

VIRTUAL SEMINAR

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Redefining Assessment Literacy for Digital Impact in the Arts

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[Brackets indicate moments in which the transcriber was unsure of the words used.]

Kelly:

Great, well, thank you everybody! I think this is our title slide and, as you can see, Jared and I are going to be talking about “Redefining Assessment Literacy for Digital Impact in the Arts” today.

So, just wanted to say very quickly: thank you to the committee - Robin, Tim, Marsha - for giving us this opportunity today and also Jeff for supporting us in delivering our talk and also wanted to thank ahead of us, Susanne and Rachel. It's wonderful to be presenting with you both here today. I'm not sure if we're able to advance our next slide, but yes thank you.

I'm Kelly Parks. Obviously, I'm in the U.S. but from Australia originally and happy to be presenting this morning with Jared.

Jared:

Thank you! Before we begin, both Kelly and I have done a few papers together on assessment with music teacher education specifically, and this opportunity to present a little bit about redefining assessment literacy for digital impact in the arts really excites us and so, one thing that was not mentioned in my bio which I have newly in this world, I'm doing learning outcomes assessment for our College of Fine Arts at the University of Utah.

The goal of this presentation is to redefine our field's conceptualization of assessment literacy while honoring some of the undergirding theoretical constructs of assessment literacy to benefit arts, specifically music as our field, student learning and musical instruction.

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Kelly:

So, although we're speaking from a music context, these critical questions transcend discipline now that we are all teaching online, during a global pandemic. And so for us, we're all I think feeling that connections must come before content. So we have some questions:

- What happens when there are no dimensions or assessment blueprint?
- And what happens when terminology expectations are not met in the current contexts?
- What happens when a student or teacher cannot finish the grading or the marking during a global pandemic?

So we're looking for what are some answers today? We believe that increasing an arts educator's assessment literacy is a strategy to address these and other problems if assessment is considered part of pedagogy. When assessment-literate arts educators make educational decisions based on authentic assessment-elicited evidence, the subsequent instructional decisions will be more likely to impact students' learning. The potential for evidence collection is now, perhaps, markedly higher due to the fact that we're teaching online, we're sharing artifacts online, we're storing artifacts, we're record interactions online - similar to the ways we're doing this presentation this morning - and as we teach and communicate online perhaps that allows us to see ourselves in ways we have not been able to before.

Jared:

So, in addition to the questions that Dr. Parks just posed we'd like to pose some additional questions which also frame our presentation today and the first is understanding or trying to uncover what assessment literacy is. In future slides, you will just see it shortened to AL - the letters AL - and we're conceptualizing this idea as fundamental concepts or skills likely to have an impact on educational decisions in the arts classrooms.

The second and third questions that we are posing is why are arts educators not already assessment literate and why should they become assessment literate. An assessment literate arts educator — wow, that's a tongue twister — doesn't need to be able to necessarily compute a test reliability coefficient. However, they need to be able to understand and comprehend what constitutes a test reliability and how different reliability coefficients can represent a test measurement... consistency in several ways. So, basic understanding is therefore the foundation of assessment literacy and not necessarily someone's technical mastery of measurement procedures.

And the fourth question is this idea to what extent can an arts educator become assessment literate within a virtual learning environment and this idea comes from

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understanding the concepts and procedures of assessment including understanding broad ideas like validity or test bias and also arts teachers can be assembling strategies for assessing within a virtual learning environment, including building knowledge or skills which represent a music teacher or an arts teacher's assessment competency or understanding how an arts teacher may learn more about assessment within — maybe when you talk about virtual learning environment, but understanding how that context and how our individual context matters is to how we learn.

Kelly:

So, if we take the first question: what is assessment literacy or AL? And for us, assessment literacy is a term that is used within the teacher education discourse, however it is not often defined within the music teacher education community and certainly less so in the other arts. For the purposes of our session, we're adopting Stiggins' definition of assessment literacy which is 25 years older now and that's the ability to know the difference between sound and unsound assessments. No pun intended. But that also speaks to how one chooses to use the assessment processes.

Campbell reports teacher competency in classroom assessment is for the most part limited and this can be seen across many areas such as grading practices, assessment coursework within their teacher preparation, teacher beliefs about assessment knowledge and skills, and assessment standards. So, Campbell suggests that assessment can be seen as learning and this should be of importance to music teacher educators and perhaps to all other arts teacher educators as to how we prepare future teachers.

Since we all might be feeling like new teachers at the moment learning to teach online we're asking how can we prepare ourselves to use assessment as learning. So, perhaps here you could make a note to yourself how can we take advantage of teaching to use assessment as learning?

Jared:

So, our next question which frames our presentation of why are arts educators not already assessment literate and let's consider perhaps one reason within one specific art form and that's music and explore how this may be transferred. So, in a previous publication with my colleague Dr. Parks we reported that, specifically in music, that music teacher educators have limited exposure to undergraduate and graduate coursework and music practices, specifically in the United States. At the 2019 International Assessment Symposium on Assessment in Music Education, the opening keynote address called for a deepened commitment to assessment content knowledge and assessment pedagogical knowledge with a view toward or furthering

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shared expertise and improving assessment literacy in the profession. So, perhaps we can't see that music teacher educators are significantly educated about assessment and I want to make a note about this graphic too that is just capturing our front page of our article that appears in contributions to Music Education Journal.

Kelly:

And so to continue with that question, just earlier this year we also reported that there's not really clear evidence about how teacher educators in music, that is, you know, those who are teaching aspiring music teachers, view their own assessment pedagogy. So, in a second study we explored their descriptions of their assessment pedagogy — that is how they teach about assessment with a secondary aim to see if we could develop some kind of model of pedagogical assessment knowledge. We analyzed individual assessment pedagogy shared with us over a series of 60-minute interviews — semi-structured interviews with teacher educators — and our findings suggest that these teacher educators have several pedagogical strategies to teach about assessments such as modeling and lesson planning and authentic projects that intersect. So, music teacher educator knowledge of assessment is somewhat but not uniformly codified around issues of validity, reliability, and grading, more so about their use of assessment to inform their teaching and their description of assessment as a process. So, their understanding of a set of all of the assessment components was quite mixed.

Jared:

Moving to our third question, I think we all probably would ask this question: is why should our future arts educators become assessment literate? We're going to make a friendly contextual reminder about the transferability of this example to other art forms that are on the call, but a broad statement about music teachers is that they don't know the difference between sound and unsound assessments, going back to this idea of Stiggin's definition of assessment literacy. Both Kelly and I have seen this as examples from our research with music teacher educators.

So one example in music education is this almost 100-year obsession with large ensemble adjudication events or contests or music festivals. So, this has been like I said a hundred year old conversation or controversy and I don't mean to say that we've been wasting our ink and scholarship, but we haven't improved the process, and so I wonder if music teachers were literate in assessment practice, we could potentially stop spinning our wheels over this issue and improve the experiences as educators music learning opportunities?

Another example is this issue of accountability assessments that have say, allegedly, determined music educator quality and these large-scale standardized achievement tests

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provide no meaningful evidence that they yield valid inferences regarding instructional quality and so we're we think it should improve instruction but it really hasn't.

Kelly:

So, we come to our final guiding question and we wonder to what extent can arts educators become assessment literate in the current context — in a virtual learning environment? We can predict that educators know we can be assessing outcomes program or course-based outcomes. Most online courses have some kind of assessment, obviously to measure the outcomes desired for the course, but in a pandemic access becomes the large concern. Perhaps modifying the goals and outcomes or the course assessment expectations is essential because we're in a situation that could be fatal, literally and figuratively, to our stakeholders and to our learners and to our teachers. So the goal might be, let's say, artistic process building — that might be performing, creating, responding, and connecting to music or all of the art forms — and in order for arts educators to become assessment literate, they need to ask themselves, perhaps, how can they take advantage of the online setting to see what our students know and can do, and of course recognizing that access is still an issue.

Jared:

So, some of the skills that we came up with together that are needed to assess within a virtual learning environment might, in fact, incentivize learning. So this list that you see in front of you is a list of music teacher assessment competencies such as a knowledge of grading and or marking, a knowledge of how to give specific feedback to music learners, knowledge of peer and self-assessment as the teacher doesn't always need to be the assessor in our classrooms, a knowledge of assessment and interpretation and communication, a knowledge of assessment ethics, principles of test administration and construction, formative assessment examples — especially in the diagnostic area where we live as art educators as well as guiding for student presentation and discuss responsibilities and guidance for pre-service music teachers incorporating assessment literacy in potentially micro-teaching organizations or practice during their coursework prior to in field work.

Kelly:

So, we believe that we're actually at the nexus of professional development in assessment and in the virtual learning environment by virtue of us all actually being here today. So, we're discussing assessment practice and that is probably the focus rather than the theoretical principles at this stage, but our work is undergirded by those principles moving into the virtual learning format.

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Jared:

So, I'd like to share an example of how the act of designing and implementing assessment within an undergraduate degree program is meaningful. So, this example includes a project from a third-year, sixth-semester study for a pre-service music teacher education program — music preparation program — that includes a 10-week unit to where pre-service music teachers have the opportunity to measure student learning through a mixture of direct instruction and application opportunities. So the pre-service music teachers do a pre-test so to speak to a sample of youth that they're teaching, they deliver an instructional intervention, they administer the post-test, and potentially re-teach again depending on the outcomes, and then re-post-test. So that's one of the examples of what happens in the University of Utah in our program. And also another example is perhaps a self-directed learning opportunity to investigate more assessment through a potential book review project and that this professional development opportunity could be intended for both pre-service music teachers as well as in-service music teachers where they share what they have learned and why this information would be useful to their peers and that's the goal of the assignment.

Kelly:

So, I think Jared's examples help us understand what we can do for preparing teachers as they're learning to become teachers and how that can collaborate with current teachers who are currently teaching, but what we're seeing is that teachers may not be getting professional development in assessment, and certainly not at the moment. Mostly they're getting professional development in technology — how to teach online. So, we're quite grateful for us to be able to present today and talk about this as a meta-type of professional development and sort of happy to share this work with our peers as part of this conference.

Jared:

So as Kelly and I, or Kelly mentioned before rather, we know that access is an issue that we have encountered during this time and the mode of the modality of teaching needs to come first in considering what can be done because we must keep the context of the global pandemic in mind and the context of learning online. In K-12 schools, access of children to online settings is disparately proportioned as well as in higher education. As an example, I want to share with you how I've used the sudden shift to virtual learning as an opportunity to increase pre-service music teachers autonomy in a learning environment. And instead of insisting on, perhaps, a interactive video conferencing system like Zoom, I designed a few asynchronous modules focusing on efficacy testing, specifically in a test construction project or/and assessing a performance assessment that the students previously designed in another course, teaching them — I believe Rachael talked about this idea of promoting critical thinking, critical inquiry

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about perhaps the appropriateness of assessment practice in certain contexts as well, as well as directing the students to social media and Facebook as an avenue for assistant literacy development. Plugging into the groups of teachers who are in practice, creating different ideas and assessment practice and tools to be used, and connecting to that continuation beyond COVID.

Kelly:

So, we have some concluding thoughts: the goal of the presentation today was to try to redefine our fields conception of assessment literacy while still honoring some of those undergirding theoretical constructs in essence to try to benefit the arts and, from our perspective music, student learning and musical instruction. So, we hope that by highlighting access and perhaps curating a sense of curiosity we might be able to see the affordances that technology might hold for us in terms of assessment.

Despite some difficulties in delivering instruction, using assessment as a process, as teaching, as educative, perhaps can help us use everything as evidence... artifacts — recorded lessons, captured discussions in real time, transcripts in zoom — teachers can review all these data with a view to authentic assessment as teaching and that can be actioned perhaps in the current context. In music, artistic processes along with teaching strategies can be captured, similarly perhaps in all artistic processes — creating, refining, presenting pieces of art — but also, we can review our teaching. By being in the virtual environment we are constantly reviewing to see what works and we're constantly assessing, adjusting, teaching again, reflecting, adjusting and teaching again! We really are relying on the visual to assume competence and we can take advantage perhaps of these virtual worlds. We're teaching both in K-12 and in higher education so sometimes accesses and communication are different obviously taking the developmental needs of learners into account.

Jared:

So, higher education students, I think we assume they have computers — we're making that broad assumption that they would have a computer to be working on and that their communication skills with online formats — but with K-12, their access varies widely and communication such as perhaps jokes or making connections is much harder to do with younger students as well. So, the relational side, we don't want to just dismiss that as far as teaching and it needs to be relearned in this digital idea or this virtual learning environment as we focus on assessment as learning. So, we rely on these relational connections for assessment and instruction and delivery via an online or virtual pathway, perhaps, provides a new opportunity to do this. And so, in summary, we hope that these ideas have given some some

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imagination or some creativity with some new ideas about positive ways forward and critical questions that perhaps need to be asked.

So, on behalf of my colleague Dr. Parks, we want to thank you so much!