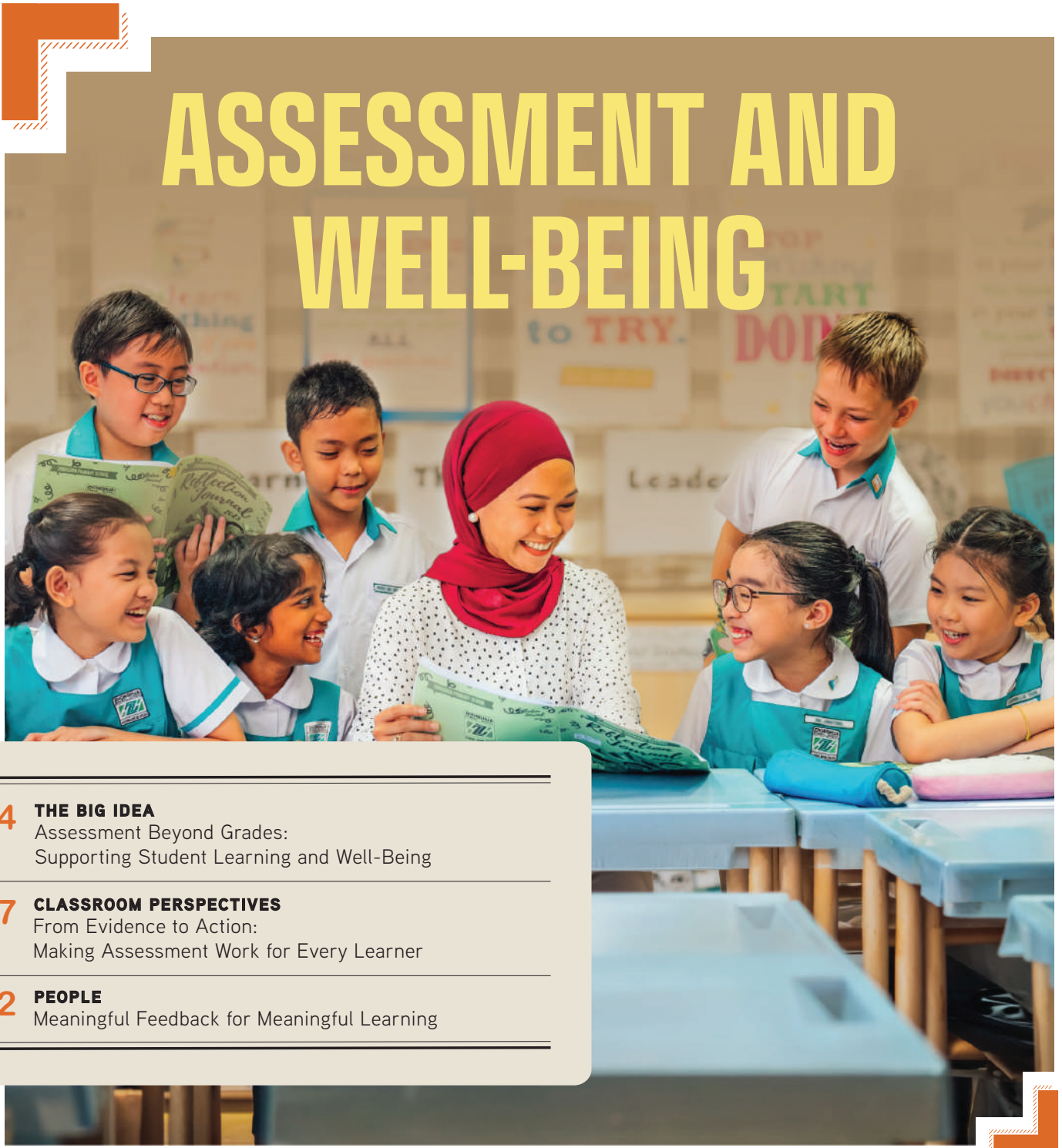


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ASSESSMENT AND WELL-BEING



-
- 04 THE BIG IDEA**
Assessment Beyond Grades:
Supporting Student Learning and Well-Being
-
- 07 CLASSROOM PERSPECTIVES**
From Evidence to Action:
Making Assessment Work for Every Learner
-
- 12 PEOPLE**
Meaningful Feedback for Meaningful Learning
-



Contents

- 03** **EDITORIAL**
Assessment for Learning,
Progress and Well-Being

- 04** **THE BIG IDEA**
Assessment Beyond Grades:
Supporting Student Learning
and Well-Being



- 07** **CLASSROOM PERSPECTIVES**
From Evidence to Action:
Making Assessment Work for
Every Learner
-

- 10** **RESEARCH IN ACTION**
The Hidden Barrier:
How Emotion Regulation Shape
Students' Feedback Reception
-

- 12** **PEOPLE**
Meaningful Feedback for
Meaningful Learning
-

- 14** **IN THEIR OWN WORDS**
Assessment Champions:
Voices from the Classroom



ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING, PROGRESS AND WELL-BEING

Assessment is an integral part of education, yet conversations about it often centre on grades, examinations and achievement. While these remain important, our understanding of assessment needs to evolve together with the educational landscape. When designed and used purposefully, it can shape learning behaviours, increase motivation and strengthen students' ownership of their learning.

In this issue of *SingTeach*, we explore the relationship between assessment and student well-being. Rather than viewing the two as competing priorities, we consider how thoughtful assessment practices can support well-being and students' growth.

This begins with looking beyond assessment as an endpoint. Assessment can be part of an ongoing learning process that helps teachers and students understand where learners are, where they need to go and what they can do next. Just as importantly, we need to consider how students experience assessment. Assessment is not emotionally neutral; it evokes emotions and these emotions influence how students engage with learning.

For educators, this means thinking carefully not only about **what** we assess, but also **why and how** we assess. Assessment evidence can inform our teaching, help us respond to different learner needs and create opportunities for students to take a more active role in their own learning. The classroom experiences shared in this issue also remind us that improving assessment does not always require a major redesign. Small but purposeful changes can make assessment a more meaningful part of learning.

These questions have become even more pressing with the rapid development of generative artificial intelligence (AI). Capabilities such as reasoning, adaptability, evaluative judgement, self-assessment and self-regulation are likely to become increasingly important. At the same time, teachers will need strong assessment literacy and professional judgement to determine when and how AI should be incorporated into assessment.

We need to continually explore questions surrounding the evolution of assessment, specifically its relationship with student well-being, the growing importance of assessment literacy and what the rise of AI might mean for assessment. Collectively, the perspectives in this issue invite us to see assessment not simply as a means of measuring educational outcomes, but as a powerful means of shaping learning, developing learners and preparing them for the future.

Dr Chue Kah Loong

Deputy Head, Psychology and Child &
Human Development Department
Co-Head, Centre of Assessment and Evaluation
National Institute of Education

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What's Yours?*

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ASSESSMENT BEYOND GRADES:

SUPPORTING STUDENT LEARNING AND WELL-BEING

Assessment is often reduced to scores and grades, but its impact runs deeper. Dr Chue Kah Loong, Deputy Head of the Psychology and Child & Human Development Department and Co-Head of the Centre of Assessment and Evaluation at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore explores how assessment shapes not only what students achieve, but also how they feel about learning and about themselves as learners. Drawing on the distinctions between assessment *of*, *for* and *as* learning, he unpacks why emotions and meaning matter just as much as outcomes, and how thoughtfully designed assessment can build students' sense of agency and ownership.

BALANCING THE DIFFERENT PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

What does an effective assessment system look like? While assessment has traditionally been associated with measuring what students have learned, our understanding of its role has broadened considerably.

Dr Chue Kah Loong, also Senior Lecturer with the Psychology and Child & Human Development Department at the National Institute of Education, identifies three related purposes of assessment: assessment *of* learning, assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning.

Assessment *of* learning focuses on determining what students have achieved, typically through familiar forms such as end-of-year examinations and written tests.

Assessment *for* learning, on the other hand, uses evidence of students' current understanding to inform what teachers and learners should do next.

Assessment *as* learning takes this a step further by making the assessment process itself an opportunity for learning. Through practices such as self-assessment and reflection, students learn to monitor and evaluate their own learning and take greater ownership of it.

Importantly, these purposes are not necessarily determined by the assessment task itself.

"The same assessment can serve different purposes depending on how the information is used," Kah Loong explains. "A test can provide a snapshot of a student's achievement at a particular point in time, or it can help teachers and students identify gaps and decide on appropriate next steps."

An effective assessment system, therefore, is not about choosing one purpose over another. Rather, it requires a balance between these different purposes and the thoughtful use of assessment to support both achievement and learning.

"Increasingly, assessment is seen not simply as an endpoint, but as a continuous process that provides information to help teachers and students make better decisions about teaching and learning," he says. Feedback, for example, can help students understand their performance and how to improve, while peer and self-assessment can strengthen self-regulation and student agency.

Assessment does more than support learning; how students experience assessment can also shape how they feel about learning, and about themselves as learners.

CONNECTING ASSESSMENT AND WELL-BEING

For Kah Loong, understanding the relationship between assessment and student well-being begins with two important aspects of well-being: *emotions* and *meaning*.

"Assessment is not emotionally neutral," he explains. "It can evoke a wide range of positive and negative emotions, and these emotions matter because they influence students' motivation and confidence."

When examinations are consistently framed as high-stakes events over which students have little control, for example, students may experience heightened anxiety, which may eventually lead some to disengage from learning.

This does not mean, however, that educators should seek to remove examinations or eliminate negative emotions.

Positive and negative emotions are both a natural part of learning. The aim, Kah Loong clarifies, is to create assessment experiences that help students understand and regulate their emotions.

"Assessments should be designed so that students see them as meaningful and worthwhile," he says. "When assessment enables students to envisage their progress, identify areas for improvement and see how their learning moves them towards valued goals, it can strengthen their sense of purpose and agency, even when the assessment itself is demanding."

MAKING LEARNING AND PROGRESS VISIBLE

One way assessment can support both learning and well-being is by making students' progress visible.

Receiving a score alone, even a good one, may tell students relatively little about their learning. A



distinction, for instance, does not necessarily tell a student what they did well, why they were successful or how they might reproduce that success in future.

Good assessment should therefore help students develop a clearer picture of where they currently are, where they need to go and what they can do to get there.

“Clear criteria, meaningful feedback and evidence of progress over time enable students to develop a clear picture of their own learning,” Kah Loong says.

This can also change how students experience assessment. Instead of seeing it simply as a judgement of their ability, they can begin to see assessment as information they can act upon.

“When students can see the connection between their actions and their progress, they may develop a greater sense of autonomy and ownership over their learning,” he adds.

This, in turn, can strengthen motivation and confidence.

Assessment can therefore contribute to well-being not by removing challenge, but by helping students see *progress*, *purpose* and *possibility*. Rather than positioning students only as recipients of grades and feedback, assessment can help them develop the capacity to monitor and evaluate their own learning, identify gaps and decide what to do next.

WHAT IS WORTH ASSESSING IN THE AGE OF AI?

These capabilities are becoming even more important with the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI).

AI can now generate questions, rubrics and feedback almost instantly. Yet Kah Loong emphasizes that teachers’ professional judgement remains essential in determining whether AI-generated assessment materials are appropriate and of sufficient quality.

This makes assessment literacy increasingly important. “Teachers need the knowledge and skills to make sound decisions about assessment, design appropriate assessments and communicate assessment information effectively,” he remarks. “They also need to be mindful of the consequences that different assessment practices can have for students and their learning.”

At the same time, students now have access to many of the same AI technologies. This raises a more fundamental question for educators: *What is worth assessing in an AI-enabled world?*

“If AI can produce a competent essay or solve a routine problem within seconds, assessments that focus primarily on the final product may no longer provide sufficient evidence of what students know and can do,” he notes.

Looking five to 10 years ahead, he believes assessment may need to place greater emphasis on capabilities such as reasoning, adaptability and evaluative judgement.

Assessment may also have an increasingly important role in helping students learn how to manage their own learning. “As learning becomes more accessible, personalized and driven by students’ interests, we need to tap on assessment to develop student’s self-capabilities such as self-regulation, self-awareness and self-assessment. Assessment would need to help students to identify goals, diagnose gaps, and select strategies,” he says.

DEVELOPING LEARNERS FOR THE FUTURE

Ultimately, rethinking the relationship between assessment and well-being is not about making assessment easier or eliminating the discomfort that can accompany challenge. It is about considering what students take away from an assessment experience beyond a grade.

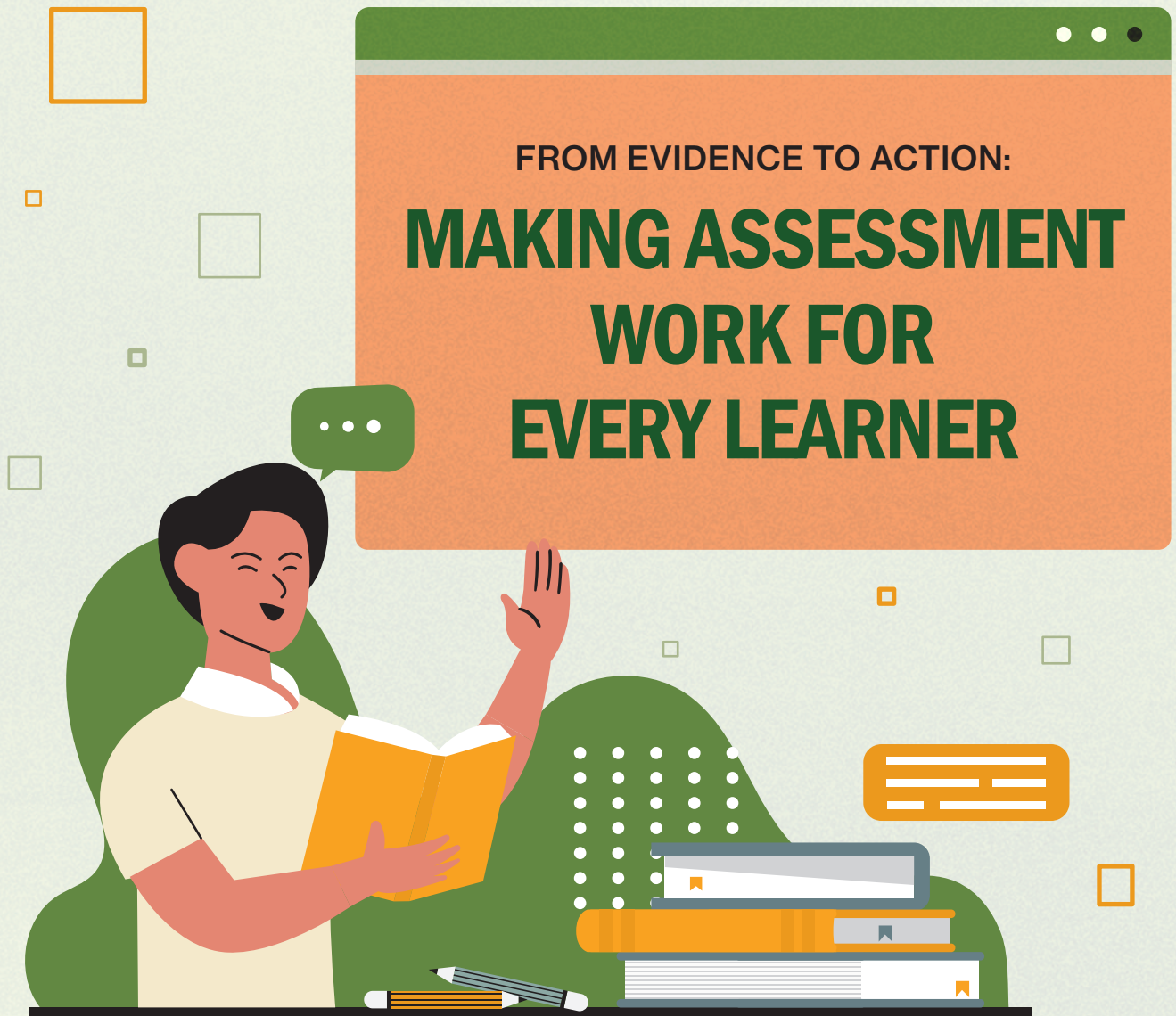
Perhaps the questions educators should ask are: *Does the assessment help students understand themselves better as learners? Can they see evidence that they are progressing? Do they know what they can do next?*

When assessment helps students answer these questions, it becomes more than a means of measuring learning: it becomes part of the learning process itself, one that helps develop confident, reflective and increasingly independent learners who are better equipped to take ownership of their learning.

“Developing these capabilities cannot begin when students enter university or the workplace,” Kah Loong reminds us. “It is essential that assessment be thoughtfully designed from an early age.” ■

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE

Chue Kah Loong is Deputy Head and Senior Lecturer with the Psychology and Child & Human Development Department at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He is also Co-Head of the Centre of Assessment and Evaluation at the same institution. His research interests include educational and psychological assessment and measurement, student well-being and motivation. He has also conducted research in team-based learning and successfully implemented it in the classroom.



Assessment is more than a measure of what students know. Used purposefully, it can help teachers understand how students are learning, identify where support is needed and create opportunities for students to experience success. *SingTeach* speaks with two teachers – Mdm Maybelline See from First Toa Payoh Primary School and Mr Mohammed Rais from Crescent Girls’ School – who share how they use assessment evidence to inform their teaching while supporting students’ confidence, motivation and well-being.

LOOKING BEYOND THE SCORE

For Mdm Maybelline See, Level Head/Mathematics at First Toa Payoh Primary School, assessment is most useful when it helps her understand how her students are learning. At her school, she uses differentiated assessment based on students’ readiness. She notes that students’ readiness can vary across mathematics topics. A student who demonstrates confidence in whole numbers, for example, may require support when learning fractions.

“Readiness is therefore dynamic, and assessment needs to be equally responsive,” she says.

Rather than waiting until the end of a topic, she gathers evidence from the beginning and throughout the lesson. Readiness checks and mathematics discussions help her identify learning gaps. She also draws on observations and students’ written work. Based on this evidence, she adjusts the level of scaffolding while keeping the same learning intentions for every learner.



Mdm Maybelline See is Level Head/Mathematics at First Toa Payoh Primary School

She also co-constructs success criteria with students, helping them understand what successful mathematical thinking looks like, monitor their own progress and reflect on the strategies they use. This gives students greater ownership of their learning and strengthens their metacognitive awareness.

“Ultimately, differentiated assessment enables me to understand not just whether students have learnt, but how they are learning,” she explains. “This allows me to respond purposefully and support the learner to progress from where they are.”

For Mr Mohammed Rais, a Mathematics and Social Studies teacher at Crescent Girls’ School, item analysis helps him better understand students’ performance in Social Studies. Weighted assessment and end-of-year examination results are analysed by question type, with each question testing particular skills and answering techniques. Tools such as the facility index and discrimination index help him and his colleagues identify strengths and areas for improvement across different groups of students.

“If only specific lower-progress students struggle with a question type, the follow-up remediation session can focus on those students,” he explains. “If an area for improvement appears across the entire level, teachers review the relevant skills with their own classes.”

He notes that this is a change from requiring all lower-progress students to attend every remediation session,

adding that a more targeted approach frees up teachers’ time and energy to focus on students who need the intervention.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS

The way assessment is pitched can also make a difference to students’ motivation and confidence.

Rais observes this in his Social Studies G2 class, where many students begin the year with low motivation and confidence. He realizes that if class assignments and practice exercises are forms of assessment, appropriate pitching should begin with these tasks too.

“Whenever I craft practice tasks and exercises for them, I always remind myself that they need to be set up for success so that they would be more motivated to pursue future successes,” he shares.

One approach is to use checklists in practice exercises. Rais finds that they provide a balance of structure and flexibility which suit his students better than more rigid answering templates.

Seeing many students craft well-written answers in their practice exercises encouraged him. “I can see that this is the affirmation and taste of success they need, as they start taking practice exercises more seriously,” he says.

Rais also observes improved motivation and performance in their weighted assessment tests. He is

heartened to see students genuinely trying their best in practice exercises, despite the low stakes.

For Maybelline, students' experience of assessment is also closely connected to well-being. Some of her Learning Support Mathematics students have experienced repeated setbacks in mathematics. These students may associate assessment with grades and failure rather than growth.

"What we can influence is how students experience assessment in our classrooms every day," she shares. Differentiated assessment allows her to respond while learning is still taking place. Students work towards the same learning goals, with different levels of support according to their readiness.

"When students experience meaningful success, they develop positive emotions, confidence and a sense of accomplishment," Maybelline notes. "My hope is that they begin to believe that growth in mathematics is possible."

RETHINKING WHAT ASSESSMENT IS FOR

Their involvement in the MOE Assessment Champions initiative has also shaped how both teachers approach assessment.

As an Assessment Champion, Rais has completed NIE's Certificate in School Assessment (CSA). He says the course has shaped his fundamental understanding of assessment and equipped him with approaches he now uses in class.

"I am now cognizant that almost anything that gives you information that impacts your decision-making as an educator can be regarded as a form of assessment," he says.

For Rais, this can be as basic as classroom questioning. Thoughtfully crafted questions can show how well students have understood the material. Their responses then help him decide what to focus on in upcoming lessons. Practice exercises and homework similarly inform the feedback and intervention he provides.

Maybelline describes a shift in the questions she asks as a teacher.

"Instead of asking, 'How well did my students perform?,' I ask, 'What does this evidence tell me about how each learner is learning, and what should happen next?'" she shares.

The Assessment Champions initiative has led her to explore differentiated assessment more deeply. It eventually shaped her practitioner inquiry into its

role in promoting student well-being. Through this journey, she has come to appreciate that fairness does not necessarily mean assessing every learner in the same way.

"To me, equity means providing appropriate support and opportunities for learners with different readiness levels to work towards the same learning goals," she remarks.

Conversations with colleagues have helped both teachers review assessment practices in their schools. At First Toa Payoh Primary School, professional learning teams and level discussions give teachers opportunities to design assessments together and analyse students' responses. They then consider how the evidence can inform subsequent teaching.

At Crescent Girls' School, Rais and his colleagues have been working to pitch their preliminary examinations in closer alignment with the O-level examinations. Their discussions consider factors such as question demands, the scope of topics and the application of rubrics.

These discussions have also challenged how teachers think about testing. "We are moving away from 'testing for lack of mastery' and towards 'testing for mastery,'" he shares.

Rather than viewing tests as a "wake-up call" signaling that students need to practice more, he says they can be used to identify areas for targeted intervention and move students towards mastery. He sees this mindset shift as critical at a time when assessment anxiety has become increasingly pertinent among students.

"When assessment is purposeful and pitched appropriately, student well-being and academic progress can definitely go hand in hand," he says.

For Maybelline, assessment is similarly a starting point for deciding how to support each learner's progress. "My biggest takeaway is that assessment is not an end point, it is the starting point for better teaching," she says. "When we intentionally use evidence to decide what happens next, assessment becomes a powerful means of helping every learner make progress from wherever they are." ■

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEES

Maybelline See is Level Head/Mathematics at First Toa Payoh Primary School. Mohammed Rais is a Mathematics and Social Studies teacher at Crescent Girls' School.



THE HIDDEN BARRIER:

HOW EMOTION REGULATION

SHAPE STUDENTS' FEEDBACK RECEPTION

In the classrooms of Singapore, the word “assessment” often equates to “exams.” However, according to Assistant Professor Amir Rasooli, from the Learning Sciences and Assessment Department at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, this narrow view overlooks a vital aspect that directly impacts student well-being. In this issue of *SingTeach*, Amir shares about his research study which focuses on the intersection of fairness and the emotional dimensions of assessment. He also discusses how understanding the emotional side of feedback can transform classroom practice and foster a healthier learning environment.

THE ASSESSMENT CYCLE: MORE THAN JUST A SCORE

Despite efforts to downplay the importance of grades, for many educators, the dominant discourse remains fixed on high-stakes testing. Yet, assessment is a much broader continuous cycle. It begins with identifying learning objectives, then moves into assessment design, evaluation of student performance which leads to feedback, and finally “concludes” with grading. While grading is sometimes seen as the endpoint of assessment, teachers and students may benefit from using assessment evidence to better inform adapting the learning process for each student.

Assessment has long concerned itself with what a student knows (i.e., cognition), with limited attention to how students’ emotions impact their assessment performance and learning. Earlier assessment-related emotion research focused on “test anxiety” to explore how nervousness before and during exams impacts how well students perform. Assessment, however, is not limited to exams and the emotions students

experience are not limited to just anxiety. Amir’s work therefore highlights an important but often overlooked dimension: *how students feel* when they receive feedback and *how they manage their emotions* in a productive way to learn from feedback. “If the students’ emotions become a barrier to effective use, the feedback will not be used effectively,” he explains.

THE ABC PROCESS OF RECEIVING FEEDBACK

When a student receives a comment on his/her work – whether from a teacher, a peer or an AI tool – they don’t simply read it. They undergo a complex “ABC” process:

- A. Affective (Emotional):** They experience a surge of feelings, ranging from joy and pride to frustration, anger or disappointment.
- B. Behavioural:** They decide whether and how to act on the feedback, and what actions they take or to ignore it.
- C. Cognitive:** They attempt to make sense of the information.

If a student feels overwhelmed or defensive because of feedback, their emotional response can disrupt the cognitive and behavioural stages, leading them to “shut down” rather than learn.

SIX STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING FEEDBACK EMOTIONS

Amir’s recent research, conducted in Singapore secondary schools, identifies six primary strategies students use to regulate their emotions during assessment:

- **Situation Modification:** Changing the external context, such as going to the restroom to cool off or asking an AI to simplify a complex or intimidating response.
- **Attention Deployment:** Attending to feedback or distracting themselves from the sting of feedback by thinking about something else, like a soccer game or dinner plans.
- **Cognitive Change:** Reframing the feedback internally or viewing a critique as advice for improvement rather than a personal failure. For instance, students can decide to focus on the good intentions of their teacher, despite the negative emotions they feel.
- **Response Modulation:** Physical or behavioural reactions like deep breathing or, notably in Asian contexts, nodding and smiling to maintain social harmony and respect towards teachers, even if they are confused or upset.
- **Competence Modification:** Seeking out additional resources, such as AI, peers or family, to help bridge any gaps in their understanding of the feedback.
- **Seeking Social Support:** Turning to loved ones or friends for emotional comfort and relational validation.

WHEN FEEDBACK IS MORE THAN INFORMATION

Part of the finding in Amir’s work is that emotion regulation is not culturally neutral. In Singapore, the values of respect, harmony and face-saving often lead to *covert regulation*. A student might nod and smile at a teacher’s feedback out of a sense of duty or respect, which can mask the fact that they haven’t in fact understood the information or are feeling deeply discouraged. This politeness can accidentally become a barrier to genuine learning if teachers take silence or nodding at face value.

Interestingly, the source of feedback changes how students process it.

“When feedback comes from a human, such as a teacher or a peer, it is perceived as both informational and relational. Students are more likely to listen to someone they like and perceive as highly competent,”

he explains. “Conversely, feedback from AI is viewed by students in this study as primarily informational; students focus mostly on the competence of the tool without the emotional baggage of wanting to be liked by the source.”

FAIRNESS AS A GROWING CAPACITY

Finally, Amir suggests that well-being is inextricably linked to fairness. Rather than viewing fairness as a simple “fair or unfair” checkbox, he sees it as a capacity for fairness reasoning that both teachers and students need to develop.

“Equality is the idea that everyone should receive the same treatment regardless of their circumstances. While we have an evolutionary instinct for equality, social life comes with complexities that makes fairness judgements a dilemma,” he remarks.

For example, in group work, some students prefer to be graded individually if they believe that their team members did not contribute equally. Students consider equality as a basis for their fairness judgements in group work largely due to the stakes of grades attached. To rethink fairness reasoning in groupwork requires shifting the emphasis from grades to meaningful feedback and encouraging students to reflect on how well they recognize and represent one another’s voices within the team.

By acknowledging the emotional dimensions of assessment, teachers can move towards using feedback not simply as a measure of learning, but as a tool to support student agency, empowerment and well-being. ■



Scan the QR code to discover simple practices that can help students pause, regulate and recharge!

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE

Amirhossein Rasooli is Assistant Professor with the Learning Sciences and Assessment Department, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He is also a Research Strand Leader at the Center for Assessment and Evaluation. His research explores assessment fairness, feedback, student emotions and well-being, with a focus on how assessment practices can support meaningful learning experiences.



MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK

FOR MEANINGFUL LEARNING

Student well-being does not always show up in grades or obvious changes in behaviour. A student can continue performing well academically while feeling overwhelmed, disengaged or disconnected from others. For teachers, understanding well-being therefore starts with looking beyond what is immediately visible. Assistant Professor Amelia Yeo from the Psychology and Child & Human Development Department at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore explores how classroom assessment, feedback and teacher-student interactions can support both learning and well-being.

TIPS FOR EDUCATORS: LOOK FOR PATTERNS, NOT ISOLATED SIGNS

Notice changes in students but avoid jumping to conclusions. Use observations as a starting point for conversation with them rather than an explanation of what they are experiencing.

A HUMAN-CENTRED APPROACH IN ASSESSMENT

Assessment plays an important role in shaping students' learning experiences. How teachers design assessments, give feedback and interact with students can influence whether students see learning as an opportunity to grow or as a source of threat.

A human-centred approach brings these considerations together by keeping the student, rather than simply the performance outcome, at the centre of teaching and assessment. When teachers notice a change in a student, it can be tempting to immediately look for a reason. However, a single behaviour rarely tells the whole story. Instead, teachers can look for patterns and changes over time. A student may participate less, appear less confident, interact differently with peers or become less willing to ask for help. Even the way students talk about their learning can offer useful clues.

Importantly, these observations are not necessarily explanations. A teacher might assume that a drop in grades has a particular cause, but making presumptions can sometimes damage an existing teacher-student relationship.

"Most importantly, teachers should create opportunities for students to communicate how

they are doing rather than assuming that observable behaviour tells the whole story," Amelia, whose interests also include translating findings from cognition research to useful educational practices for the promotion of learning and well-being, shares.

This means giving students different ways to communicate. If a student is uncomfortable talking, writing or drawing can provide another avenue for expressing how they are feeling.

MAKE ASSESSMENT A MEANINGFUL EXERCISE

Assessment can be rigorous without becoming threatening. A human-centred approach focuses on making assessment authentic, engaging and meaningful to the learner.

Students need to understand what they are being asked to demonstrate and how the task connects to the knowledge or skills they are developing. Transparency matters too. Students should not feel that an assessment is designed to trick them or that success depends on guessing the answer the teacher expects.

Instead, meaningful assessment gives students opportunities to apply what they know, explain their thinking and demonstrate their learning in context.

This also helps shift assessment away from being simply about producing a correct answer. When students understand the purpose of a task, they are better positioned to see it as part of their learning rather than merely as a judgement of their performance.

KEEP THE RIGOUR, REDUCE THE THREAT

"Rigour and threat are not the same thing," Amelia affirms. "High expectations and student well-being do not have to be opposing goals."

Teachers can maintain academic standards while making expectations clear, providing appropriate preparation and ensuring that assessments measure the intended learning. Clear criteria and opportunities to practise can make a challenging assessment feel fair and manageable.

Mistakes also have a place in this process. When students understand that mistakes are part of learning, assessment can challenge them intellectually without creating unnecessary uncertainty or fear about how they will be judged.

“Importantly, students must be reminded that their self-worth is not tied to a single assessment or how they perform relative to others,” Amelia explains. Separating the quality of a student’s work from their value as an individual can help create a healthier relationship with achievement.

TIPS FOR EDUCATORS: PROVIDE FOCUSED FEEDBACK

Focus feedback on the task, strategy or behaviour rather than personal characteristics. Give students a specific next step they can work on.

GIVE FEEDBACK WITH A CLEAR DIRECTION

Feedback is another point where learning and well-being intersect. Personal judgements about a student can make performance feel like a judgement of who they are. Feedback that focuses on the work, strategy or specific behaviours, however, gives students something they can act on.

Amelia suggests teachers to consider the difference between saying, “You are careless,” and saying, “Your explanation needs more evidence to support this conclusion.”

The second response identifies something specific that the student can improve. Effective feedback tells students what they have done well, what needs improvement and what they can try next. “This gives students a clearer path forward and helps them see performance as something that can change,” she explains.

PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT IS NOT SAID

Words are not the only source of information in the classroom. Gestures and other nonverbal cues can provide teachers with additional insight into students’ thinking and understanding.

“A student may say that they understand something while their gestures suggest uncertainty or reveal a different conception,” Amelia highlights. “Gestures can also communicate aspects of thinking that students find difficult to express verbally.”

Rather than treating these cues as definitive evidence of what a student is thinking or feeling, teachers can use them as prompts to ask another question or invite the student to explain their thinking.

This creates another opportunity for students to make their thinking visible.



How can teachers preserve human connection when giving digital feedback? Scan the QR code to find out more!

START WITH ONE SMALL QUESTION

Supporting well-being does not always require a major change to classroom practice. One small shift can begin at the end of a lesson or assessment activity: ask students about their learning experience, rather than simply whether they got the answer right.

Questions such as “What was the most difficult part of this task, and why?” or “How did you feel completing this task?” can reveal more than a correct or incorrect response.

They can surface misconceptions, frustration and confidence, while also showing teachers where students may need support. At the same time, the questions send a message to students: their experience of learning matters.

Ultimately, looking after student well-being and supporting learning are not separate tasks. When teachers pay attention to how students experience learning, they gain another source of information about what students understand, where they struggle and what support they need.

It is a small shift in focus: from asking only whether students have the right answer to asking what it is like for them to get there. ■



ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE

Amelia Yeo is Assistant Professor with the Psychology and Child & Human Development at the National Institute of Education, Singapore. Her research has examined gesture production in bilinguals, gestural effects on learning, visual attention to hand movements, and the role of expectation in communication.



ASSESSMENT CHAMPIONS:

VOICES FROM THE CLASSROOM

Assessment Champions play an important role in strengthening assessment practices within their schools. *SingTeach* hears from two teachers about their experiences in the Assessment Champions Networked Learning Community, and how these experiences have shaped their approaches to supporting students' learning, confidence, agency and well-being.

**Yap Chong Chieh**

Lead Teacher (Science)

Telok Kurau Primary School

HOW HAS PARTICIPATING IN THE ASSESSMENT CHAMPIONS NETWORKED LEARNING COMMUNITY INFLUENCED YOUR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AS AN EDUCATOR, AND YOUR APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT?

Participation in the Assessment Champions (AC) Networked Learning Community (NLC) is definitely an important part of developing myself as the school's AC. It serves as a valuable platform where ideas are exchanged, and assessment practices can be benchmarked with other schools.

As a member of my cluster's AC NLC, I find it particularly useful when discussing how to implement the assessment of the Ministry of Education's (MOE) Emerging 21st Century Competencies (E21CC). Since

assessing these competencies varies greatly between schools, exchanging ideas and listening to suggestions helps me improve our own school's approach. These discussions are rich and insightful, prompting me to reflect deeply on our current practices. Supported by MOE HQ officers, these sessions also give me firsthand insight into whether our assessment direction aligns with broader Ministry goals.

Since schools typically have only one AC, the NLC provides a crucial support system, reassuring us that we are not alone in our professional development. Being alongside like-minded educators creates a safe testbed for new ideas, allowing us to collaborate and explore different assessment approaches to enrich student learning.

WHAT IS ONE ASSESSMENT PRACTICE YOU HAVE SEEN OR IMPLEMENTED THAT HAS MADE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE TO STUDENTS' LEARNING AND WELL-BEING?

One assessment practice I have implemented and am currently encouraging colleagues to adopt is differentiated assessment in two classes of differing student readiness levels.

An improvement in student enthusiasm and motivation has been observed using this approach. Giving students choice in how they demonstrate their understanding provides a high degree of student agency, supporting their E21CC development. This is done by providing students with a choice of either presenting their understanding of the science concept via models, recorded verbal explanation or drawings.

Using the PERMA (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment) framework to assess effectiveness, it was observed that both classes demonstrate high levels of engagement, meaning and accomplishment. Students submit their work promptly, and the work is of high quality. High-readiness students also show greater collaboration efforts, with students voluntarily providing peer feedback when they view their peers' work.

Beyond motivation, this approach significantly improves student well-being by boosting confidence and self-efficacy which I see as a barrier for low-progress learners. Many of my low-readiness students agree that the approach increases their confidence in understanding science concepts. In both classes, students like having a choice in how they are assessed on their understanding, while others neither like nor dislike the idea. More importantly, no students have a negative perception of differentiated assessment.

Preparing differentiated assessments requires substantial time and effort in designing multiple assessment formats and grading them. While it may not be feasible to implement this for all science concepts taught, it might be a strategic move if we can consider it for more challenging science concepts.



Teo Kian Wee

Head of Department, Mother Tongue
Languages Department
Queensway Secondary School

HOW HAS PARTICIPATING IN THE ASSESSMENT CHAMPIONS NETWORKED LEARNING COMMUNITY INFLUENCED YOUR ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN THE CLASSROOM?

Being in the Assessment Champions (AC) Networked Learning Community (NLC) has made me more cognizant that assessment is integral to everyday teaching and learning. In the classroom, I have begun to look for opportunities to facilitate peer assessments so that students practise their evaluative judgement. I am teaching Chinese Language, so peer assessments

take the form of evaluating and providing feedback to selected paragraphs of classmates' essay, or selected classmates' Singapore Student Learning Space (SLS) audio response during an oral practice. This often also involves *feed up*: showing exemplary work and highlighting the learning that is demonstrated well; *feedback*: students giving peer feedback to one another and also acting on the feedback to refine their current submission; and *feed forward*: using what they have learnt to attempt the upcoming essay or oral practice.

Obviously, making constructive exchanges happen requires dedicating more time. Will students fully understand the criteria just because I show them exemplars, with explanations? Will students know how to evaluate just because I task them to do so? Definitely not. These are moments that students need more time to navigate and struggle through.

After attending the NIE course on assessment, I often ask myself: "Will students learn to self-evaluate, if they are not given opportunities to practise it? Clearly, the answer is also no. It is through such lessons that students get the chance to ask questions like, "*Zhang laoshi*, this is an example, not a point, right?" and "*Cher*, I don't know how to help him improve on his response to this question." With this process, I am more able to assess and address students' level of understanding and confidence before the next assignment. As a result, students can be more mindful and more confident when completing the next task.

WHAT IMPACT HAVE THESE ASSESSMENT APPROACHES HAD ON YOUR STUDENTS' LEARNING, CONFIDENCE AND WELL-BEING?

Improving students' evaluative judgement is not a bed of roses. From what I see, high progress learners gain confidence the fastest. Using the PERMA model of positive psychology to explain, this group of students displays more positive emotions, engagement and sense of achievement when they engage in self or peer assessment. This is because they can understand the exemplars and elements of quality most easily. They are also more engaged as they can apply what they learn while they practise their evaluative judgement. Things make more sense to them after they go through the self or peer assessment process.

While the lower progress learners display less confidence than their peers, they still display greater engagement and sense of meaning even as they struggle through the peer assessment process in trying to make sense of the criteria of success. I often see these students seeking help from their peers subtly, for example, commenting, "I'm not sure if I get it, but I think your example is not concrete." Such instances may tell us that these students are not confident. But it is also a clear sign of productive struggle, which may otherwise be missed if they simply use generative AI to do the thinking. ■

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