthy findings that raised some interpretive questions. The findings and questions are presented below.

- The teachers generally reported that they were practicing all of the properties of assessment FOR learning to various degrees. However, there were a number of questions that were not answered consistently with those practices describing the same property of AfL. These results indicate that there is a disconnect between how teachers understand AfL and their classroom practices. In other words, the teachers are not necessarily connecting AfL to their daily class work.

[Why are teachers' reported practices inconsistent with AfL properties even if the practices make sense conceptually?](#)

[For example, why don't teachers link connecting the results of classroom assessments with their instructional practices when considering pedagogical next steps as a property of assessment?](#)

- The self-reported assessment practices of teachers indicate they are focusing a lot on students. They are promoting regular practices that are student-centered. For example, promoting making student knowledge transparent, student understanding of their place in their individual learning progression, student understanding of what they need to do to move forward. There is a lot less emphasis in their practices on the link between learning expectations – assessment — and pedagogical next steps. Although we should celebrate the attention given to individual student learning, the balance in teacher practices suggests that they reflect less on assessment information to improve their teaching. In other words, assessment information is being used more for improving learning rather than teaching.

[How do you improve student learning without careful and regular reflection on improving teaching?](#)

- Teachers reported that they know how to connect assessment information to their instructional practices. But their confidence contradicts their reported practices.

[Is this a case of teachers not knowing what they don't know, or, are there obstacles that do not let them connect assessment information to instructional practice in their work?](#)

- The teachers reported that they have improved their classroom assessment practices which are already proficient. However, these same teachers ranked needing professional development in AfL as a priority in their learning. These results suggest that the teachers recognize that they need support in improving their classroom assessment knowledge and skills, but that they may not readily appreciate which of their practices need to be addressed.

What is the best way to support teachers in improving their AfL practices given their beliefs about their proficiency in this professional area?

- Elementary teachers consistently scored higher than their elementary colleagues. They reported more professional support for AfL and believed that learning about AfL was a higher priority. In other words, elementary teachers have been engaging with AfL learning and believe in the need to improve their practices which are already higher than their secondary colleagues. Whereas secondary teachers do not feel the need to improve to the same degree and have received less professional support for AfL.

Has there been greater attention given to elementary teachers in building their assessment capacity? If that is true, why has this occurred? Does that need to change?

- Teachers with leadership responsibilities in assessment scored slightly higher on all of the properties of AfL. However, the difference between the two groups was very weak. These results indicate that there was not a notable practical difference between the AfL practices of assessment leaders and regular teachers. Apart from more teacher assessment leaders reporting that they had participated in more professional development on AfL and changed their assessment practices, there were no notable differences between the two groups.

If the teacher assessment leaders received more professional development and did change their practices in AfL, how come they did not score significantly higher on the properties of AfL when reporting on their practices?

Recommendations

This section presents four key recommendations to build capacity for AfL in the PNC given the results of this survey.

1. AfL professional development needs to oblige the teachers to examine in-classroom practices to start recognizing what good assessment for teaching and learning looks like in practice. Simple one-day workshops will not be very effective since the teachers are currently not making the connection to their classroom practices. Teachers reported a high level of confidence regarding their assessment practices. The findings suggest that it is critical to develop a learning program that caters to the inconsistency between teacher beliefs and their practices. The teachers' connection to their professional learning communities is a promising key to developing a teacher-friendly learning program that will readily engage teacher to change their AfL practices.
2. Teachers are focusing on the student-level learning without an equal focus on their teaching. Given that assessment information is necessary for effective teaching, an effective AfL learning program needs to focus on differentiating instruction based on evidence.
3. Leadership responsibility for assessment should be placed in the hands of teachers who are motivated and have the capacity to help their colleagues in improving their practices. The teachers with leadership responsibilities in assessment are not the teachers whose assessment practices were notably better or reported AfL as a priority for improvement.
4. Secondary teachers need to be encouraged and motivated to value AfL in their professional work and development. The elementary teachers appear to have had more support, are more aware of the need for professional learning in AfL, and believe it is more of a priority than their secondary colleague.