



LAW AND JUSTICE
Foundations in Law · Foundations in Criminal Justice

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TEACHER TOOLKIT: ASSESSMENT

Performance assessment is an integral component of the Law and Justice curriculum. Research has shown that students who participate actively in their own learning by constructing understanding around central, meaningful tasks demonstrate improved learning and greater levels of engagement.¹ Designed using the problem-based learning (PBL) approach, each unit in the Law and Justice curriculum is built around an authentic task designed to build core skills in preparation for careers in law and law enforcement. Unit projects engage students in real-world tasks developed in conjunction with industry professionals, such as preparing for a trial, investigating a murder, creating advocacy materials for the general public, or engaging in plea bargaining. Performance assessments provide the teacher with a range of opportunities to observe students' skill development over time and in a variety of contexts.

Unit activities such as class discussions, journal assignments, and team strategy sessions are examples of good *formative assessment* opportunities. These allow the teacher to collect and observe student work in order to assess a student's knowledge and skills, diagnose strengths and challenges, provide feedback, and adapt instruction. *Summative assessment* opportunities are also embedded in the curriculum, including unit exams, which may be administered in sections throughout the unit or as a final assessment after completion of the unit project. The unit exams elicit understanding through a variety of question types, including short-answer and essay, and require students to solve problems and synthesize information from the course. Unit projects also serve as summative assessments. Formative and summative assessment opportunities are highlighted at the beginning of each unit for easy reference.

Assessment checklists have been provided for teachers to use and adapt when planning and assessing student work. The assessment checklist provides indicators of proficiency in skills and understanding as well as a column in which teachers can weight different components according to the needs of their students. These indicators may be used to help the teacher develop classroom rubrics, either alone or in collaboration with students. The flexibility of the checklist provides guidance while allowing teachers to adapt unit assessments to their own school context.

The Law and Justice curriculum uses the Career Portfolio as a means of assessing student growth in a core group of career skills. The portfolio represents a purposeful collection of student work demonstrating students' skill development, progress, and achievements. A portion of each unit has been allotted for students to collect and reflect on their work and progress throughout the course. While we have suggested the incorporation of summative and skill assessments in the portfolio, teachers may choose to use it for formative assessment purposes and ask students to reflect on their skill development and content understanding throughout the course.

¹ "Performance Assessment." Education Consumer Guide. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Research. Number 2. September 1993. <http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/OR/ConsumerGuides/perfasse.html>

The use of performance assessment in the Law and Justice curriculum is in keeping with the philosophy that the most effective assessments happen over time, in different ways, and in different contexts, allowing teachers to support student learning wherever and whenever that support is most needed.

Note: This document is currently in development and will be modified to include specific instructional strategies and tool for classroom use.