

## Syllabus

**Course:** Assessment and Grading for Student Achievement

**Presenters:** Damian Cooper and Ken O'Connor

*From the Resource tab in the eClassroom, please download and read "Instructions and Requirements" for additional important information.*

### Overview

Expert educational consultants Damian Cooper and Ken O'Connor argue the necessity of rethinking assessment practices to help all students learn and to become more efficient. Participants will analyze their current practice and begin to implement improvements based on careful distinction between assessment *for* learning vs. assessment *of* learning.

Mr. Cooper's strategies will facilitate for teachers such critical tasks as routinely sharing learning goals with students, providing examples of excellence (e.g., through rubrics), promoting collaborative work and self- and peer-assessment, and providing feedback that both informs students how to improve and allows them the time and space to do so.

Ken O'Connor joins Mr. Cooper in the final two units of the course to explore the critical distinctions between formative assessment and summative grades and to ask and answer such questions as whether grades promote learning at all; when, what, and how to grade; and what functions grades can serve in a standards-based system.

Interviews with teachers and classroom footage punctuate the presenters' key points throughout and provide examples of their theories in practice.

### Objectives

After completing this course, educators will know:

- Formative assessment vs. summative assessment
- What makes formative assessment facilitative of learning
- What constitutes essential learning
- Backward design
- The zone of proximal development
- What balanced assessment looks like
- The relationship between instruction and assessment
- The benefits of standards-based grading
- The role of grades in learning
- What makes grades quality

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

After completing this course, educators will apply the following skills:

- Employ formative assessment to improve student learning
- Use backward design principles to design effective instruction and assessment
- Teach to students' zones of proximal development
- Provide effective feedback to students
- Balance their assessment plans
- Embrace standards-based grading over norm-referenced grading
- Produce quality grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning

### **Units:**

#### 1. Unit 1: Rethinking Assessment for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

In this unit, Damian Cooper outlines his two critical goals for assessment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: to use assessment to help all students learn and to render the practice of assessment more efficient for teachers. Participants will consider their current processes and begin to analyze how and whether those processes advance student learning and are consistent with their missions as educators. They will learn the definitions and different uses of different assessment types, including pre-assessment (or diagnostic), formative, and summative. They will prepare themselves to improve their practice in terms of providing effective feedback to students, adjusting their instruction in response to assessment, recognizing the influence of assessment on students' motivation and self-esteem, and preparing students to self-assess to effect their own improvement.

#### 2. Unit 2: Program Planning with the End in Mind

In this unit, Damian Cooper offers Wiggins and McTighe's backward design model as the foundation for developing and employing affective assessment. Backward design, Cooper notes, enables teachers to share the process of developing assessment with their peers (making it less private, more public, and therefore both more accurate and more consistent for students). Participants learn to identify what's essential for students to learn and to design assessment tasks and assessment tools accordingly. They consider the different kinds of data (or evidence) students can produce to illustrate their understanding of the essential knowledge and skills.

#### 3. Unit 3: Balanced Assessment

In this unit, Damian Cooper guides participants in the crafting of a balanced assessment plan, in which students write, do, and say to illustrate what they are learning. Participants will study how to assess their learning targets with tasks that involve students in authentic, real-world problem solving. They will learn to improve their performance tasks by incorporating interaction into activities, as well as on-the-spot thinking and application of the knowledge and skills students are developing.

#### 4. Unit 4: Connecting Assessment with Instruction

Damian Cooper begins this unit by exploring assessment in differentiated classrooms, including those containing struggling students. He introduces the notion of the zone of proximal development to help participants develop instruction and assessment that sufficiently challenges all children, without overwhelming them. He outlines how to differentiate for students' different skill levels or interests, in order to help all students achieve proficient or exemplary achievement at their grade level.

#### 5. Unit 5: Assessment that Promotes Learning

In this unit, Damian Cooper introduces six questions about assessment for learning critical to the teacher's success at promoting student achievement. Participants watch classroom footage to help highlight how answering "yes" to those questions improves a teacher's practice and student learning.

#### 6. Unit 6: Article: Collaborating with Students in the Assessment Process

Participants read the article "Collaborating with Students in the Assessment Process," available under Resources, and address the questions that follow.

#### 7. Unit 7: Communicating Performance Standards to Students

In this unit, Damian Cooper explores rubrics, moderated (or collaborative) marking, and summative conferences for their benefits to students, particularly as methods of communicating performance standards both within individual classes and from class to class and grade to grade. Rubrics provide a descriptive roadmap to excellence, moderated marking develops consistent grading practices from teacher to teacher, and summative conferences enable teachers and students to do a careful analysis of a student's achievement in relation to standards over the course of a semester or year.

#### 8. Unit 8: Article: Not Everything that Counts Can Be Counted"

Participants read the article "Not Everything that Counts Can be Counted," available under Resources, and address the questions that follow.

#### 9. Unit 9: Grading and Reporting, Part 1

In this first unit devoted to grading and reporting, Ron O'Connor joins Damian Cooper for a dialogue that concerns such questions as whether grading is essential to learning, what needs to be communicated to parents in a standards-based system, and how not only to engage all students in learning, but how to get them to complete all relevant tasks. They explore what makes grades quality (accuracy, consistency, meaningfulness, and supportive of learning) and how to achieve that quality both singly and with one's peers.

#### 10. Unit 10: Grading and Reporting, Part 2

In this unit, Damian Cooper and Ken O'Connor continue their in-depth consideration of the role of grading in students' education. They delve deeper into the issue of consistency and its impact on student learning; discuss when grades measure growth, progress, or achievement; and explore what specifically makes grades meaningful to students and supportive of their learning. They also consider provocative questions about what to grade, whether and when to consider behavior, whether to give zeros, whether to allow late work, and other issues that can plague teachers in the classroom.

#### 11. Unit 11: Article: "Redefining 'Fair'"

Participants read the article "Redefining 'Fair,'" available under Resources, and address the questions that follow.

#### **Presenters Bios:**

**Damian Cooper**, who has a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Education, as well as a Master of Education in Curriculum, is an independent education consultant who specializes in helping schools and school districts improve their instructional and assessment skills. In his varied career, Cooper has been a secondary English, special education, and drama teacher; a department head; a librarian; a school consultant; and a curriculum developer. He has specialized in student assessment for more than twenty years and served as assessment consult to the School Division of Nelson Education where he worked on the development of assessment principles and strategies for a wide variety of K-12 resources. Prior to that appointment, he was Coordinator of Assessment and Evaluation for the Halton District School Board in Burlington, Ontario. Cooper's current work focuses on helping teachers and administrators connect curriculum, instruction, and assessment in ways that improve learning for all students. He is the author of *Talk About Assessment: Strategies and Tools to Improve Learning* and *Talk About Assessment: High School Strategies and Tools*, as well as co-author, with Nanci Wakeman, of *Getting Assessment Right: Language* and *Getting Assessment Right: Mathematics for Data-Based Directions*.

**Ken O'Connor**, who earned his Master's of Education at the University of Toronto in 1973, has been an independent consultant since 1996. His 23 year teaching career includes experience as a geography teacher and department head. He has been a staff development presenter and facilitator on assessment, grading, and reporting throughout North America, presented at myriad conferences, and served as a curriculum coordinator for the Scarborough Board of Education and the Toronto District School Board. O'Connor is the author of a number of books, including *How to Grade for Learning: Linking Grades to Standards* and *A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades*.

### **Recommended Texts:**

Cooper, D. (2010). *Talk About Assessment: High School Strategies and Tools*. Scarborough, ON: Nelson Education

Cooper, D. (2007). *Talk About Assessment: Strategies and Tools to Improve Teaching and Learning*. Scarborough, ON: Thomson Nelson

Available at <http://www.nelsonschoolcentral.com/cgi-bin/lansaweb?webapp=WBOOKSITE+webtrn=booksite+F%28LW3ITEMCD%29=9780176289164>

### **Methods of Instruction:**

- Videos (presentations consisting of lecture, interviews, and classroom footage)
- Texts (units based on required reading)
- Reflection questions (open-ended questions at intervals throughout the video presentations where participants are asked to reflect on the course content, their own practice, and their intentions for their practice)
- Quizzes (selected-response quizzes to assess understanding of the video presentations and eBook content)

**All steps listed under each topic must be completed to receive credit for the course. No partial credit is given.**

### **Plagiarism Policy**

KDS recognizes plagiarism as a serious academic offense. Plagiarism is the dishonest passing off of someone else's work as one's own and includes failing to cite sources for others' ideas, copying material from books or the Internet, and handing in work written by someone other than the participant. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade and may have additional consequences. For more information about plagiarism and guidelines for appropriate citation, consult [plagiarism.org](http://plagiarism.org).

**KDS Rubric for Pass/Fail Option: 1 CEU**

**Passing Requirements:**

- 70 points or more
- No “unsatisfactory” in either category

|                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Quizzes              | 40% of total grade |
| Reflection questions | 60% of total grade |

| COMPONENT                   | Unsatisfactory                                                                                                                                                               | Basic                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Proficient                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Distinguished                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Quizzes</b>              | (16 points)<br><u>Quizzes:</u><br>0 - 40% correct                                                                                                                            | (24 points)<br><u>Quizzes:</u><br>60% correct                                                                                                                                                                    | (32 points)<br><u>Quizzes:</u><br>80% correct                                                                                                                                                                  | (40 points)<br><u>Quizzes:</u><br>100% correct                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Reflection questions</b> | (30 points)<br><u>Reflection questions:</u><br>-Participant includes no content from the course in his or her responses<br>-Participant does not address the questions posed | (40 points)<br><u>Reflection questions:</u><br>-Participant includes some content from the course, usually appropriate, in his or her responses<br>-Participant answers the questions directly, not always fully | (50 points)<br><u>Reflection questions:</u><br>-Participant includes appropriate content from the course in his or her responses<br>-Participant makes thoughtful comments in direct response to the questions | (60 points)<br><u>Reflection questions:</u><br>-Participant provides rich detail from the content of the course in his or her responses<br>-Participant makes his or her responses to the questions personally meaningful |