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Assessment of Teaching: Purposes, Practices,
and Implications for the Profession

Buros-Nebraska Series on Measurement and
Testing

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Preface

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Preface

The Buros-Nebraska annual Symposia on Measurement and Testing are aimed at providing a forum for discussing important issues in the field of measurement and testing. The topic for the 1987 Symposium was “Assessment of Teaching: Purposes, Practices, and Implications for the Profession.” This topic was selected because of the current interest in developing, designing, and implementing accountability programs for teaching that are present in many states and education programs. The complex nature of teaching, combined with the unique measurement issues for assessing outcomes in the teaching context, provided the basis for identifying the topic of teacher assessment for the 1987 symposium.

As is the tradition for the Institute, after each annual symposium a volume is prepared that contains written versions of the presentations from the symposium as well as additional chapters, invited by the editors, to complement the collection of chapters representing the symposium presentations. During the editorial process, each chapter for the current volume has external review by one or two professionals in the field in order to provide comments and suggestions for improvement of the chapter. We are

very grateful to the dedicated efforts of the following persons who served as external reviewers for this volume: Peter Airasian, Jerrilyn Andrews, David Berliner, Carol Dwyer, Stephen Dunbar, Kim Hoogetveen, Ronald Joekel, Michael T. Kane, Steven Murray, Michael Rebell, Carol Robinson, Robert Stalcup, Charol Shakeshaft, Kenneth Strike, James Sweeney, Gary Sykes and Herbert Walberg. We also extend our gratitude to Jane Close Conoley, who as series editor provided the advice, oversight, and continuity necessary for an enterprise of this kind.

This volume provides a comprehensive look at the assessment of teaching, covering dimensions of assessment techniques, validity concerns, legal issues, application and implementation considerations, utility of assessment information, and views of the process of teacher assessment from the perspective of both an administrator and a teacher advocate. Therefore, this volume will focus on many related and vital facets of assessment of teaching.

The first chapter in the volume is authored by W. James Popham and is titled "Face Validity: Siren Song of Teacher-Testers." As the keynote speaker of the Buros-Nebraska Symposium on Measurement and Testing, Dr. Popham sets the stage for concern for validity in teacher assessment programs. The concerns raised by Dr. Popham are echoed by many authors in subsequent chapters in the volume.

Dr. Edward Haertel is the author of the second chapter, "Teacher Performance Assessments: A New Kind of Teacher Examination." As a member of the team involved in developing an instrument to credential teachers, Dr. Haertel is in a unique position to provide insights into the assessment methods for teaching. The methods identified give an overview for upcoming chapters in the volume on paper-and-pencil assessment instruments (Mehrens) and performance assessment techniques (Stiggins).

"Improving Teaching Through the Assessment Process" is the title of the next chapter authored by Dr. Donald Medley. Most practitioners agree that improvement of teaching should be the primary goal of teacher assessment programs. This chapter provides examples of teacher assessment programs that attempt to realize this critical goal for teacher assessment programs.

Dr. William Mehrens' chapter, "Assessing the Quality of Teacher Assessment Tests," provides an important continuation of the discussion on assessment methods identified by Dr. Haertel in Chapter 2. Focusing on paper-and-pencil assessment instruments, Dr. Mehrens addresses many critical psychometric issues related to the development and use of instruments for assessing teaching.

Highlighting the need for test validity, and focusing particularly on content validity, Dr. Mehrens provides an important contribution to teacher assessment evaluation.

The complex interrelationships among organizational/situational variables as they impact the teaching function are the focus of Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond's chapter, "Teacher Evaluation in the Organizational Context." The ecological validity of teacher assessment is portrayed as a critical requirement for such assessment. This chapter provides useful information for development and application of teacher assessment programs.

Dr. Richard Stiggins is the author of the next chapter, which focuses on another method of teacher assessment, "Measuring Performance in Teacher Assessment." Identifying this method as central to valid inferences about teacher performance, Dr. Stiggins lays out critical features to be considered in the development of a teacher assessment procedure. Coupled with Dr. Mehrens' chapter on paper-and-pencil techniques for teacher assessment, Dr. Stiggins' chapter provides important information for the application of performance assessment techniques to teacher assessment. Together, Dr. Mehrens' and Dr. Stiggins' chapters serve as useful applied examples of some of the assessment methods identified by Dr. Haertel in his chapter on teacher assessment methods.

"Legal and Professional Issues in Teacher Certification Testing: A Psychometric Snark Hunt" is the title of Dr. George Madaus' chapter. Dr. Madaus presents an interesting and important perspective on both legal and political implications for teacher assessment programs. Anyone seriously considering designing, implementing, or interpreting teacher assessment programs should carefully review Dr. Madaus' chapter.

Some teacher assessment program advocates suggest that useful information concerning teacher performance is shown through the performance of students on objective tests. Dr. Ronald Berk addresses this approach for merit pay decisions for teachers in Chapter 8 titled "Limitations of Using Achievement Data for Career Ladder Promotions and Merit Pay Decisions." Dr. Berk's chapter has important linkages to Dr. Darling-Hammond's chapter on organization variables influencing teacher performance and Dr. Madaus' chapter on legally defensible measures for assessing teacher performance.

The next two chapters in this volume are authored by practitioners directly impacted by teacher assessment programs. Chapter 9, "Teaching Assessment: The Administrator's Perspective" by Dr. John Hoyle addresses teacher assessment from an admin-

istrator's perspective. "Appraisal: The Teacher's Perspective" by Peg Shafer follows. Together, these chapters bring reality considerations to the broad goals and methods discussed in earlier chapters.

The final chapter is "The Assessment of Teacher Assessment: Concluding Thoughts and Some Lingerin Questions" by Dr. James V. Mitchell, one of the coeditors of this volume in the Buros-Nebraska Symposium on Measurement and Testing series. The goal of his chapter is to provide synthesis of the earlier chapters, evaluating them on their approach to the topic, raising concerns as the topics are discussed, and then identifying a set of concerns that need to be addressed as the field of measurement moves more directly into the assessment of the teaching process.

The goal of this volume was to address the assessment of teaching from a variety of viewpoints relevant to measurement and testing. Through discussions of techniques, an evaluation of the utility of these techniques, an identification of contextual variables and concerns that impede direct linkages between teaching and student performance outcomes, and critical legal and political implications of teacher assessment, this volume provides the foundation for directed efforts toward improving the knowledge base for teacher assessment programs. It is clear that the cry for accountability in teacher performance is growing louder. This volume will hopefully serve as a tool for researchers, policy makers, and practitioners involved in developing, implementing, and evaluating the utility of teacher assessment programs.

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