

Building a Better Ruler: Is It Time to Rethink Exams?

One of the most liberating moments I've had as an educator was ditching the exam in my chemistry courses, recognizing that they didn't engender the type of learning I wanted for my students nor give me adequate measures of their ability. Moving to performance-based (or authentic) assessments was much more rewarding for me *and* the students because the assessment continued the learning process. I also learned from my students because they did original research to demonstrate their learning. The quote below from [Maryellen Weimer](#) comes from an article in Faculty Focus, [Is It Time to Rethink Our Exams?](#), in which she examines the ways exams motivate (or demotivate) students and how we might improve upon this process:

We forget the second reason (or take it for granted): exams are learning events. Most students study for them, perhaps not as much or in the ways we might like, but before an exam most students are engaged with the content. Should we be doing more to increase the learning potential inherent in exam experiences?

What about you? Have you used authentic assessments as replacements for exams? What was your experience? What barriers do you face?

Interested in learning more about authentic assessments?

- Talk to a fellow faculty member in your school of education.
- Read the [wikipedia entry on authentic assessment](#).
- Visit the [Authentic Assessment Toolbox](#) compiled by Jon Mueller, Professor of Psychology, North Central College, Naperville, IL.
- Check out the [presentation](#) and [handouts](#) and handouts for a short workshop I gave at [Stetson's Colloquium on Teaching and Learning](#) in 2016.
- Look at the assessment scenarios we used in our general chemistry course on [ground pollution](#), [ozone depletion](#) and [global climate change](#).

Submitted by:

Julia K. Metzker

Executive Director Brown Center for Faculty Innovation and Excellence
Stetson University