

What makes great assessment?

A panel discussion hosted by the creators of Assessment Academy and the Chartered College of Teaching

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Acknowledgements

We are indebted to the following people and organisations for their time, support and participation, without which this event would have been simply impossible to arrange:



Also, huge thanks are due to Argyle Primary School for hosting the forum, and to every single one of you who came along on the day. Equally, by reading this booklet, watching the video and joining the ongoing discussion on Twitter, you are also a key part of this event - thank you!



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Foreword

Putting together the ‘What makes great assessment?’ forum has been an exciting and uplifting endeavour. The response from teachers wanting to attend the event at Argyle Primary School on 9th May 2017 was astonishing; the support from the Chartered College of Teaching was beyond my wildest dreams; the work of the team at Evidence Based Education has been truly inspiring.

All of the WMGA panellists have written answers to the questions posed to them at the live event; you will find them in them following pages. While by no means the definitive work on assessment, I think you will find some strong common themes around which all teachers can unite, and discussions that can be taken into staff rooms, SLT groups and governors’ meetings. Indeed, this is my challenge to you: take WMGA as a starting point to begin a conversation in your school about great assessment.

The interest in WMGA is testament to the profession’s thirst for knowledge and desire to engage in such an important topic. Reading this booklet is evidence of your own interest in an area of education which is in urgent need of review and revitalisation; the responsibility to act further – and continue to act – now falls on all our shoulders. Now is the time.

I wish to thank the six WMGA panellists for giving their time and expertise. I also thank those who have worked behind the scenes to make WMGA possible: Katie Crabb and the team at the Chartered College of Teaching; Jamie Scott, Jack Deverson and the rest of the team at Evidence Based Education; all at Argyle Primary School. Now is the time. Let’s do this.

Stuart Kime
Durham, May 2017



The interest in WMGA is testament to the profession's thirst for knowledge ... The responsibility to act further now falls on all our shoulders.

Meet the Panel

Daisy Christodoulou

Head of Assessment, ARK Schools



In July 2017, Daisy Christodoulou will take up a new post as the Director of Education at No More Marking, the online comparative judgement engine, where she will work closely with primary schools on developing new methods of assessing writing. Currently, she is Head of Assessment at Ark Schools, a network of 35 academy schools, where she works on assessment reform, replacements for national curriculum levels and curriculum reform in secondary English. She has taught English in two London comprehensives and has been part of government commissions on the future of teacher training and assessment. Daisy is the author of *Seven Myths about Education* and *Making Good Progress? The future of Assessment for Learning*, as well as the influential blog <https://thewingtoheaven.wordpress.com>

You can also find her on Twitter @daisychristo

Professor Rob Coe

Director, Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring



Rob Coe is Professor of Education and Director of the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) at Durham University. He is researcher in educational assessment, evaluation and evidence-based practice, and a former secondary maths teacher. As Director of CEM - the largest educational research centre in a UK university - Rob leads a team of over 100 staff, providing innovative assessment and monitoring systems to many thousands of schools across 70 countries.

Rob has contributed to the writing of some key publications that connect evidence and educational practice. He is a co-author of the Sutton Trust / Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching and Learning Toolkit and the EEF's DIY Evaluation Guide for teachers. He is lead author of the Sutton Trust report *What Makes Great Teaching?* and co-author of the Teacher Development Trust's *Developing Great Teaching* report. He is a member of advisory groups for a wide range of educational organisations.



Sarah Lee

Headteacher, Tarporley High School

Sarah is the headteacher of Tarporley High School and Sixth Form College in West Cheshire.

She leads a large Teaching School Alliance and is a National Leader in Education, involved in supporting in a range of schools across Cheshire and beyond. She began teaching in higher education in Cambridge and Bristol, but soon found her passion, 30 years ago, working in Secondary Education as an English teacher. However, she was attracted by the challenge of senior leadership, and returned to Cheshire, the county of her birth, where she has been a senior leader for 20 years and a headteacher for 15 years. She is passionate about the power of collaboration; something she first experienced in teachers' centres in Bristol where English teachers met together in the twilight hours and became excited by the ideas they shared. She is an active contributor to a range of networks and associations, and continues to be inspired by students, colleagues and Tarporley's many partners.

Tim Oates

Group Director, Cambridge Assessment

Tim Oates is Group Director of Assessment Research and Development at Cambridge Assessment, focusing on national and international research on assessment and measurement. More recently, he has undertaken wide-ranging international comparison of the performance of education systems, and advised OECD on its curriculum review work. In 2010 he published *Could do better* which laid down the principles for the review of the National Curriculum in England. From 2010-2013, he was chair of the Expert Panel for Review of the National Curriculum.



He has published widely on assessment and curriculum. He was a member of Ofqual's Standards Advisory Group from 2010-16; he recently has moved from this group to the Ofqual Vocational Standards Advisory Group. Tim routinely provides briefings and advice to UK and other governments. He is a visiting professor at the University of Leeds and a Fellow of Churchill College Cambridge. In 2015 he was awarded a CBE for services to education.

Professor Dame Alison Peacock

Chief Executive, Chartered College of Teaching

Alison Peacock DBE, DL, DLitt is Chief Executive of the Chartered College of Teaching. The Chartered College opened membership in January 2017 and aims to provide a professional body 'by teachers, for teachers'.

Until December 2016, Alison was Headteacher of The Wroxham School and Educational Research Centre, in Hertfordshire. She led the school out of special measures less than a year after her appointment as Headteacher (Jan 2003) and it was subsequently judged by Ofsted to be outstanding (2006, 2009, 2013). Alison's teaching career spans primary, secondary and advisory roles. She is a trustee of Teach First and a member of the Royal Society Education Committee and a trustee of the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors.



David Weston

Chief Executive, Teacher Development Trust

David is the founder and Chief Executive of the Teacher Development Trust, the national charity for effective professional development. He Chaired the Department for Education's Teachers' Professional Development Expert Group and helped to set up the new Chartered College of Teaching. David is a secondary school governor and taught maths and physics for nine years in two schools in London and the South East.

He has written extensively in the TES, Guardian, SecEd and a number of other education journals and newspapers and speaks frequently on teacher development. He has had a number of radio and TV appearances speaking about teaching, teacher development and LGBT issues. David works closely with stakeholders across the sector including government ministers and policy-makers. He is also an advocate for LGBT teachers and is the founder of OutTeacher.org. He can be found on Twitter @informed_edu.

Chair: Dr Stuart Kime

Director of Education, Evidence Based Education

Stuart Kime is Director of Education at Evidence Based Education, a consultancy company with a mission to empower and support schools in their use of research evidence and evaluation techniques for the purpose of school improvement.

Stuart is a qualified teacher and former school leader, researcher and policy advisor. He undertook doctoral research work on evaluating teaching quality with Prof. Rob Coe and Prof. Steve Higgins at Durham University, for which he won the Prize for Outstanding Postgraduate Studies.

Creating meaningful connections between research, policy and practice is at the core of Stuart's work both as a researcher and consultant. In this latter capacity, he and his team advise scores of schools annually on appropriate interpretation and uses of ability and progress data, focusing particularly on the primary and secondary systems developed at the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM). As one of the co-authors of the Education Endowment Foundation's DIY Evaluation Guide and Assessing and Monitoring Pupil Progress Guide, Stuart and his team continue to work with the EEF on a number of projects. He is also a former Policy Fellow at the Department for Education, and is on Twitter at @stuartkime.



Question 1

**What makes great
assessment?**



Alison Peacock

As a profession, we need to seize hold of assessment and make it work for us. There are three key pillars of education: pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. For too long, we have allowed the third of these to act as dispassionate judge of our teaching instead of building our expertise as assessors and confidently engaging with assessment as a means to inform everything we do. Great assessment enables both children and teachers to understand what has been learnt and identifies specific areas where misconceptions have occurred or where more practice is needed. Assessment that is used formatively, actively informs pedagogy.

Assessment, whether summative or formative, used as a tool to inform ongoing learning, is rigorous and supportive. The process of assessment should not be seen by the child or her teacher, as the end point, but as the beginning of future achievement.

My work in the field of Learning without Limits focuses on the importance of enabling each child to surprise us with their achievements, as opposed to seeking fixed definable judgements of 'ability'. This approach described in detail in *Assessment for Learning without Limits* (2016) has led to a pedagogic approach in many schools where children are encouraged to act on self-assessment by making choices about the pitch of tasks that they complete independently. As soon as there is sufficient challenge within the classroom, children who may otherwise have been held back are able to compete with themselves and others, to constantly improve. This means that the curriculum must be sufficiently open-ended to enable the highest attainers to always have the opportunity to stretch their imagination and learning capacity.

” **As a profession,
we need to make it
[assessment] work
for us.**

Tim Oates

Great assessment' is accurate. It measures things with fidelity, and by doing this, provides valuable information. It can be depended upon, whether it is high-stakes summative assessment in programmes such as medical training or in general education, or whether it is putatively 'low-stakes' formative assessment designed to directly support learning. The question in the classroom which probes a child's understanding and where the answers help the teacher's insights into the way in which a child's understanding is building can be as important to the educational life of a child as the grade he or she obtains in a high stakes examination.

Accuracy is at the heart of good assessment. Some analysis explains 'accuracy' in terms of 'validity' - at it simplest, whether an assessment measures what it is intended to measure. If this is a fundamental quality, alongside it, an assessment must be fit for purpose: immune to maladministration, manageable, affordable, with timely and useful results. Of course, these qualities are easy to state in principle, and difficult to deliver in practice - these features can be in tension: high accuracy can mean high cost; dependable assessments can mean high levels of bureaucracy. These real-world tensions mean that fine tuning, using the idea of 'fitness for purpose' is at that heart of practice in designing, administering, and evaluating 'great assessment'.

Daisy Christodoulou

Clarity of purpose is vital for great assessment. There are dozens of reasons why you might assess pupils, and the ideal type of assessment is different depending on the purpose. If you are assessing to find out what a pupil's predicted grade might be, that's very different from assessing to find out how you should adapt your next lesson given your pupils' strengths and weaknesses. An assessment that is perfect for working out a predicted grade might be terrible at identifying strengths and weaknesses. So until you are clear about exactly what your different purposes are, you won't be able to use the right assessments.

Sarah Lee

As an alternative name for formative assessment, I like Dylan Wiliam's term 'responsive teaching', which Daisy Christodoulou quotes more than once in her book. Great assessment is great responsive teaching. Assessment is inextricable from teaching, and the quality of one is dependent on the quality of the other. Assessment is primarily a process whereby a teacher and a student find out what the student knows, and can do, and how they can take their next steps in learning. For me, as a school-based practitioner, the formative function of assessment is primary.

Great assessment needs to be fit for purpose. To achieve this, we need to be explicit about purpose. The debate about the extent to which an assessment can at the same time serve formative and summative purposes has been ongoing for a long time in schools, especially with the emphasis on tracking information by Ofsted. Whereas it may be possible to combine the two functions, I think there have been far too many examples of school assessment systems that compromise both by trying to make routine assessments serve too many different functions.

Great assessment needs to be focused on what teachers want to know; it must be timely and well communicated. There are key principles, underpinned by evidence, that are essential to great formative assessment. The development of a shared understanding of the evidence for what makes great assessment needs to be central to teachers' continuous professional learning. Above all, we need to have school assessment systems that support great teaching, so school leaders need to create and protect space within their CPD programmes, where teachers and leaders can develop and regularly revisit assessment policy and practice.

Rob Coe

Assessment is one of those things that you think you know what it is until you start to really think hard about it. Then the problem of trying to delineate exactly what it is and what it isn't seems rather more complex than at first sight. Part of the problem is that assessment covers such a wide range of things: some assessment is really part of pedagogy: simply good teaching; some assessment is about measurement: operationalising a trait or attribute; some is about evaluation, stretching into accountability and inseparable from the consequences that attach to outcomes.

One common principle that links a lot of these aspects is that assessment should contain information. It seems obvious enough, but a (perhaps surprising) corollary is that an assessment that cannot surprise you is not an assessment. Assessment should tell you something new: often enough for it to be valuable, but not so often that it undermines your judgement. Assessment should inform judgement, not replace it; but equally, a single judgement is not an assessment. Hence an impressionistic 'best fit' level (whether in the old money of 4b, 7a, etc, or the new of 'working towards', 'working at', 'greater depth') is not really an assessment either, or certainly not a very good one. A simple rule of thumb for how much information is in an assessment is how many independent bits of information make it up. For example, a twenty-question test contains twenty bits of information. A single, holistic judgement contains one, unless it can be disaggregated into independent component parts.

Another way in which an assessment can fail to contain information is if it is pre-constrained by what is desirable or acceptable. One example is when teachers are asked to fill tracking systems with a termly number or category that indicates each learner's progress. Such data tend to show improbable over-regularity: a genuine assessment process would show less consistent patterns, purely as a result of chance or 'measurement error'. Further examples are found in the distributions of outcomes produced by 'assessment' processes such as the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (with a massive spike at 34, the score obtained by a child reaching the 'expected' level on all 17 early learning goals) or the phonics screening test (with a huge discontinuity at the 'expected standard', especially when the qualifying score was pre-announced). Great assessment is based on sound information, and does not show these kinds of anomalies.

David Weston

At first glance, great assessment and great curriculum are two sides of the same coin. You can't clearly work out how well pupils are learning unless you have an equally clear map of what you want them to learn. The learning map should be clear on how knowledge and skill is built up: weaving and reinforcing existing learning. Curriculum design involves identifying barriers to understanding and remembering, being clear on the most effective paths to overcome and circumvent these problems. Assessment is then the process of working out where pupils are on the map.

However, at second glance, it becomes clear that learning isn't linear, progress goes backwards as well as forwards and misconceptions can reassert themselves over time. Two similar questions or tasks on the same area may yield different responses – assessment is fuzzier than we'd often like. An assessment gives us a snapshot of where the pupils were in that moment but tell us much less about where they'll be tomorrow, next week or next year. More recent studies also show us that the very act of assessing changes learning – recall of information (whether correct or incorrect) strengthens the associated memory.

So great assessment must be incredibly carefully designed. It needs to elicit information that can prompt helpful reflection by the pupil. It needs to reveal enough to the teacher to allow her to give useful feedback. It needs to relate to the curriculum 'map', strategically challenging pupils to recall and strengthen the right pieces of learning and understanding.

Stuart Kime

Great assessment is not a single thing. It is a collection of tools brought together in a toolkit, and used artfully by teachers. Great assessment is the servant of learning, not its master. It is purposeful, manageable, efficient and effective. Great assessment is lean and valuable. It is used thoughtfully to achieve specific aims, ones for which it is better suited than any other tool or strategy a teacher has at their disposal. Great assessment is one of the most powerful toolkits a teacher will ever have and, like any toolkit, it requires careful instruction and honed practice to use it wisely and skilfully.

Great assessment begins with a clearly-defined purpose: we must know what we want to measure and why in order to select the right tool to achieve our purpose. No matter what we want to measure – from self-efficacy to algebraic fluency to word decoding ability – we should make sure the tool we use to measure is capable actually of measuring the thing we want to measure: it should be valid for the defined purpose. Great assessment is also reliable – it allows dependable claims to be made because the tool performs consistently in the many circumstances we want to use it.

Question 2

What are the current and foreseeable assessment challenges and uncertainties facing educators?

Sarah Lee

Our challenges, as teachers and leaders in schools, are partly about how we respond to external and internal pressures that get in the way of great assessment, and partly about how we develop deeper, more accurate understanding and better approaches to assessment in the 'Life after Levels' era.

The current instability of national performance measures and national qualifications seems, to those of us who have been working in schools for several decades, to be more of the same. Our current reality is, therefore, a high-stakes accountability system, and what feels like non-stop major change to national qualifications and performance measures. We have seen coursework, controlled assessments, national curriculum tests, 'contextualised value-added' (CVA), grades, levels, sub-levels and so much more, come and go, sometimes with surprising suddenness. I see no reason to foresee a period of stability; I rather expect to see more changes of direction, with their associated challenges to teachers and leaders. If this sounds cynical, it is not meant to be. It is simply our reality, and one that can open up opportunities as well as bringing threats.

Life after levels has given us an opportunity to re-think assessment. It is disappointing, but perhaps not surprising to read in Daisy Christodoulou's book that the resulting systems, although they appear various, are mostly re-workings of previous practice. It feels in the secondary school phase as though there has been a rush to fill the post-levels vacuum with systems that are not based on a very rigorous revisiting of the principles of great assessment. Quite often teachers and leaders end up working very hard to service cumbersome systems and engage in checks to make sure they are in place, whilst losing sight of what they are supposed to achieve.

As a serving headteacher, I could easily go on at even greater length to describe and comment on the scale and number of our current challenges and uncertainties. Even if some of these do not directly involve assessment, they are often distractions from a whole-school systematic engagement with the deeper more rigorous piece of work on assessment that the writings of educationalists such as Daisy Christodoulou, Tim Oates and David Weston should prompt us to undertake.

Stuart Kime

The principal assessment challenges facing educators today are uncertainty itself and the risible dearth of support for practitioners. How can anyone hope to become skilled in the craft of great assessment when its role in education is so mercurial and politicised, and deep understanding of it so thin on the ground by virtue of such limited high-quality training and long-term support?

Assessment has become synonymous with marking, and marking has become a proxy for effective teaching. The potential power of classroom assessment has been diminished the more it has shape-shifted its way between being a learning tool and an accountability instrument. Without recalibrating our expectations of what these valuable tools can - and cannot do - we stand little chance of harnessing assessment's true power to enhance learning.

Daisy Christodoulou

At secondary, the new GCSE specs and new numbered grades are being used for the first time in exams this summer. And the implications of Progress 8 and new accountability measures are still being worked through as well.

At primary, it looks like there will be more reforms in the near future. In particular, there's uncertainty about the future of the interim frameworks and the secure fit model of assessment they represent.

More broadly, workload is a huge problem at both primary and secondary, and whilst not all of that is the fault of assessment, some of it certainly is. DfE workload diaries show that the amount of time primary teachers spent on assessment doubled from 5 hours a week to 10 hours from 2010 to 2013. The abolition of national curriculum levels was definitely the right thing to do, but unfortunately a lot of schools have filled the vacuum of levels with very burdensome marking policies in an attempt to prove to Ofsted that their pupils are making progress. So I think the biggest assessment challenge for schools is to design sustainable assessment policies that make the best use of teachers' time.

David Weston

Education management is often built on the idea of quality assurance through monitoring. This make a number of incorrect assumptions:

- that an assessment designed as a valid test of pupil learning can also act as an equally valid test of teacher effectiveness without compromising either use;
- that assessment results tell us precisely where the pupil is right now; and
- that progress will be linear and forward-moving from this 'precisely assessed point'.

While these assumptions are in place, teachers will inevitably feel that central monitoring systems are more of a help than a hindrance to their teaching. The dominant feeling about assessment will be about trying to prove progress and effectiveness rather than as diagnosing and stimulating learning.

The key question for the system, therefore, is whether we will be able to find a way of implementing quality assurance systems without them being a huge brake (or even a damaging impact) on making progress in the way that we use assessment in schools.

Rob Coe

It is hard to know where to start with this one, but I am going to focus briefly on the challenge of some big unanswered questions in assessment research. Assessment is an area where there is actually a lot of very good research, but despite this some big questions remain, especially in relation to practical implications. Among the many questions I would raise here are:

How can we make formative assessment work? Formative assessment appears to have a strong backing from research as enhancing learning, although perhaps not by as much as the routinely cited 'effect sizes between 0.4 and 0.7', according to a 2011 meta-analysis by Kingston and Nash : their estimate is 0.2. But it has been criticised (eg by Bennett, 2011) as ill-defined, conceptually incoherent and impossible to operationalise and implement. Even so, most of the things that are traditionally lumped together as 'Assessment for Learning' do have good research support. They also readily get support from teachers, who generally find them consistent with their beliefs about what is good practice. Despite this, and the massive efforts and spending by numerous governments and other agencies to promote it, there is no convincing evidence that Assessment for Learning has yet led to any detectable improvements.

How important is assessment literacy for teachers? Apparently convincing and plausible arguments support the need for teachers to have a good understanding of assessment, and it is often claimed that the gap is too large between widespread current knowledge and what is desirable . Some evidence does support the positive impact of training teachers in assessment literacy, though there is debate about what teachers actually need to know and, perhaps ironically, most assessments of assessment literacy do not seem to be very good measures anyway .

Alison Peacock

Although many colleagues in Early Years are confident about assessing children's learning across the full range of the curriculum, too often in Key Stage One and Key Stage Two confidence about teachers' own judgement and assessment erodes in favour of external test materials. It is as though the skills of detailed observation and planned learning that builds on the children's current knowledge are lost as the curriculum becomes more formal. Yet the skill of assessing what has been understood is fundamental to good planning. How can we know what to teach tomorrow if we do not know what has been understood today?

Assessment challenges in primary education include:

- Hyper-accountability induced by inspection and the fear this creates;
- Potential introduction of a baseline test in Foundation;
- Meeting the demands of national curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage Two where the 'expected' standard has been raised;
- Confusion between tracking and assessment. Schools that require teachers to provide so-called 'data-drops' every few weeks, risk putting energy in the wrong place;
- Further pressure from families if KS2 predicted results are linked to selective secondary school places;
- Difficulty of 'proving' progress within and between year groups;
- Assessment of children with SEND.

Additionally, there are concerns about the manner in which the teaching of English may be constrained and contorted to ensure that writing portfolios provide examples of every aspect of the interim teacher assessment framework.

Tim Oates

Many nations – not just England – have begun to 'up the stakes' around assessment – to use assessment as part of public accountability, and to try to 'steer' education through assessment. Under such pressures, assessment can begin to dominate the curriculum, and incentives to 'cheat' can become overwhelming – whether this is on the part of candidates or on the part of teachers being held to account. There comes a point where good assessment design and careful requirements around administration of the assessments can only do so much to support the dependability of assessment, and incentives and drivers around the assessment begin to distort both assessment and the curriculum. The 'Goldilocks Principle' is at the centre of good assessment: assessments should be challenging (to stimulate and support worthwhile learning) but not so challenging that they are unattainable through reasonable effort. Assessments should be valuable to the states which so frequently fund their development and administration but also seen as valuable by teachers and students. They should support equity and attainment in education but still discriminate accurately between those who have attained something and those who have not. The 'sweet spot' in optimising these different tensions is not easy to maintain, but must constantly be sought.

Question 3

What action can the profession take to address these challenges?



Daisy Christodoulou

There's a particular need for better assessment training and CPD. Back in 2014 the Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training identified assessment as one of the weakest areas of current ITT provision. Given that schools now have so much responsibility for system improvement, it is vital that teachers get access to high-quality assessment training. Assessment is also one area where collaboration with other schools is vital. Research shows that individual teachers are great at identifying how their pupils are doing relative to each other, but not nearly as good at identifying how they are doing relative to national standards. Schools and teachers need to collaborate in order to create shared and common languages of assessment. Some of this can be done in traditional ways, through meeting to plan shared assessments and mark schemes, but some of it could utilise innovative ways of establishing standards, such as comparative judgement.

David Weston

We need to do three key things.

Firstly, come up with effective appraisal and performance management systems which support rather than hinder effective use of assessment. Whole-school data systems need to focus more on analysing and revealing useful information for classroom practice than on producing management information with a level of apparent certainty which cannot possibly be supported by any research.

Secondly, put assessment and curriculum thinking at the heart of teachers' professional development.

 **There's a particular need for better assessment training and CPD.**

This marks a shift away from simply trying to transmit 'effective practice' from one teacher to another. Instead, it reflects research that shows that a different model of learning is needed once you gain some level of expertise. This model is more enquiry-oriented, requiring that teachers are constantly checking for evidence of their own impact on pupils.

Finally, re-establish the strong link between curriculum and assessment. The idea that we can produce generic and comparable measures of 'progress' irrespective of topic, context and class is a dangerous one. The central purposes of classroom assessment should be to give pupils and teachers enough information to elicit useful feedback, for teachers to adapt and evaluate their own approaches, and to stimulate recall and memory for pupils.

Rob Coe

One action the teaching profession could take would be to support a joined up research agenda to address questions like these. A research-engaged profession would want to find ways to address these kinds of applied research questions: setting a research agenda that includes such questions and bringing researchers and practitioners (and researcher-practitioners) together to conduct studies.

Related to this is the need to create and reinforce opportunities and mechanisms for plausibly effective professional learning. Persuading and enabling teachers to sign up for a programme of training that lasts more than half a day seems to be quite challenging, yet the best research suggests that this is far too little to be worthwhile. If we want teachers to learn about great assessment, we need an infrastructure for their learning.

In England at the moment, there are good reasons to be optimistic that this may happen. For example, researchED is a grass-roots, teacher-led, social media-connected organisation that has mobilised both teachers and researchers to talk about questions that matter to both. The Educational Endowment Foundation (EEF) has been funding high-quality, practically relevant research for five years now. As well as funding trials of interventions, EEF has produced reviews of existing evidence, evaluation tools and led the 'research schools' initiative. And of course the new Chartered College of Teaching promises to be a forum for engaging teachers in research, scholarship and professional learning.

Sarah Lee

To address these challenges requires confidence, which is easier to feel and to build in some schools than others, so brave and collaborative leadership is needed more than ever. We also need the best evidence on assessment, as well as the tools to enable us to apply it in schools. Most of all, we need great teachers and strong departments to focus rigorously on developing their practice. There is a risk of generalising too sweepingly, but it does seem that in secondary schools right now, there is a widespread sense of urgency about finding out how to teach and assess well in preparation for the linear GCSEs. New content and approaches required by the new specifications are also prompting reviews of the whole 11-18 curriculum. This re-thinking can create the conditions in which teachers and leaders ask fundamental questions and search more widely for evidence about what works. Where leaders are already confident, and identify the need to improve the way we do assessment, they are likely to find the capacity for schools and staff to undertake this work in a supportive climate, and also to find ways to evaluate and apply the available evidence.

I think that the teaching profession can, and is, doing much to address the current challenges and uncertainties around assessment. For example, our school was successful in obtaining Workload Challenge funding to look into the relationship between marking and learning in the wider context of assessment. This entails three schools' English Departments working on an enquiry into effective forms of feedback, and then sharing their findings nationally. There is much potential to drive and disseminate assessment reform. This is evident at grass-roots teacher level and at school leader level, as is apparent in the Research Schools and ResearchED movements, and also amongst some Teaching Schools and MATs. If we are to mobilise the whole teaching profession and respond to Daisy Christodoulou's longer-term challenge to make widespread systematic improvements to assessment, I do believe we need to raise even more national awareness. Events like this, and the involvement of influential bodies such as the Teacher Development Trust and the Chartered College of Teaching will help. I am not asking, on behalf of the profession, for a new system to be handed down to us from government. Experience makes me believe that a better, more informed approach to assessment is best developed by the profession, guided by what the evidence tells us, by thoughtful consensus about fundamental principles, and by passionate advocates at all levels.

Tim Oates

While work on 'crowd-sourced assessment' shows that good questions abound in education, there is still a need for highly technical quality assurance to select and refine those questions to enable tests and examinations to meet quality thresholds. Assessment agencies thus are not some institutional anachronism but offer a vital service – a service which should be delivered in conjunction with teachers and education institutions. Building trust and mutuality of interest in dependable assessment is essential – this is one means of ensuring that assessment is not seen as something wholly external to education to be gamed whenever possible. Rather, good education needs to be seen as the best route to assessment – and this then places assessment in its rightful place – as the servant, not the master, of curriculum aims. Technology will help with robust, unobtrusive and relatively inexpensive security around assessment, just as it will help with easier registration and test-taking. And finally there lurks the question of cost. High-quality assessment acts as a vital bridge between so many parts of the education system; reassuring parents of children's progress; reassuring the State that schools and colleges are pursuing desired goals; linking education and the labour market by providing assurance of skills and knowledge. Good assessment should be relatively inexpensive – for example, in England the cost of all GCSEs and A Levels comes in at just under 2pc of the total budget for secondary schools. It is thus not cheap, but it should always be worthwhile – and thus justify its cost. Efficiencies should always be chased, but not at the expense of compromising trust and quality.

Alison Peacock

There is a great deal that we can do by learning more about the process of assessment. Organisations such as the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) and the Assessment Academy provide professional learning for teachers that aims to build teacher expertise that can be shared amongst colleagues within clusters of schools. Additionally, the future Chartered Scholarship route of the Chartered College of Teaching will work with assessment organisations to offer modules of study about assessment.

Building teachers' skill in this crucial aspect of education will help us to spend less time judging and more time refining pedagogy. Initiatives such as the Beyond Levels conferences across the country over the last year illustrate the desire and need within our profession to collaborate and share assessment practice.

Although the recent report 'Primary Assessment' from the Education Committee (2017) recognises the problems caused by such intense scrutiny of test results at eleven, it is unlikely that any future government will remove the tests. If the tests are to remain it therefore falls to our profession to ensure that they do not dominate unhelpfully, but rather become tests worth teaching to. As a professional body for teachers the Chartered College of Teaching will undertake to provide an authoritative voice about assessment that will inform future governments. The Assessment Academy event held in London this May is the first of a series of professional learning opportunities that will be provided for members as a means of engaging our best minds in the process of turning a rigorous test based system from a limiting straitjacket, towards a generous assessment framework for improvement that supports high-quality inclusive pedagogy and curriculum design.

Stuart Kime

The seeds of change have already been planted, but they need watering. Teachers and school leaders must not wait for invitations to innovate, but should seize the opportunities presented by this interesting moment in our education system's history to educate themselves and each other in the principles of great assessment, and to reimagine assessment into the toolkit it could – and should – be.

On a pragmatic level, I make the following suggestions for anyone wanting to become more skilled in assessment. Firstly, read Daisy's book on assessment for learning. If you want to go further and become an Assessment Lead for your school, sign up for an Assessment Academy course. Finally, if you want to become an assessment expert, apply to do the amazing Masters in Assessment course at Durham University.

In schools, universities, unions, charities, member organisations and in government departments, there exists all of the assessment expertise needed to develop effective, efficient and meaningful assessment practices throughout the entire system. We now need to collaborate and galvanise around a common aim.

Our system needs assessment experts in every school to support colleagues to develop their skills over time, just as it needs SEND specialists, English specialists and behaviour experts. This is not an idealist's pipedream, but a possibility which, with humility and collaboration, is wholly achievable.

About the Organisers

Assessment Academy is a place where education professionals enhance their assessment knowledge, skills and confidence. We support schools in navigating the world of classroom assessment by providing high quality training and insight on assessment theory and practice, applicable to all subjects and schools. We believe that assessment is a tool that can be used more effectively and confidently to understand pupils and their learning progression.

It is an Evidence Based Education development, in partnership with Cambridge Assessment and Professor Rob Coe. Follow **@EvidenceInEdu** on Twitter, or head to **www.assessment.academy** to find out more about the residential, in-person and innovative online training it will offer educators.

The Chartered College of Teaching has been established following work by a number of organisations, including the Prince's Teaching Institute and the Claim Your College campaign, to look at how we could develop a recognised professional body for the teaching profession. It succeeds the College of Teachers, which was previously the body that held the Royal Charter for the teaching profession. A supplemental Charter to create the Chartered College of Teaching was approved by the Privy Council in June 2016. Visit **www.chartered.college** to find out more about their work, and also about further upcoming events they are hosting.

This event has been live streamed via Evidence Based Education's Twitter account, and a film will be produced in the weeks following the event and disseminated through both EBE and the Chartered College. Follow us for more.

On one final note, if you wish to cite this publication, please use the following reference:
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