

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THE FEASIBILITY OF USING AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT IN  
CATECHISM INSTRUCTION

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## Abstract

“Authentic assessment” refers to assessments that measure accomplishments either in the real world or directly tied to it. Everything God teaches us is practical in its very nature and the way those teachings are passed on ought to be practical as well. Therefore there is value in a pedagogy that works toward worthwhile, significant, and meaningful real world accomplishments. There is also value in assessing confirmation students according to how well they perform in authentic tasks or in tasks that are very close to authentic. For this reason, the following thesis proposes to explain and defend the validity and value of what is known as authentic assessment as one part of a larger authentic pedagogy for catechism instruction.

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## An Author's Personal Note

The idea for this thesis comes from a long time ago. I was living in Mexico working as an English teacher through the WELS Kingdom Workers (WKW). And, while I was there I had the privilege of teaching some basic Bible information classes to my students. As you might expect, there were little quizzes at the end of each lesson. Presumably they were there assess the knowledge that had been acquired during the course of the lesson and encourage the students with the fact that they had learned something new.

What was interesting to me, however, was that even though I was certain that they had “gotten” the lesson they would not be able to pass the quizzes. As I probed, I came to discover that their struggle with the quiz was not the content, but the format. Many of my students had not advanced beyond the United States equivalent of a middle school education. They were unfamiliar with test-taking in general. As we corrected the quizzes I would rephrase the questions or format them differently and it would become clear that they knew the content of the lesson.

I didn’t really spend too much time thinking about it at the time, but this whole assessment subject would arise in my mind again. This time, I was correcting the exams at the end of the Spanish version of the prison ministry self-study Bible teaching series that WELS Prison Ministries distributes to prisoners across the United States. I discovered some similarities. Since I hadn’t taught the prisoners, I had no other way of evaluating whether or not they “got” the lesson other than the quiz. It became evident, though, that the manner of evaluation was not achieving the desired result. Some may struggle to take tests, especially if they are unfamiliar with test taking procedures or don’t have a teacher giving cues. Members of a test-taking culture like ours think tests are easy. However, I would often see prisoners receiving incorrect answers because they didn’t know how to complete matching, agree/disagree questions, and true and false questions. They may have very well understood the content and learned the lesson. It was just that I couldn’t tell on the basis of the assessments presented.

Although these are an excellent set of evangelism materials for prisoners, the assessment procedure employed made me start to think. I began to formulate questions. What do those types of questions assess? How can I know what they have learned if not by these traditional assessment methods? What have I demonstrated to show that I have learned? Does being a good test-taker mean that one is a better student or “smarter” than another person who got worse

grades? How can I teach so that my students *know* the content I am presenting? How can my instruction help the students *master* the content. And the seed for my thesis was planted.

Although pastors work in many and varied educational contexts, I chose to focus on catechism. I believe that is where pastors and others within a church or Lutheran elementary school do the majority of their educating and assessing of religion based curriculum. Through discussions with professors and especially with my wife, Ellen, a teacher, I decided to pursue a specific type of assessment that is called “authentic assessment.”

## Introduction

Every pastor, whether he likes it or not, is a teacher.<sup>1</sup> Pastors teach Sunday morning Bible study. They teach in pre-marital counseling. There’s a didactic element to the Sunday morning sermon. Finally, of course, the pastor teaches catechism class. When a pastor takes part in the teaching process, he joins in a long line of teachers and participates actively in the teaching process.

Teaching has been a part of what Christians do for centuries. Since the very beginning God has taught his people. God taught Adam and Eve, albeit in an informal way, to love and worship him by giving them the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and telling them not to eat of its fruit. Moses’ father-in-law Jethro encouraged him to teach: “Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform” (Ex 18:20).<sup>2</sup> We see that the LORD wants parents to teach their children: “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children” (Dt 6:6-7). And the often quoted, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it,” (Pr 22:6) demonstrates that instruction is important to God’s Old Testament people. These passages point to a corporate, perhaps more formal, understanding of education. Moses is supposed to teach the people. But parents are supposed to have conversations about the Word of God in the home and when they are out and about (Dt. 11:19). This points to the importance of the informal education for the formation of children with a strong faith.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Cy. Rowell, "Empowering Images of the Minister as Teacher," *Religious Education* 95, no. 1: (2000): 64. Although it's beyond the scope of this thesis J. Cy Rowell makes the following assertion: "The resistance of many minister to the teaching role may be rooted in the dynamics of power and control, as seen in their preference for one-to-one and one-to-many dimensions of ministry rather than the one-to-group context of teaching. Another source of resistance is the minister's narrow understanding of teaching and the minister's limited repertoire of teaching skills."

<sup>2</sup> All Scripture quotations in this thesis are taken from The Holy Bible: New International Version, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984.

From the beginning of the Christian Church, education has been critical. Jesus himself taught: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Lk 24:27). Philip used Isaiah to teach the Ethiopian eunuch “the good news about Jesus” (Ac 8:35). The Apostle Paul spoke to the Corinthian church about passing on what he received (1 Co 15:3). All of this is *teaching*. The author doesn’t propose to make this paper about a Biblical paradigm for teaching. These passages are merely cited as examples from Scripture that teaching is something that Christians and the church has always done and ought to do.

Outside of the biblical record we know that the Christian church continued to value education. Early Christians used the *Didache* as a kind of orientation for induction into the Christian faith from the late first century and early second century. It’s interesting to note that even from the roots of what we would consider catechetical instruction the curriculum was “concerned with both the catechumen’s knowledge and lifestyle.”<sup>3</sup>

For Lutherans, however, methods have never been the most important element of religious education. In other words, God doesn’t prescribe the exact way Lutheran-Christian education is to be carried out. For Lutherans, the content has typically been the focus. Lutheran Christians want to teach their children the “decree of the LORD,” the “way they should go,” and the “good news about Jesus.” These are those things of “first importance” that they wish to transmit to another generation.

The next several pages focus on one very specific aspect of the teaching method but the reader would be wise to always keep first things first. The Lutheran educator does not focus on method at the expense of content. The pastor does not elevate the mode of instruction to a position above the efficacy of the means of Grace. The Christian parent does not put outward obedience over personal growth of faith. While this author believes that education is important, he also recognizes that it is not the goal of the Christian to be the best educated but to be heaven-bound. Like Moses, Paul, and numerous other Christians we rely wholly on Jesus, not methods.

That said, the method for instruction in the catechism classroom has traditionally been the familiar question and answer format. This method has undoubtedly served the church well since the time of the Saxon visitation that prompted the original version of Luther’s Small and Large

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<sup>3</sup> Darwin K. Glassford, "The Future Is Behind Us: Catechesis and Educational Ministries," *Christian Education Journal* 9 (2012): S-176.

catechism.<sup>4</sup> The simple wording of the catechism paired with the surpassing truths of God’s Word have successfully transmitted the basic theological knowledge of the Lutheran church for generations. However as David Rueter notes, “...In the Lutheran Church, we have been solid on our understanding of what we are to teach to our children, the open question of how best to provide that instruction has been wrestled with since the time of Luther.”<sup>5</sup>

As will be demonstrated, there is much benefit to this format and to the accompanying memorization that internalizes the verbiage of what it means to be a child of God. This method of question and answer is known as the catechetical method and closely resembles what is known as the instructional approach that focuses on the acquisition of factual knowledge and basic skills.<sup>6</sup> However, this author believes that traditional evaluation methods of the so-called “instructional approach,” or the traditional approach, only assess certain aspects of the preparation of catechism students to be confirmed, but not all aspects.

Having provided an individual with an understanding of the Lord’s Supper as means of grace, including the expressed desire and cognitive ability to examine him/herself, the visible church now grants this person privilege of partaking of this means of grace and grants the confirmand communicant membership into their local church. Therefore any instruction ought to prepare them to assume the responsibilities of a confirmed member of their local Lutheran congregation and also prepare them to receive the blessings that accompany the confirmation rite, namely regular reception of the Lord’s Supper. Any assessment that takes place should aim to assess their journey towards preparedness to assume these responsibilities and enjoy these blessings.

There have been many changes since the time Martin Luther first outlined the Small and Large Catechism. The world population has grown. There have also been advances in the fields of educational psychology, methodology, and studies of how the brain functions. The culture in which the catechism is taught is different from Luther’s. The culture has even changed since the 1950’s. All of the changes that have taken place will not be addressed. However, in light of

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<sup>4</sup> *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press: 2000), 347-348.

<sup>5</sup> David L. Rueter, "Confirmation—a Developmental Understanding." *Lutheran Education* 142, no. 1 (2008), 22.

<sup>6</sup> Judith T.M. Guilkers, Theo J. Bastiaens, and Paul A. Kirschner, "A Five-Dimensional Framework for Authentic Assessment." *Educational Technology Research & Development* 52, No. 3 (2004), 67.

current educational research, brain research, and current cultural realities this author believes that there is a case for the implementation of authentic assessment strategies in catechism instruction.

What follows here is this author's attempt to inform the reader concerning the topic of authentic assessment. The intent of this thesis is to present briefly the goals and means of authentic assessment and its terminology, a summary of previous research on authentic assessment, and a presentation of some of the challenges involved with authentic assessment. The aforementioned presentation will support and defend this thesis: The catechism instructor can and should use elements of authentic assessment in catechism classes. It uses time valuably, applies the content practically and personally, and accurately assess preparedness for confirmation.

This paper may prompt more questions than answers on the subject but the author prays that this presentation will encourage and guide the reader to reflect deeply on his or her own assessment processes and consider implementing learning activities along authenticity continuum for the benefit of students and to the glory of God. Authentic assessment is a valid and valuable tool in the teaching of Luther's Catechism. A review of the definitions and use of authentic assessment and an examination of how and why it should be used in catechetical instruction will establish this.

## Literature Review

### *A Summary of Previous Research on Assessment*

There is a wide array of literature on the subject of assessment. As a result there is a need to define terms to remove ambiguities and misunderstandings in the dialogue concerning assessment issues. Harry Wong describes assessment as “what the teacher does to assess for student learning.”<sup>7</sup> This is a simple definition that says much. One can see that the goal of assessment is tautologically to *assess*. According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary that means to “make a judgment about something.”<sup>8</sup> So educators assess to judge their students’ progress and if the learners are able to do what they are being taught to do.<sup>9</sup> Not only is assessment used to judge competency it is also used in order to *develop* competency.<sup>10</sup> Let’s take a look at some more of the terms used in assessment discussions.

When one thinks of the word “assessment” there is most likely more than one notion of what that word means. Other words that are often considered to be synonymous with “assessment” are “test,” “evaluation,” or “quiz.” Another word associated with assessment is “grading.” This would serve to demonstrate how modern educators understand the assessment task.

Educational professionals seem to be shifting the emphasis away from tests and grading as a daily tool for the assessment of students. Dr. Spencer Kagan asserts:

Tests and grades do give us an indication of how students are doing over time, but do they really help us do what’s most important for us to do—help students learn? Are grades the best tools we have to analyze how our students are doing, and help them take the next step? Definitely not!<sup>11</sup>

Art Ellis gives his own assessment of the function of grades and testing:

Student progress is traditionally assessed and reported along a feedback continuum which incorporates everything from daily marks and test scores to semester grades and standardized test results. These marks take on a life of their own, creating a sense of

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<sup>7</sup> Harry K. Wong and Rosemary T. Wong, *The First Days of School: How to Be an Effective Teacher New 4th ed.* (Mountain View, CA: Harry K. Wong Publications: 2009), 223.

<sup>8</sup> Merriam-Webster, “assess,” Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/assess> (accessed 23 November 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Brandy Whitlock and Julie Nanavati, “A Systematic Approach to Performative and Authentic Assessment.” *Reference Services Review* 41, no. 1 (2013), 33.

<sup>10</sup> Guilkens, Bastiaens, and Kirschner, 67.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Spencer Kagan and Miguel Kagan, *Kagan Cooperative Learning* (San Clemente, CA: Kagan Publishing: 2009), 15.2.

reality in the minds of teachers, students, and parents. In fact, this ‘reality’ may or may not have curriculum content validity; that is, the tests, and therefore the grades that flow from them, may not be very well connected to the curriculum that is taught to students.<sup>12</sup>

As a result of this shift, terminology is changing. There is an array of terms associated with assessing student progress in the classroom that is not associated with the traditional educational model.

Brown and Knowles give some of the reasoning behind the change in assessment vocabulary. They state that “when we think about determining what students know, we may think of words such as *testing*, *evaluation*, or *grading*. These words do not have the same meaning as *assessment*.<sup>13</sup> The problem with *testing* is that “tests may not actually measure what teachers want students to know or be able to do as a result of studying a particular topic.”<sup>14</sup>

*Evaluation* is another word commonly used in place of assessment. Evaluation is a value assigned to student performances and a judgment about the quality of a child’s performance or product of learning.... The typical end products of evaluation are grades.<sup>15</sup>

*Grading* too can be problematic to our understanding of assessment because “grading is an arbitrary label teachers use to place students along a continuum from best to worst or to compare students with one another.”<sup>16</sup>

Where does this leave the educator? What terms should be used to communicate clearly what is trying to be achieved? The prevailing thought concerning assessment in the literature can be summed up well by Brown and Knowles:

*Assessment* has a more generalized meaning than testing, grading, or evaluation. Assessment is a set of strategies for discovering what students know or can do as a result of engaging in learning experiences. It involves a number of activities designed to determine the level of student learning. Assessment is a comprehensive act that includes consideration of a student’s goals for learning, processes of learning, progression toward established goals, and revision of goals when needed. All assessment should have as its primary purpose the improvement of student learning.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Arthur K. Ellis, *Research on Educational Innovations*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, 2001), 232.

<sup>13</sup> Dave F. Brown and Trudy Knowles, *What Every Middle School Teacher Should Know*, 2nd ed. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2007), 181.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 182-183.

This is the standard definition that will be used for *assessment* in this paper.

Below there is a list of assessment goals and the assessment styles that can be used to best achieve those goals. It's wise to note that the distinctions in assessments aren't mutually exclusive. There is a degree of blurring of lines and crossover in all types of assessment. In practice there may not be a clear delineation between the terms. There are very few assessments that are purely formative or purely summative and what one instructor refers to as alternative assessment another may consider best standard practice. The following discussion of terms serves to inform the reader of the array of vocabulary needed for a discussion on assessment.

Education professionals also speak of two types of assessment that take place at different times in the learning process: "formative assessment" and "summative assessment." Formative assessment takes place while learning is occurring and is used to give the teacher feedback and thereby enhance student learning. The idea behind formative assessment is that it is not the culmination of the learning task but rather an assessment which supplements the learning task. For example, when an instructor asks the class to recite the first commandment together to check if they have all memorized it that would be a formative assessment. If some of the students don't recite it properly they may be asked to repeat it until they have done it correctly. Summative assessment takes place "at the end of learning"<sup>18</sup> and is used by the teacher as a measurement of learning that has been completed. Formative assessment is beneficial in "[enhancing] student learning and [giving] teachers valuable feedback about student progress."<sup>19</sup> Summative assessment refers to using assessment as a summation of the learning process. In the spectrum of assessment, formative and summative assessments both have value. One is not more beneficial than the other. However, the literature seems to suggest that we should focus on formative assessment because that is the assessment task that is most often ignored by teachers.

When one thinks of the assessment task of teachers one need not think only of "formal" assessments such as tests or quizzes or projects. There are also "informal" assessments such as asking students for a thumbs-up or down during class to determine if they understand some component of the lesson. An assessment is considered *formal* "when data is gathered and

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<sup>18</sup> Bruce B. Frey and Vicki L. Schmitt, "Coming to Terms with Classroom Assessment," *Journal of Advanced Academics* Vol. 18, No. 3 (2007): 411.

<sup>19</sup> John B. Bond, Laurynn Evans, and Arthur K. Ellis, "Reflective Assessment," *Principal Leadership* 11, no. 6 (2011): 32.

saved.”<sup>20</sup> And it is considered *informal* “when data is collected but not stored for later analysis.”<sup>21</sup> Formal assessments may more often be summative in nature and have value in “making data-driven decisions about instructional content and pedagogy, especially at the course level and beyond.”<sup>22</sup> While informal assessments don’t allow for any structured or empirical analysis at the course level they are nonetheless “indispensable inside the classroom” because they influence the teaching style of the instructor and help ensure student learning of particular skills.<sup>23</sup> In the vernacular of assessment, these are the definitions this paper will function with and the definitions that most educators use when dealing with traditional assessment strategies.

There is a different vernacular used for discussing *alternative assessments*. These alternative assessments shift focus from grades to achieving educational objectives. If the teacher is to assess how well the students are achieving educational objectives then the terminology involved with those goals is also relevant to the assessment discussion. As one can see from the aforementioned information in the previous paragraphs there may be a disconnect between assessment practices and the goals of the curriculum. This is referred to as “actual goals” and “ideal goals.” They may also be thought of as implicit goal and expressed goals. Presumably, the general expressed goals of the traditional model and the alternative assessment model are somewhat similar. Educators have always wanted students to *learn*, to *grow as learners*, to *learn a joy of learning*, to *know content*, and to *be able to practically apply what they know*. But expressed goals aren’t always the same as the real, or implicit goals. If a teacher only assesses via traditional assessment methods, i.e. tests and quizzes, the implicit goal of the educational experience is only to pass those tests and quizzes. The expressed goal may be different, but the assessment practice primarily coordinates with an unexpressed, implicit goal. As instructors, teachers must do their best to align the expressed and implicit goals of their lessons and assessment practices.

So what are the goals of assessment if it is not to assign grades? Brown and Knowles describe assessment as follows:

Assessment is a set of strategies for discovering what students know or can do as a result of engaging in learning experiences. It involves a number of activities designed to

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<sup>20</sup> Whitlock and Nanavati, 34.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

determine the level of student learning.... All assessment should have as its primary purpose the improvement of student learning.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore the goals of assessment are to discover what students know because of what's been taught and using the data from assessment learning should be improved. More explicitly Ellis suggests that three specific goal of assessment should be to clarify, diagnose, and encourage and support learning.<sup>25</sup> This moves the focus of assessment from competition among students or classification by teachers to learning and instructing. This marks a significant departure from the traditional paradigm requiring a notable change in the thinking involved in the teaching and assessing task.

The result of these shifting paradigms and changes in thinking is that "an entire range of terms and phrases has emerged. The significant vocabulary includes authentic assessment, performance assessment, practical testing, and direct testing."<sup>26</sup> Added to that milieu terms such as "assessment for learning,"<sup>27,28</sup> and "performance assessment."<sup>29</sup> Bruce Frey and Vicki Schmitt address the difficulties that arise in the alternative assessment jargon:

Although these newer approaches are driven by a motivation to make student assessment data more useful and meaningful than some traditional approaches, and their use, therefore, is a positive development, it is hard to judge the theoretical benefit of these changes or even to begin to systematically explore the nature of teachers' modern classroom assessment practices. This difficulty arises because researchers, advocates, and practitioners have not arrived at a consistent definition of what these terms mean or what these practices look like.<sup>30</sup>

The *assessment for learning* movement springs from a dissatisfaction with the traditional goals of assessment. Brown and Knowles stress that "assessment is not the end product of a unit of study. It should not be focused on the number of facts students have memorized but rather on

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<sup>24</sup> Brown and Knowles, 182-183.

<sup>25</sup> Arthur K. Ellis, *Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Together: Reflective Assessments for Elementary Classrooms* (Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, 2010), 32.

<sup>26</sup> Ellis, *Research on Educational Innovations*, 232.

<sup>27</sup> Brown and Knowles, 187.

<sup>28</sup> Sue Swaffield, "Getting to the Heart of Authentic Assessment for Learning," *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice* 18, no. 4 (2011), 434.

<sup>29</sup> Bruce B. Frey and Vicki L. Schmitt, "Coming to Terms with Classroom Assessment," *Journal of Advanced Academics* 18, no. 3 (2007), 406.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 402.

meaningful learning experiences.”<sup>31</sup> They also quote Rick Stiggins as he differentiates assessment *for* learning from the traditional assessment *of* learning:

Assessment *of* learning is the traditional and standardized testing view of assessment that notes how much students have learned as of a particular point in time (the day of the test). Assessment *for* learning, in contrast, is based on the idea and practice of assessing students so that teachers can help each of them grow cognitively.<sup>32</sup>

One can see the difference between the traditional view and the newer alternative view of testing very clearly from this excerpt. Formative assessment is more prominent and intentional. This new concept springs from the explicit goal not of grading or pigeonholing but of cognitive growth.

A *performance assessment* or *performative assessment* “provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate what they know or understand through a performance task.”<sup>33</sup> According to Whitlock and Nanavati: “performative assessment focuses on what students can demonstrate, attempting to measure students’ skill acquisition in simulated scenarios.”<sup>34</sup> As Grant Wiggins posits, “the aim of assessment is primarily to *educate and improve* student performance, not merely to *audit* it.”<sup>35</sup> The focus here is obviously on performance. Brown and Knowles continue:

We have all participated in performance assessments such as athletic events, musical contests, dance recitals, driving tests, and submission of letter to the editor. Some common classroom performances include writing stories, designing science laboratory experiences, and engaging in debates. Students participating in performance assessments demonstrate deep understanding of a topic by engaging in personally meaningful learning activities.<sup>36</sup>

The benefits of this type of assessment are obvious. The challenge for the instructor is how to assess in an equitable way. In other words, how does one assign a grade to a performance assessment?

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<sup>31</sup> Brown and Knowles, 187-188.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 188. Quoting Rick Stiggins, “Assessment for Learning: Creating a Culture of Confidence” (Presentation, National Middle School Association Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA, November 3, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>34</sup> Whitlock and Nanavati, 35.

<sup>35</sup> Grant Wiggins, *Educative Assessment: Designing Assessments to Inform and Improve Student Performance* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 7. Italics in original.

<sup>36</sup> Brown and Knowles, 197.

*Reflective assessment* is a type of formative assessment that is promoted by Arthur Ellis and focuses on student reflection on learning. Reflective assessment is a form of self-assessment that is engineered to help students become aware of their learning and “assume ownership of their learning.”<sup>37</sup> Reflective assessment has merit and further study of it is encouraged, especially in its relationship to catechism instruction. This description will suffice for now and the idea of reflective assessment will be briefly revisited below in the sections concerning authentic assessment in catechism instruction. Reflective assessment is considered to be a form authentic assessment.

The last type of alternative assessment examined is also the main topic of this paper, *authentic assessment*. The summary will be brief, as the literature surrounding authentic assessment will be examined in depth in the following section.

As with other alternative assessments there is a degree of ambiguity concerning what exactly authentic assessment is. There is a need to differentiate between the different types. Frey and Schmitt suggest defining an assessment on the basis of its purpose. An *authentic assessment*, therefore, measures ability on tasks which represent real-world problems or tasks. A formative assessment provides feedback to the teacher to assess the quality of instruction or to improve teaching behaviors, or provides feedback to the student to assess the quality of learning and to improve learning behaviors. An *assessment for learning* provides feedback to students to assess the quality of learning and to improve learning behaviors.<sup>38</sup> According to Guilkers, Bastiaens, and Kirschner say, “Authenticity is an important element of new modes of assessment. The problem is that what authentic assessment really is, is unspecified.”<sup>39</sup> What qualifies as authentic assessment will be clarified in the following section. For now, suffice it to say that “authentic assessment focuses on what students can do in real-world contexts, attempting to measure students’ skill acquisition when the need for the skill and the use of the skill arise from a real-life situation.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Bond, Evans, and Ellis, 32.

<sup>38</sup> Frey and Schmitt, 417.

<sup>39</sup> Guilkers, Bastiaens, and Kirschner, 67.

<sup>40</sup> Whitlock and Nanavati, 35.

### ***A Summary of Previous Research on Authentic Assessment***

The earliest reference to authentic tests was likely made by Archbald and Newman in 1988.<sup>41</sup> The references to authenticity appear first “in reference to educational tasks, and achievements and not necessarily assessments.”<sup>42</sup> So, one can see that the basis of this movement towards authenticity already found at its roots a criticism of standardized testing. In his analysis of educational innovations Art Ellis notes this dissatisfaction with the entire system in his introduction to authentic assessment.

Serious students of assessment are committed to a review of the entire educational system, and this would certainly involve a close look not only at how we have traditionally evaluated students but also of the effects on students of *how* they have been evaluated.<sup>43</sup>

He goes on to explain how authentic assessment can be understood and the impetus for its origination:

Perhaps the key to understanding the alternative assessment movement is found in a thoughtful consideration of the term *authentic assessment*. The term implies that, by contrast, it should replace assessment that is inauthentic, which means false. So, the idea of authentic assessment is to create evaluation strategies that measure more realistically and accurately those things that students are supposed to be learning.<sup>44</sup>

Stated simply, the innovation of authentic assessment springs from a desire to assess how well the goals of the class are being achieved by the student and to assess how well the teacher is teaching these goals.

One notes that assessment in this paradigm is not a thing unto itself rather it is part of a larger classroom economy. Ellis says, “One supposes that in order to achieve some level of curricular relevance and coherence, authentic *teaching and learning* ought to accompany any attempts at authentic assessment.”<sup>45</sup> Ellis also states in his book, *Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Together: Reflective Assessments for Elementary Classrooms*, that

Research studies … suggest that teaching, learning, and assessment are often misaligned and that more needs to be done to unite these important dimensions of education.... The

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<sup>41</sup> Frey and Schmitt, 402-423.

<sup>42</sup> Shelley Keyser and Scott L. Howell, “The State of Authentic Assessment,” Online Submission (2008), 6.

<sup>43</sup> Ellis, *Research on Educational Innovations*, 234. Emphasis in original.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

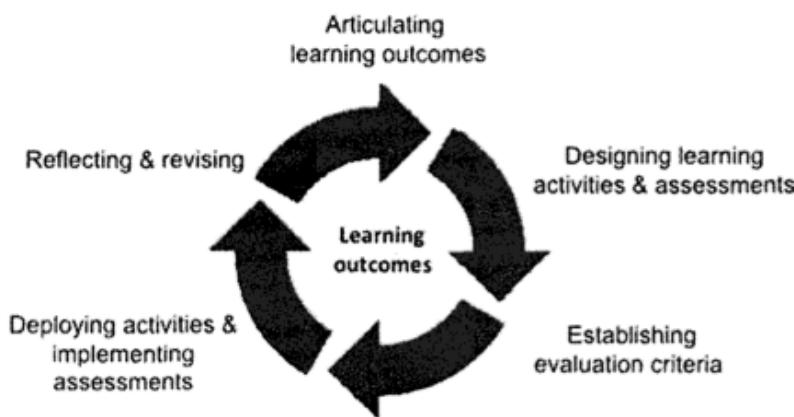
idea is that these three elements of school life need to be considered as seamless, they must not be separated.<sup>46</sup>

Doug Lemov reaffirms the interconnectedness of assessment with the entire lesson. He suggests the addition of goals which Ellis may have assumed as a given.

Using this lesson planning sequence – objective, assessment, activity – disciplines your planning. It helps ensure that your criterion will not be, “Is my lesson creative?” or “Does it employ enough of the right strategies?” but, “Will it be the best and fastest way to help me reach the goal?<sup>47</sup>

Whitlock and Nanavati describe assessment as a “recursive, perpetual process.” They supply the following description of that process and the accompanying graphic:

Cyclical models are often used to describe the assessment process...Articulating learning outcomes...used to design more effectual learning activities and assessments...Evaluation criteria...must be established....Once the activities and assessments have been completed, we reflect on the scores students earn and on the other assessment data we collect in order to revise our learning outcomes, activities, assessment tools, and evaluation criteria, so that they are more aligned and most effective.<sup>48</sup>



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One can see in the accompanying graphic that “learning outcomes” or goals are at the center or the assessment process in this model. So assessment is an important component of education not an addition tacked on at the end of a learning activity. It fits into an interconnected web of factors (instruction, planning, goals, assessment) that ought to work together to assure student success.

<sup>46</sup> Arthur K. Ellis, *Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Together: The Reflective Classroom*, (Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, 2001), xiii.

<sup>47</sup> Lemov, Doug. *Teach Like a Champion : 49 Techniques That Put Students on the Path to College. 1st ed.* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 59.

<sup>48</sup> Whitlock and Nanavati, 33.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 34.

One cause of the push for implementation of authentic assessment is dissatisfaction with traditional assessment methods. But there is a more deeply seated origin to the authentic assessment movement. It springs from a changing paradigm in academia concerning how knowledge is acquired. The emerging philosophy of education is called *constructivism*. As Jong Suk Kim states, “Knowledge is not attained but constructed.”<sup>50</sup> He goes on:

The epistemological base of constructivist teaching comes from an epistemological difference between the traditional epistemology of knowledge and the constructivist epistemology of knowledge. Traditional epistemology views knowledge as an objective phenomenon while the constructivist views knowledge as a subjective understanding of the person.<sup>51</sup>

A Christian may find much to critique in this humanistic view of knowledge. Christians know that there is an objective truth and knowledge of God is an objective phenomenon. There is, however, accuracy in the way that the constructivist describes learning.

Constructivism is a philosophy of education and a topic beyond the scope of this paper. Permit then only a brief sketch of its basic tenets. The main premise of a constructivistic idea of education is that an individual can only learn for him or herself. This represents a significant shift in the prevailing thought concerning education. Traditionally education was thought of as transmission of what the instructor knows to the learner. But for the constructivist, knowledge isn’t taught or even acquired; the learner constructs it. No one can learn for them. It’s the same idea of leading a horse to water. a cowboy can’t make that horse drink. A teacher can instruct, but that same teacher can’t make a student learn.

Constructivism is also learner-centric as opposed to being teacher-centric. That means that, in a constructivist classroom 1) the student is an active participant in the learning 2) the teacher is acting in a support role to the learner, and 3) learning is the priority in the classroom, not teaching.<sup>52</sup>

The goals of a constructivistic classroom may also differ from the goal of a traditional classroom. “Three curriculum goals—understanding, appreciation, and life application—lie at the

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<sup>50</sup> Jong Suk Kim, “The Effects of a Constructivist Teaching Approach on Student Academic Achievement, Self-Concept, and Learning Strategies,” *Asia Pacific Education Review* 6, no. 1 (2005), 7.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 9.

core of constructivism as a ... methodology.”<sup>53</sup> They go on to clarify what they mean by each of these goals:

*Understanding* means that students grasp both the individual elements in a network of related content and the connections among them, so that they can explain the content in their own words. *Appreciation* means that students value the content because they recognize that there are many good reasons for learning it. *Life application* means that students retain their learning in a form useable in other contexts. To address this range of goals, assessment must be what scholars refer to as *authentic*.<sup>54</sup>

The goals of this paradigm are lofty but attainable. With the idea that construction of knowledge via practical means at the core of constructivism, one begins to see how authentic assessment fits into this educational philosophy. How else can these things be measured? There is no multiple-choice test that can determine understanding, appreciation, or life application accurately.

The reader may be starting to sense that it is impossible to separate the assessment event from the teaching event and the planning of the class. Authentic assessment fits under the umbrella of *authentic pedagogy*. In other words, the constructivistic idea of education does not separate the assessment from the instruction. They work together in a system of teaching, learning, and assessing.

The temptation for some when speaking of different paradigms of education is to reduce the new information into adapting new teaching techniques. However, techniques employed without consideration of the underlying philosophy are less likely to achieve desired outcomes. This may be one reason that so-called new education ideas don’t work for certain teachers in certain settings. Newmann and Wehlage explain it well

Instruction is complex, and quantification of instruction can often be as misleading as informative. To guard against oversimplification, we formulated several standards [for authentic instruction].... The five standards are: higher-order thinking, depth of knowledge, connectedness to the world beyond the classroom, substantive conversation, and social support for student achievement.<sup>55</sup>

Each of these five standards deserves a brief examination.

Higher order thinking (HOT) is the opposite of lower order thinking (LOT). Students involved in LOT are viewed as “receivers” of information and are asked to “recite factual

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<sup>53</sup> Jere Brophy and Janet Alleman, “Assessment in a Social Constructivist Classroom,” *Social Education* 62, no. 1 (1998), 32.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>55</sup> Fred M. Newmann and Gary Wehlage, “Five Standards of Authentic Instruction,” *Educational Leadership* 50, no. 7 (1993), 8.

information” and are called on to “recite previously acquired knowledge by responding to questions that require specific recall of pre-specified knowledge. HOT “requires students to manipulate information and ideas in ways that transform their meaning and implications...Manipulating information allows students to solve problems and discover new (for them) meanings and understandings.” One of the issues for the instructor is that while educational objectives and outcomes may be certain instructional outcomes may be uncertain.<sup>56</sup>

Authentic instruction also calls for increasing the depth of knowledge from shallow to deep. “Knowledge is thin or superficial when it does not deal with significant concepts of a topic or discipline.” And “knowledge is deep or thick when it concerns the central ideas of a topic or discipline.” One objection some educators may have concerning depth of knowledge has to do with the amount of class time it takes to achieve the substantial depth of knowledge spoken of in authentic instruction contexts. Newmann and Wehlage say “depth is produced by covering fewer topics [but doing so] in systematic and connected ways.”<sup>57</sup> A brief Google search of “depth of knowledge” or “DoK wheel” will give the reader a brief overview of the types of verbs and processes associated with instruction and questioning in a class with a profound depth of knowledge.

Authentic pedagogy involves assessing students on deeper levels of knowledge as well.<sup>58</sup> Much of the authenticity literature is critical of traditional assessment. Traditional assessments may do an adequate job of assessing declarative knowledge but there is more knowledge that can be assessed than a bare memorization of facts. The more advanced thought processes such as analysis and synthesis ought to be assessed as well.

Dr. Spencer Kagan addresses these concerns in his book *Kagan Cooperative Learning*:

Traditional assessments don’t measure what is important to measure, and therefore students don’t learn what is important to learn. Tests are usually paper-and-pencil, right-or-wrong, easy-to-evaluate, out-of-context measurements of knowledge. Science tests measure if students have mastered a body of science knowledge, but fail to measure students’ ability to generate hypotheses and carry out valid experiments to test them. They measure the content of science, but not the process of science.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 9

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 9-10

<sup>58</sup> Brown and Knowles, 193. Quoting Sandra Schurr, *Authentic Assessment: Using Product, Performance, and Portfolio Measures from A to Z* (Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association, 1999), 3. One of Schurr’s main components of *authentic assessment* is that it “employs higher-level critical and creative thinking.”

Don't we value creativity, collaboration, artistic expression, and oral and written articulation? If assessment dictates instruction and traditional assessments don't measure the full array of desirable outcomes, then instruction is headed in the wrong direction.

Authentic assessment seeks to correct these flaws by directly examining students during 'authentic' learning tasks—challenging and meaningful real-world tasks embedded in real-world contexts.<sup>59</sup>

This may represent something many catechism instructors haven't seen before, at least not on any professional-academic level. This is not to say that traditional assessment is "bad" *per se* but it should not be the only way that students are assessed according to educational professionals.

The third element of authentic instruction relates to the class's connectivity to the world beyond the classroom. The two components of connectivity are related to the student's learning in his or her own context and the connectivity of what occurs in the classroom to what occurs in the "real world."<sup>60</sup> Connecting new information with the individual learner's context is important for the student to generate meaning because "meaning often results when past learning moves from long-term storage into working memory and interacts with new information. The diverse nature of an individual's experiences can impart different meanings to the same information."<sup>61</sup>

This is one reason why it's so important to assess this new learning in an authentic way.

But connectivity is also related to instruction that connects to the world outside the learner's head and outside his or her classroom. As Scheurman and Neumann say "Authentic intellectual achievement has aesthetic, utilitarian, or personal value beyond merely documenting the competence of the learner."<sup>62</sup> They also contend that calls for more relevant curriculum are "an imprecise expression of the desire for student accomplishments to possess authentic value beyond low-level measures of competence in a subject."<sup>63</sup> In other words, people recognize the shortcomings of the traditional model to prepare students for the real world. In turn, they request changes in curriculum. This fails to address the issues of assessment and learning in connection with the teaching.

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<sup>59</sup> Kagan and Kagan, 15.3-15.4.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 10

<sup>61</sup> David A. Sousa, *How the Brain Learns: A Classroom Teacher's Guide* (Reston, VA: The National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1995), 69.

<sup>62</sup> Geoffrey Scheurman and Fred M. Neumann, "Authentic Intellectual Work in Social Studies: Putting Performance Before Pedagogy," *Social Education* 62, no. 1 (1998), 25.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 25

The next component of authentic instruction calls for substantive conversations to take place in the classroom. Students talk to learn and understand the substance of a subject. In many classrooms conversations consists of teachers asking low-level questions and students giving short answers. These are the verbal equivalent of a written fill in the blank. For substantive conversation to occur there should be “considerable interaction about the ideas of a topic,” “sharing of ideas” and a “dialogue that builds coherently on participants’ ideas to promote improved collective understanding of a theme or topic.”<sup>64</sup> These types of conversation are important in a catechism class setting.

The fifth component of authentic instruction calls for social support. This simply means that teacher have high expectations, require respect, and include all the students in the learning process. This also means that teachers prepare students to succeed and offer the proper instruction to that end. “Social support is high in classes when the teacher conveys high expectations for all students, including that it is necessary to take risks, …that all members of the class can learn important knowledge and skills, and that a climate of mutual respect… contributes to achievement by all.”<sup>65</sup> It’s difficult to argue with the positive aspects of these five components.

What is the object, then, of authentic pedagogy? For those in secular contexts the goal is *authentic achievement*. Newmann et al contend “that all students deserve an education that extends beyond transmission of isolated facts and skills to in-depth understanding and complex problem solving and that is useful to students and society outside the classroom.”<sup>66</sup> If this is the object, then new ways of defining and setting standards may need to be implemented and new standards may need to be crafted.

Outside of crafting new standards for achievement there is some evidence that this constructivist, authentic model for education does produce students who perform well, or sometimes even better, on traditional standardized testing.<sup>67</sup> Not to mention that authenticity in

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<sup>64</sup> Newmann and Wehlage, 10.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 12

<sup>66</sup> Fred M. Newmann, *Authentic Achievement: Restructuring Schools for Intellectual Quality* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 18.

<sup>67</sup> Kim, 12.

education seems to positively influence student engagement and learning strategies more than traditional educational paradigms.<sup>68, 69</sup>

In spite of how nice all of these components and goals of authenticity may seem, there is not universal adoption of the constructivist authentic pedagogy paradigm. There may be some understandable hesitation to implement them. This paper does not endeavor to demonstrate the proper implementation. Perhaps fear of a new, “unproven” educational philosophy is a factor in this. It’s also possible that there are misunderstandings concerning how teaching and learning occurs. In the following paragraphs the author intends to clarify some of this confusion and demonstrate how authentic pedagogy works in step with student learning.

One of the misunderstandings on the part of many teachers may concern the difference between declarative and procedural knowledge. As Robert Marzano states:

The concept of practicing and deepening knowledge is brought into focus by the distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge ... Procedural knowledge is oriented toward skills, strategies, or processes.... Declarative knowledge is informational in nature.<sup>70</sup>

He gives examples of procedural knowledge as performing long division, reading a contour map, shooting a free throw, editing a composition for overall logic, editing a composition for mechanics, or sounding out an unrecognized word while reading. Examples of declarative knowledge are knowing and being able to recall events during the Normandy invasion in World War II, characteristics of different types of genre in literature, rules of basketball, characteristics of the cell, and characteristics of the process of percolation.<sup>71</sup>

These two types of knowledge are different. Marzano states, “procedural knowledge develops in different ways from declarative knowledge.”<sup>72</sup> It follows that a different type of knowledge that is developed in a different way should be assessed in a different way.

As previously mentioned there is brain science involved in the basis for authentic assessment. Brown and Knowles cite Sandra Schurr: “Authentic assessment emotionally engages

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>69</sup> Gene Pfeifer, “Designing Authentic Tasks” (Powerpoint presentation of doctoral work, 2002).

<sup>70</sup> Robert J. Marzano, *The Art and Science of Teaching: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction* (Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2007), 60.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

students, as they use information in real-life contexts that have meaning to them.”<sup>73</sup> David Sousa states that “emotional data also take high priority” in short-term memory retention and that “under certain conditions, emotions can enhance memory by causing the release of hormones that stimulate the amygdala to signal brain regions to strengthen memory.”<sup>74</sup> That means that an authentic classroom where active learning that involves emotional buy-in and emotional outcomes actually contributes to long-term retention of content. Sousa continues, “It seems that the learner’s working memory asks just two questions to determine whether an item is saved or rejected. They are: ‘Does this make *sense*?’ and ‘Does this have *meaning*?’”<sup>75</sup> Sense and meaning in relation to authentic assessment will be discussed further below.

There exists a great deal of literature on the subject of how to teach. Much of the methodology that can be found does not mention authentic assessment by name but the literature nonetheless recommends an implementation of teaching techniques that fit in along the authentic assessment spectrum.

As mentioned above assessment, is closely linked with the setting of goals. Authentic assessment is not different. The literature supporting the setting up of goals is widely accepted. One does not simply teach without any goal in mind. Likewise, one does not simply assess without any goal in mind. Frey and Schmitt state clearly that “Those who develop assessments, or choose them, do so for a certain purpose.”<sup>76</sup> Lemov,<sup>77</sup> Marzano,<sup>78</sup> and Keyser<sup>79</sup> among others state the importance of goals. One needs to know the goal or objective of an activity in order to assess the progress formatively or the completion of the project summatively. If the instructor has not constructed a goal or developed the assessment with a goal that is clearly expressed it is unfair to the student to assess the student on the basis of an unstated or ambiguous criterion. Authentic assessment thereby recommends developing goals which relate to or end in “meaningful real-world tasks.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Brown and Knowles, 195-196. Quoting Schurr, 3.

<sup>74</sup> Sousa, 13.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>76</sup> Frey and Schmitt, 416.

<sup>77</sup> Lemov, 57.

<sup>78</sup> Marzano, 28.

<sup>79</sup> Keyser and Howell, 8.

<sup>80</sup> Kagan and Kagan, 15.4.

Assessment does more than assess. It teaches as well. That's precisely what formative assessment is. Therefore, *authentic* assessment does more than assess learning, it also teaches. When we assess authentically we are allowing students to generate their own meaning from the learning activities instead of from some sort of explicit statement from an instructor. This is important according to recent research on the brain. Meaning can't be "taught" like some sort of fact. "Meaning is always generated from within, not externally," says Eric Jensen in his book *Teaching With the Brain in Mind*.<sup>81</sup>

Obviously, *meaning* is a personal thing. In fact, there are two levels of meaning. Jensen calls level one the "sense" meaning and level two the "deeply felt" meaning.<sup>82</sup> *Sense meaning* refers to a lower-level, declarative, lexical knowledge of a term. For example, one may know what the word "starve" means on a sense level. But "starve" holds a deeper, more personal, *deeply felt* meaning for someone who survived a Nazi concentration camp. In order for a learner to "learn" meaning there must be a confluence of "relevance, emotions, and context and pattern making."<sup>83</sup> This makes authentic assessment a powerful force multiplier for generating or discovering meaning in educational content. Depending on the design of the assessment exercise, all four factors may be engaged.

As stated above, emotion is important for meaning as well as for short-term retention and addition to long-term memory. Positive emotions are more likely to aid in memory retention than negative emotions and any emotion at all links learning to the episodic memory in the learners' brain. Brown and Knowles quote Schurr on the role of emotion in authentic assessment: "Authentic assessment emotionally engages students, as they use information in real-life contexts that have meaning to them."<sup>84</sup> This engagement of the emotions in the learning process is regarded as a positive thing.

Authentic assessment provides an element of rigor to the classroom as well. It allows students to use other important areas of the brain that will prove useful in real-life situations. They are therefore being assessed by how they are able to use their new knowledge. Brown and Knowles consider this to be a more accurate measure of progress than the traditional testing

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<sup>81</sup> Eric Jensen, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998), 46.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>84</sup> Brown and Knowles, 195-196.

model. “The [authentic assessment] activities demonstrate how young adolescents are able to use many of their developing cognitive skills such as creative thinking and problem solving, rather than their ability to memorize isolated facts.”<sup>85</sup>

One of the difficult things about teaching and questioning further along Bloom’s taxonomy or in deeper depths of knowledge<sup>86</sup> is uncertainty among teachers about how to assess the more advanced kinds of knowledge. Whitlock and Nanavati cite Ryan stating that “Performative and authentic assessments provide the best information about what students can actually accomplish... Performative and authentic assessments are also more conducive to evaluating higher-order thinking skills than objective assessments, helping to ‘expose students’ thinking, making it more overt, visible, and tangible’ (Ryan, 2006, p. 113).”<sup>87</sup> Authentic assessment gives an intriguing rationale for teaching the students to think more in-depth because now the instructor has a tool for assessing student achievement. Whitlock and Nanavati continue: “When we want to know if students can apply, analyze, evaluate, or create, performative and authentic assessment produces the best information.”<sup>88</sup>

One of the key components of authentic assessment is that the more you approach authenticity, the higher the stakes for the learner. Stakes, or the fact that the learners have a personal interest or share in the assessment, are important for knowledge acquisition. In other words the assessment is performed before an audience. In the real world, all of the work done is done for some sort of “audience.” That audience may come in the form of a customer, a boss, a co-worker, or a congregation. Either way, knowing that your work will be seen and evaluated by others automatically increases the stakes. Higher stakes mean more emotional investment which is tied to retention among other things as stated above. This leads Jensen to offer the following advice: “Put higher stakes in the learning through the setting of goals or the possibility of public presentation to evoke emotional investment.”<sup>89</sup> One suggestion for middle school learners in particular is to let them choose a project that is closer to them personally. This engages the

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>86</sup> For more information about Bloom’s Taxonomy and the Depth of Knowledge wheel see the appendix.

<sup>87</sup> Whitlock and Nanavati, 36.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>89</sup> Jensen, 94.

emotional connection of stakes and gives meaning to the task. When they “work on tasks of value to a particular community [it yields] a truer audience for authentic feedback.”<sup>90</sup>

It is also important to note that students are not all identical. There is more than one kind of intelligence. There is no basic set of knowledge that is common to all students. “Students are different, have different minds, come from different backgrounds and experiences, and learn differently. The world beyond the classroom values more than linguistic and logical skills and products. Therefore, learning tasks need to be varied to encourage and develop the various senses, intelligences, and learning and thinking styles.” Beyond encouraging and facilitating these differences the teacher needs to be able to assess students according to goals set in relation to them. “Good assessments seek to understand students along these multiple dimensions. We more accurately understand what students know and what students can do if we assess them under varied learning conditions.”<sup>91</sup> Authentic assessment offers differing learning/assessment conditions and observes and authentically appraises their development and achievement in those multiple dimensions.

Different cultures foster different kinds of learning as well. The facts of immigration and a rising “globalization” mean “educators must seek to develop curriculum that both resonates with learners and reflects the complexity of hybrid identities present in the global community.”<sup>92</sup> Different learning styles may not coordinate well with the traditional assessment paradigm. Other cultures may value things like creativity, collaboration, artistic expression, and oral and written articulation more than just grade on a report card.<sup>93</sup> That means that traditional testing may inadvertently give students from a “grade culture” a better grade than students from a “problem-solving” culture even though they may “know” the same amount. The difference isn’t in ability or knowledge but rather in what certain cultures value.

The main theme of authenticity is that adults want to prepare children for the rigors of the “real world.” This means helping them “attain the competency of skilled adults,” and readying them to “face the primary challenge of constructing or producing rather than reproducing,

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<sup>90</sup> Tonya R. Moon, Catherine M. Brighton, Carolyn M. Callahan and Ann Robinson, "Development of Authentic Assessments for the Middle School Classroom," *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education* 16, no. 2-3 (2005), 121.

<sup>91</sup> Kagan and Kagan, 15.4.

<sup>92</sup> Stacie Reck, "Analyzing and Evaluating Christian Religious Education Curricula," *Christian Education Journal* 9, no. 1 (2012), 27.

<sup>93</sup> Kagan and Kagan, 15.4.

meaning or knowledge.”<sup>94</sup> In order to meet those goals, instructors striving for authenticity ought to ensure that their instructional and assessment activities include construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school.<sup>95, 96</sup>

Construction of knowledge is “based on a foundation of prior knowledge.”<sup>97</sup> The instruction builds on that prior knowledge in context and requires more than just mere reproduction of that prior knowledge. Disciplined inquiry makes use of that prerequisite knowledge while “striving for in-depth understanding… and expressing one’s ideas and findings through elaborated communication.”<sup>98</sup> This means that students must learn to communicate and express themselves in more elaborate forms. Finally, that initial knowledge base should be expanded and the new knowledge acquired added to it in a way that shows its value beyond school. It is the job of the instructor to “build life value into the context of the project”<sup>99</sup> or whatever other assignment is being given.

### ***Possible Challenges of Implementing Authentic Assessment in Catechism Instruction***

A great deal of education theory comes from people with no interest in teaching something as important to the Lutheran as catechism. The vast majority of literature the author encountered concerns itself with secular subjects such as math, science, social studies, and reading. As one would expect, it comes from a humanistic viewpoint. One must keep in mind that not all the educational literature from other religious sources shares our high view of Scripture and the efficacy of the living Word of God as the power of God. These are important considerations to understanding how authentic assessment has been used in the past and how it may be implemented for a subject for which it wasn’t designed. One does not approach something as important and as rooted in tradition as catechism without any caution. Any changes made must be made thoughtfully.<sup>100</sup>

Much of the educational literature encountered approaches education with humanist presuppositions. Constructivism itself is based on the ideas that knowledge is subjective to each

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<sup>94</sup> Newmann, *Authentic Achievement*, 24

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Pfeifer (2002).

<sup>97</sup> Newmann, *Authentic Achievement*, 24

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 24-25

<sup>99</sup> Pfeifer (2002).

<sup>100</sup> Rueter, 11.

individual.<sup>101</sup> Christians won't adhere to the idea that facts can be subjective. However, it can be understood that the way knowledge is constructed is subjective. Each individual learns differently and comes from a different place geographically as well as emotionally and intellectually.

Other possible conflicts that may arise could spring from the critical difference between teaching a secular subject and teaching catechism. The catechism is not merely there to transmit information, although it does that. It does more than just "transmit core values and a worldview"<sup>102</sup> to the students. It prepares them for a life as Christians as no secular subject does and it passes on a deeper understanding of the priceless gospel. Secular teachers won't approach any secular subject the way a Lutheran Christian will approach the subject of God's Word.<sup>103</sup> Some have asserted that just merely knowing "right answers" is of no benefit to learners in secular or religious instruction.<sup>104</sup> This is simply not true. There are many learners who never experienced any form of authentic pedagogy but have learned on their own how to apply the right answers and bare facts.

The fact of the matter is that the Word of God is "living and active" (Hebrews 4:12). What is taught in the catechism is never just right answers and bare fact. So the critical difference between teaching a secular subject and teaching catechism is that the catechism is not merely there to transmit information, although it does that. It does more than just "transmit core values and a worldview"<sup>105</sup> to the students. It prepares them for a life as Christians as no secular subject does and it passes on a deeper understanding of the priceless gospel.

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<sup>101</sup> Kim, 8.

<sup>102</sup> Reck, 27.

<sup>103</sup> Rueter, 12.

<sup>104</sup> Alice Camille, "It's Not What You Know," *U.S. Catholic* 67, no. 4 (2002), 45.

<sup>105</sup> Reck, 27.

## **What Authentic Assessment Might Look Like in the Classroom**

### *A Summary of Adjustments for the Implementation of Authentic Assessment*

Naturally any departure from what one has grown accustomed to can be difficult. Changes will have to be made and there will undoubtedly be a learning curve. There will certainly be changes for the teacher in the instruction of the class, in the goals of the class, and the goals of the subject. The teacher who uses utilizes authentic assessment strategies may also find that the students aren't accustomed to them at first.

"The traditional description of the teacher" is "one person knows things that others need to know, and it is the role of that person, the teacher, to somehow get those ideas across to learners. Thus we have an expert working with novices." This is not necessarily a bad model for a teaching paradigm. It is a "powerful way to think about the teacher." The danger of this model is the "temptation to put subject matter ahead of people." This system has its advantages and weaknesses but one shouldn't be confined to only this way of teaching. It's not the *only* model for teachers.<sup>106</sup>

Another model of the teacher is the teacher as *facilitator*. "[This] image is not so much that of the scholar dispensing knowledge as it is of the helpful coach, the fellow learner and guide." This is where the authentic assessment paradigm fits best because it portrays "a teacher who wants students to learn for themselves, to explore, discover, construct, and create their own knowledge."<sup>107</sup> A facilitating instructor dovetails nicely with authentically assessing students in a freer environment that is more analogous to what the students might experience in the real world.

The instructor will have to make the bulk of the adjustments at the outset of the implementation of the authentic assessment strategies. There are several reasons for that. Teachers may have been taught to assess via traditional means. In the area of education, it has been noted anecdotally that one teaches the way he or she has been taught. And there is no doubt that many teachers and pastors were taught via the traditional method and were assessed via traditional assessment means. This makes the implementation of authentic assessment difficult for teachers. The reader should not be fooled; the work comes from the change, not the techniques themselves. The teacher, regardless of whether or not they are implementing authentic assessment, ought to "push more and more of the cognitive work out to students as

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<sup>106</sup> Ellis, *Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Together: The Reflective Classroom*, xiii.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

soon as they are ready.” It’s about what the students can do, not what you can do. “A successful lesson is rarely marked by the teacher’s getting a good intellectual workout at the front of the room.”<sup>108</sup> This would seem to indicate that instructionally, the amount of cognitive work the teacher is doing is actually less in the authentic assessment classroom than in the traditional classroom.

One of the adjustments may very well be to assess the goals and objectives of the class. But even before we can examine the goals of the daily classes or the goals of the entire course, we must examine the goals of assessment in general. Traditionally, the goals have only been to place students into a grade, to compare students with others, to motivate students, and to qualify for the next levels. These should not be the goal of assessment.<sup>109</sup> As stated above the goals of assessment should be to *clarify, diagnose, and encourage and support learning*.<sup>110</sup> For the student, a good assessment clarifies what has been taught. He or she will see the content more clearly in an authentic assessment because of its application or integration to existing knowledge that takes place during the assessment task. For the teacher, a good assessment detects communication miscues and successes. It will immediately become clear if the students have learned what was intended. The students will also be encouraged when they see the progress they’ve made. “The best assessment is that which leads to the improvement of individuals and groups.”<sup>111</sup> A good assessment can do all of these things, all while solidifying and supporting the ongoing learning that is taking place.

Any teacher wishing to implement authentic assessment strategies into his or her classroom will need to reassess the goals of the course. We all know that the goal of the course isn’t to “pass.” An effective teacher *must* take into account curriculum design.<sup>112,113</sup> Authentic assessment values process. Therefore the goals of the course must take into account the specific processes the instructor wants the students to learn and practice.

The same applies for the goals of the daily classes. The thoughtful instructor who wishes to implement authentic assessment will see the value in pondering the processes involved in the

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<sup>108</sup> Lemov, 93.

<sup>109</sup> Brown and Knowles, 186-187.

<sup>110</sup> Ellis, *Teaching Learning, and Assessing Together*, 33.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Marzano, 5.

<sup>113</sup> Brown and Knowles, 202

content to be presented that day. In fact, it's most valuable to evaluate the objective first. Then decide on what the students will learn en route to that objective. Finally, decide how they will be assessed.<sup>114</sup>

One simple idea for beginning to implement components of authenticity into the catechism class is role-playing. While role-playing is not technically “authentic” it is further along the continuum of authenticity than many activities. Also, role-playing is less contrived and more real to students in early adolescence.

In an authentic role-playing lesson the instructor would first state the goal of the lesson. “Today we are going to formulate a way to confront a close friend who is sinning against the seventh commandment. We will do this by role-playing a scenario that I will give you. If we don't quite get it right away, that's ok. We can try it again.” The instructor would give a rubric that clearly states a scale of points, the criteria, and the description of what makes each criterion worth its points. In order to push toward more authenticity the instructor will also add context to the task. Perhaps there have been some recent thefts of mp3 players from student lockers. The situation might then be that the student discovered that his or her friend is the thief. The particular context will vary from classroom to classroom. That's what makes it authentic. The instructor might even ask for scenarios from the lives of the students that can then be made into authentic role plays.

Up to this point, no assessments have been made. Once instruction begins, informal formative assessment opportunities will undoubtedly arise as the instructor asks guiding questions and the students attempt to assimilate the new material and concepts into their prior understandings and knowledge base. Now the instructor might ask the students to take some time to prepare their role-play. One student will be the erring friend and the other will try to confront them then they will switch. As the students begin to formulate their responses the teacher might walk around and ask questions like, “What Bible passages did we talk about that you can use here?” or “Do you remember what we talked about earlier in class?” At the end the teacher would then observe all the role-plays and assess them on the basis of the rubric distributed at the beginning of class. Any questions or doubts could then be addressed and corrections made. The instructor could up the authenticity ante even further by asking the students to write a reflection in their reflection journal that will be given to the teacher.

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<sup>114</sup> Lemov, 59.

This is just one small example of what authentic assessment might look like. There are obviously many different permutations of the basic idea. Changes may need to be made on the basis of class size, local culture, location of classroom, etc. but the idea remains the same. What was learned was added to the present body of knowledge. The students addressed the new information in a disciplined and profound way. And the real-world significance of the lesson was made clear. The catechism instructor might even consider keeping the grading rubrics or recording the role-plays and saving them in individual student portfolios. These would then serve to augment any public examination of confirmands as evidence of spiritual growth and achievement in academic aspect of catechism.

### ***Authentic Assessment Complements the Content of the Catechism***

While there are obvious caveats concerning any change to the instruction of the catechism, especially changes that come from such a humanist, secular perspective as listed above, there are still many benefits to implementing authentic assessment strategies into the catechism curriculum. Much of the research that the literature presents demonstrates that there are numerous benefits for both the learner and the instructor when authentic assessment is integrated into the classroom. Authentic assessment strategies don't work against the content or the goals of the catechism; they complement them.

No one can learn for the student. The students must do the activity of learning themselves. As Maria Montessori puts it, "The student must do his own work or die."<sup>115</sup> As has previously been stated, authentic assessment takes the cognitive work from the teacher and puts the bulk of the load on the student. This is what any educator wants, regardless of the subject matter being taught.

The catechism doesn't just transmit bare facts. It passes on knowledge that is practical in nature. Practical knowledge can be learned and applied not only on a *declarative* level but also *procedurally*. In other words, it's important that Christians know that they "cannot by [their] own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ...or come to him"<sup>116</sup> on a declarative, head-knowledge level. It is another matter to connect that knowledge to a conversation that one would have with someone who is confused about his or her own role in conversion. Memorizing that

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<sup>115</sup> E.M. Standing, *The Montessori Revolution in Education*, (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1966): 12.

<sup>116</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism: The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther and an Exposition for Children and Adults Written in Contemporary English*, ed. David P. Kuske, (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2010): 181. The referenced section comes from the explanation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Article.

section of the catechism is different from being able to comfort oneself with that section of the catechism. Authentic assessment complements that procedural learning that is a valuable component of catechism instruction.

The matters addressed by the catechism have intrinsic meaning and value regardless of how well they are passed along to learners or how well the learners pay attention. Nothing in the way the doctrines of God's Word are taught can make the doctrines relevant. The material in the catechism is relevant because it is straight from God's Word. God gave it. The questions asked are Luther's but the answer's given are God's. The purpose of teaching catechism is not to make relevant something that is already inherently relevant. But the way in which doctrines are taught can help the learner understand them or give them meaning. Authentic assessment strategies are proven to convey that meaning more effectively and deepen the ownership of that meaning in the hearts of the students. Authentic assessment doesn't make the content relevant but it does encourage relevant application of that content to the lives of the students.

Some people are understandably sensitive to any connection of emotions to doctrine. Nonetheless, one cannot deny that the content of the catechism is closely tied with emotions because it deals so directly and relevantly with the human condition and God's role among humans. As Joel Gerlach says in his paper *Teaching for Cognitive and Affective Outcomes*

To disciple people is a process. It involves people whose lives are undergoing a constant transformation as they grow in likeness to their Lord. Obviously then we must teach both for cognitive as well as for affective outcomes. These are the twin goals of Christian teaching. These goals are as Scripturally determined as they are psychologically sound.<sup>117</sup>

We don't rely on emotion or manipulate emotions but we do recognize that everyone has them and they are an important part of learning. As stated above, emotions are key in long-term retention of content. Emotions are also an important part of internalizing and personalizing meaning. The instructor is concerned about content retention and student personalization of the core doctrines of the church. Authentic assessment has been proven to effectively harness student emotions in the learning process without manipulation. This is another complementary role of authentic assessment to the learning task as applied to catechism.

The content presented in a catechism class is multi-disciplinary. It values knowledge in Bible history, reading comprehension, logic, and memory work among other things. It is also

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<sup>117</sup> Joel Gerlach, "Teaching for Cognitive and Affective Outcomes," Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, <http://wlsessays.net/files/GerlachCognitive.pdf> (Accessed February 15, 2014): 3.

applicable across every facet of the life of the Christian. A great deal of the value of Lutheran elementary schools is that God's Word is taught specifically in its own class and used in the instruction of all the otherwise secular classes. This showcases how broadly the doctrine may be applied to all areas. Authentic assessment encourages the student to step back and take a broader look at the content within a certain context, namely the real world. This employs creative and higher level thinking. It is complex and open-ended. It may require collaboration with others.<sup>118</sup> All of this extends knowledge and integrates it into the students existing knowledge. The higher level thinking, creativity, and complexity increase the rigor of authentic assessment tasks. Perhaps students would enjoy increased rigor in their catechism class. Regardless, pastors interested in the education of their students want increased rigor in their classes.

The catechism deals with *eternal* life and *eternal* death. There are no higher stakes than eternal life and eternal death. Authentic assessment has been proven to increase the stakes from a student perspective by giving them ownership of the assessment task and by making the results of the assessment public. Higher stakes in class prepare students for the high stakes of adult life outside of the Lutheran day school.

God's Word is for everyone. Christ calls us to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). There are no exceptions made for those with diverse learning needs or those from other cultures that value types of knowledge different from what the instructor values. Authentic assessment is part of an instructional style that develops multiple types of knowledge, values diversity in culture, and can better assess those who learn in different ways. Catechism instructors will teach to people from a broad range of cultures with a broad range of gifts and intelligences. Authentic assessment is complementary to instructors facing the needs of diverse learners.

The uses of authentic assessment are broad and interconnected. One can easily see that assessment is not simply a one-dimensional, summative thing-unto-itself. Assessment is an integrated part of planning, instruction, learning, and curriculum. Authentic assessment is only one type of assessment that fits into a larger assessment structure. This author believes it is an important component of the entire economy of the classroom environment that ought to be implemented. It is also believed to be important because instructors should give their students the best quality education possible. That means using the time valuably, effectively presenting

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<sup>118</sup> Brown and Knowles, 40.

the information in a unified and coherent way, demonstrating the practicality of doctrine, and of course glorifying God in all of it. In the following section the conclusions drawn from the previous studies are prayerfully aimed to do just that.

## What Does This Mean?

### *Authentic Assessment Is Consistent with a Truly Lutheran Philosophy of Education*

There is no official “Lutheran philosophy of education” but there is a *de facto* educational philosophy that is consistent with the traditional teachings of the Lutheran church. Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS) author William Rietschel treats the subject of Lutheran educational philosophy in his book *An Introduction to the Foundations of Lutheran Education*. There he quotes Allan Hart Jahsmann saying that a “truly Lutheran *educational* philosophy is biblical theology and Lutheran thinking applied to education.”<sup>119</sup> This shows where the content of Lutheran teaching fits within educational psychology and other frameworks of education. It’s not just the same teaching style in a different subject. Rather biblical theology and a Lutheran hermeneutic shape how we teach.

The Lutheran philosophy of teaching recognizes the power of God’s Word and the depravity of man. It also recognizes that “even in our fallen state we can learn.”<sup>120</sup> The Lutheran educator will take care to guard against two extremes: “1) doubt in the power of God that leads to substituting personality or human methods or efforts for the means of grace; 2) a careless attitude that fails to treasure the means of grace in our own lives or that leads to laziness, lack of effort, lack of preparation, lack of planning, or lack of interest in proclaiming the gospel to others.”<sup>121</sup> This is important. Humans are sinful and totally subject to God, but that does not obviate any Christian responsibilities. Educators must know that what is taught isn’t some impotent, empty set of ancient myths that need to be vivified with fancy teaching techniques. God’s Word and the doctrines therein are powerful all on their own because God breathed them (2 Timothy 2:14). However, knowing that powerful content doesn’t free anyone to merely utter dry words. Trying to teach God’s Word as effectively as possible is not some sort of attack on the power and efficacy of the means of grace. Teaching with the best teaching methods available is tipping the hat to the value and importance of the specific content area laid out in the catechism.

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<sup>119</sup> William C. Rietschel, *An Introduction to the Foundations of Lutheran Education* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 45.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>121</sup> John Brenner, “Christ’s Love: The Efficacy and the Power of the Means of Grace,” Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, <http://www.wlsessays.net/files/BrennerConvention.rtf> (accessed October 29, 2013), 8.

When Martin Luther first laid out the catechism he wanted it to be practical. “Luther approached education from the practical side.”<sup>122</sup> When he asks, “what does this mean?” he is demonstrating a care for the practical side of what he was teaching. Could this even be an early effort that approaches authenticity? The answer to that question is beyond the scope of this paper but it is safe to say that he wanted people to go deeper than mere questions and superficial answers. A Lutheran paradigm of teaching will keep this practical, quotidian nature of all doctrine in the front of the mind while planning on assessment.

This serves to demonstrate that there does exist implicitly in the minds of Lutheran educators a specific philosophy of education that takes into account the magisterial nature of the content and the ministerial nature of the teaching task. It also shows that Lutheran education, especially catechism, ought to have a component of practicality if not a central element that emphasizes the practical nature of what is being taught. As stated above authentic assessment is a valuable tool for the educator to demonstrate and instruct the practical importance of whatever content area is being taught. The authentic learning task not only serves to help educators diagnose shortcomings but it also clarifies to the student the practicality of the subject matter. Therefore authentic assessment can fit quite easily into the Lutheran philosophy of education on the basis of its practicality.

### ***Authentic Assessment Effectively Utilizes Class Time***

Most teachers will tell you that there is never enough time to teach everything they want to teach. They never seem to be able to cover all the content they desire. Unfortunately some teachers waste class time. They may do so unwittingly by poor planning of classes, failure to properly manage students, or by not using time effectively. As seen above, one of the chief components of Lutheran education is practically applying what has been learned. Unfortunately, for many instructors of catechism time runs out before the depths of the applications can be fully plumbed.<sup>123</sup> Therein lies one of the arguments for the implementation of authentic assessment strategies.

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<sup>122</sup> F. V. N. Painter, *Luther on Education: Including a Historical Introduction, and a Translation of the Reformer's Two Most Important Educational Treatises* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1889), 145.

<sup>123</sup> This is not completely the fault of the curriculum developers for the WELS catechism. In the introduction to the Small Catechism teacher’s guide it is clearly stated that the best applications apply the key points to the lives of the students. In spite of this ideal goal of application the curriculum may be too content heavy to actually allow adequate application. That would make the actual goal of the curriculum to transmit information despite the best efforts of its developers.

Reflection and reflective activities are considered to be authentic assessments of student learning. The beauty of this particular authentic assessment strategy is that it is not considered something extra over and above the regular classroom activity. Instead it more effectively uses class time. Time that could be considered dead time may be filled by an authentic reflective assessment activity. If the students are actively engaged in reflection while the instructor is transitioning to another task time has effectively been added to the class period. Bond, Evans, and Ellis explain:

Instead, [reflective assessment] is a value-added tool that builds teachers' and principals' understanding of how to design and implement strategies that increases student achievement and that can be incorporated into the already-established daily routine of the classroom. In fact, many teachers who begin using reflective assessment soon realize that it is a perfect way to make good use of what had previously been dead time in their classroom.<sup>124</sup>

One can easily see how this could be valuable for pastors, teachers, vicars, or parents teaching catechism. In reading reflections, it becomes immediately clear what is important to the students, what they learned well, and what their misconceptions may be. This is a much more accurate gauge of what has been taught than some multiple-choice quiz. Not to mention that those reflections can energize a weary pastor because he will see the Spirit at work in blossoming young Christians.

A simple way to use reflection as a time-effective, authentic task in the catechism class would be to create an “exit ticket”<sup>125</sup> with simple reflective questions. For example, student would be informed at the beginning of class that they won’t be able to leave until they have filled out their exit ticket. The questions could simply be: “What was clear?” and “What was unclear?” Or the instructor might make the exit ticket a culminating activity of the day: “Your friend is trying to get you to steal some money out of your mother’s purse. Write a short response using a Bible verse that you learned today.” This is a simple, reflective, semi-authentic task that easily gauges comprehension. It also gives the student an element of choice that is so important to adolescent learners. The instructor will know immediately if what was taught was caught.

Student and teacher collaboration is another valuable component of authentic assessment that takes advantage of time available. Students might not decide what the content of the class will be but they can be a part of the decision concerning what kind of assessment they think

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<sup>124</sup> Bond, Evans, and Ellis, 33.

<sup>125</sup> Lemov, 106.

would be best.<sup>126</sup> They might choose the content every once in a while. They could choose the order of topics or the project they wish to complete. When this collaboration takes place the assessment is not merely some measurement of learning but is a part of the instruction as well. Brown and Knowles explain: “When teachers design the curriculum collaboratively with students, students become responsible for helping to design not only how they want to learn information but also how they want to demonstrate their learning. The assessment is in fact part of the instruction and drives the learning experiences.”<sup>127</sup> When instruction and assessment occur in tandem, less time is spent on non-instructional tasks like taking quizzes. This leaves more time open for actually *using* the newly discovered knowledge in class under the supervision of the instructor. The students are still held accountable for what they prepared for class, like memory work quizzes. The hope is that more time be given to instruction and spent in higher order thinking.

The instructor might ask the students how they would prefer to show they understand what Jesus’ sacrifice means to them in light of the lesson. The options given could be to write a 5-panel comic strip, write a poem, or create a dialogue with a neighbor. The teacher would have clear expectations outlined in rubrics for these activities. This would serve to give the students some ownership and collaboration in their own education. Formulating how they will fulfill these tasks is part of integrating the assessment into the instruction as well.

Catechism students are at the stage of brain development where they have begun to think logically and have developed the ability to reason abstractly.<sup>128</sup> This makes the time spent in higher levels of thinking important, especially in catechism class. If students are being pushed to deeper depths of knowledge in other classes it would hold that they can be pushed as well in catechism. This is a difficult to do when one considers the amount of time spent in the regular classroom versus the amount of time spent in the catechism classroom. It is also difficult in light of the fact that, paradoxically students at confirmation age are likely to conform to what an instructor says without actually understanding. This happens because developmentally they are seeking a sense of belonging. This is a great opportunity for the catechism instructor because it

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<sup>126</sup> This need not be a free for all, lest students decide to draw stick figures at the end of class to show learning (or something of that nature). Teachers may give the students three choices of assessment ranging from a reflective essay to writing a play, for example.

<sup>127</sup> Brown and Knowles, 189.

<sup>128</sup> Rueter, 13.

gives an opportunity to allow the students to see that they belong in the body of Christ. This opportunity also presents a difficulty.

The difficulty of this situation is that all too often we do not recognize this fact and proceed under the false assumption that merely presenting the material and receiving affirmative responses to that presentation is enough. Students at this age are likely to simply acquiesce without much depth of understanding or personal integration of the contents of the Christian faith.<sup>129</sup>

This gives a golden opportunity for authentic assessment techniques because they can move students quickly from the shallow to spiritual so that they spend more time there making use of their higher level thinking processes.

Martin Luther says in his Large Catechism that:

It is not enough, however, for them to simply to learn the words and be able to recite the chief parts of Christian doctrine. The young people should also attend preaching services, especially when the pastor has scheduled sermons on the catechism... The reason why we carefully make a point of preaching often on the catechism is to impress it on our youth, not in high-toned, sophisticated language, but briefly and in very plain terms, so that it may reach their hearts and remain fixed in their minds.<sup>130</sup>

Luther placed an emphasis on attending church regularly. Church attendance is a good thing. It is a real world application of what confirmed Christians ought to do. However, if the assessment is attendance alone it is most likely not technically authentic. It might be more effective to request the students take notes on the sermon and then formulate a reaction to the sermon to be turned in to the pastor. While Luther may not have been very concerned about authentic assessment his goals in catechism instruction and church attendance are the same goals that an instructor implementing authentic assessment in the catechism class would have. That is, he wanted to impress these key doctrines on the youth and get beyond merely intellectual, fact-based knowledge and to their hearts and their minds. There are authentic assessment strategies that do this in a time efficient way as stated above. Other examples may include authentic assessment strategies that can be performed outside of class like journaling that is reviewed by the pastor, introducing and reading a Scripture lesson, or drawing a picture that can be used on the bulletin cover for a specific Sunday.

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>130</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Large Catechism*, Translated by F. Samuel Janzow (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 13.

### ***Authentic Assessment Takes Advantage of the Best Educational Strategies Available***

The literature review above demonstrates how authentic assessment dovetails nicely with how human brains actually work, how it complements the adolescent educational psychology of students of catechism age, and how the methodologies being taught to teachers make use of authentic assessment strategies to some degree or another. Implementing authentic assessment strategies therefore means implementing cutting edge techniques that take into account all of the advances made in education strategies.

As previously mentioned, brain science teaches that “how the learner processes new information has a great impact on the quality of what is learned and is a major factor in determining whether and how it will be retained.”<sup>131</sup> Authentic assessment gives students the time necessary for processing and reprocessing new learning. This processing time is essential for assigning *sense* and *meaning*, which as stated above, are crucial for retention and long-term memory. Authentic assessment opportunities engage what students already know and force interaction with new knowledge. This helps them predict how what they have learned will be useful in the future. This is known as *transfer*. Transfer is critical for the brain to extract meaning from content. Meaning is also context related. This means that the further along the authentic assessment continuum the class moves, the more easily and effectively the brain can assign meaning to the content and the better that content will be stored in long-term memory.

An instructor might use the class introduction to establish context necessary for transfer to occur. For a lesson on the Third Commandment they might ask if any of the students have ever skipped church. What were the reasons? How did they feel about it? Then the instructor might establish that the goal of the lesson for the day is to establish a plan to grow in gladness to hear and learn God’s Word. The lesson could continue into the next week if the instructor would ask them to reflect on how they began to implement that plan in the intervening time. This activity could easily serve as a time-effective, warm-up and review.

It has already been established that meaning is essential for long-term retention of content. One of the best ways for students to gain meaning is via reflection time. In fact, one of the key components is time. The brain does not retain information delivered barrage style. In fact, “Cramming more content per minute, or moving from one piece of learning to the next,

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<sup>131</sup> Sousa, 34.

virtually guarantees that little will be learned or retained.”<sup>132</sup> Although one may want to “get through” as much content as possible there is virtually no benefit to filling class time with endless content. The students will not retain it. That’s just not how brains work. Perhaps the brain has been created to recognize that important things take time to absorb. If we attempt to treat deep subjects such as doctrine with a shallow and speedy content-laden structure we may be fooling the brain into thinking it’s not that important.

While the tendency may be to focus on what the adolescent brain has not yet fully developed that is only half the story. There are also great opportunities that may be seized in dealing with adolescent learners. Educational psychologist Jean Piaget places catechism-aged students in the formal operational stage of development. This stage is marked by a “new capacity for reflection on one’s own thought and ways of experiencing, invites one mentally to step outside the flow of life’s stream.”<sup>133</sup> This means that catechism students are at the age where they, perhaps for the first time, *can see and name patterns of meaning*. The meaning of catechism is powerful and life-changing when viewed from this perspective. James Fowler places catechism-aged students as transitioning from what he calls stage 2 to stage 3, from mythic-literal faith to synthetic-conventional faith.<sup>134</sup> The student in stage 2 focuses on the all-powerful God who also cares about the individual deeply. The student in stage 3 is now developmentally able to see God in a broader context as he relates to entities outside of the individual such as school and society at large. Needless to say, adolescents are in a state of instability. The adolescent in transition benefits greatly from not only a personal God, but a God who also interacts and cares deeply about society at large. Authentic assessment connects these stages nicely. That immature sense of self is satisfied with the choice offered and the growing sense of larger meaning is invigorated by being able to take part in a project that can be seen by others. The high(er) stakes and authenticity of the tasks resonate with students of this age group. Therefore, authentic assessment is a valuable component of catechism instruction because it takes full advantage of what we now know concerning the brains of adolescent learners.

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<sup>132</sup> Jensen, 47.

<sup>133</sup> James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1981), 152.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 153. Although the reader might not agree with his terminology or his theology there is value to his perspective on psychological development in relation to religious instruction.

### ***Authentic Assessment Has Been Proven to Be a Valuable Assessment Tool***

Authentic assessment was developed because it fulfills needs that other assessment strategies don't. In its various permutations authentic assessment may assess students formatively or summatively and even informally in certain contexts. By compelling instructors to reevaluate goals and objectives authentic assessment more accurately assesses ideal goals. It is the culmination of aligning the expressed goals of the class with the implicit goals of the instructional method and assessment strategy. Authentic assessment also serves as a more equitable way to assess the progress and learning of students who learn differently or who are from cultures that value different intelligences than the traditional model.

Authentic assessment may be considered summative and formative. In practice it is difficult to distinguish the two. Summative assessment easily becomes formative when the student learns from the result and changes behavior on that basis. For the Christian, what is learned in catechism is assessed summatively over the course of ones entire life. In the catechism class the instructor should be less concerned about whether or not an assessment is purely formative or summative and more concerned about whether it is authentic. Then the results, whether formal or informal, could be used by the student and the teacher to clarify, diagnose, and encourage and support learning. Sue Swaffield differentiates between these two assessment approaches that both fall under the authentic assessment umbrella. She calls the summative assessment simply "authentic assessment." The formative assessment she calls "authentic assessment for learning."<sup>135</sup> It is important to note that for the purposes of this paper, they should both be considered authentic assessment. Interestingly enough, both the summative and formative authentic assessments can be utilized informally.

An example of an informal authentic assessment might be a instructor watching his catechism student performing an evangelism call at the door of a prospect. The instructor is assessing the knowledge acquired and its public performance summatively. The assessment is also formative because the student will undoubtedly learn from the experience and the productive feedback provided by the instructor. Naturally an informal authentic assessment won't fall as close to purely authentic on the continuum, but it can still be considered authentic. An example might be a pastor giving students three minutes to write a reflection on the 3<sup>rd</sup> article of the Apostles Creed. Then the students would share their reflections in pairs as the pastor

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<sup>135</sup> Swaffield, 434.

observed and mingled. Either way, authentic assessment is valuable for assessing the students both formatively and summatively.

In order to perform affective assessments of students the instructor must first establish goals. It's unfair to teach without any goal in mind and then assess on the basis of what has been taught. If students don't know how they will be assessed or what types of benchmarks they are to achieve their educational experience will lack direction and focus. Without a goal, the presentation of a lesson will likely lack direction and focus. The key in establishing goals with an eye toward assessment is that any goal that is expressed should be assessable.<sup>136</sup> In other words, if it can't be assessed it shouldn't be a goal. Human beings can't see faith. Pastors are human beings. If one of the goals of the class is that the students grow in faith it will be impossible to assess. It would be better to take "growth in faith" as a given and then proceed to assess what can be measured.

With that in mind, often instructors will have an idea of what they want their students to do but it won't be expressed. Or they have the opposite problem: they express a goal but the methods to achieve and assess that goal are misaligned. For example, if one wants his or her students to be able to analyze Bible passages to determine whether or not they are law or gospel passages but don't express that as a goal, you will run into problems. Either the students won't know the goal or the lesson will be disorganized. If the expressed goal is that the students ought to be able to respond to common objections to the vicarious atonement on the basis of Scripture, the method of instruction and the manner of assessment must match that goal. Teaching them what the Bible says is good, but assessing them on the basis of a multiple choice won't really assess whether or not they could actually respond to those objections on the basis of Scripture. It would assess if they could pick the best way out of three or four possible ways. If a student should be confronted with an invitation to smoke a joint in the real world they may not be able to respond even though the assessment given said they knew the first, fourth, and fifth commandments.

Once those goals have been thoughtfully established authentic assessment is an ideal way to assess whether or not they are being achieved. In the real world there are no multiple-choice questions. There are just questions. In the aforementioned example the instructor would state the goal that by the end of class students will be able to respond to invitations to smoke marijuana on

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<sup>136</sup> Lemov, 57.

the basis of Scripture. That's the expressed and ideal goal. It's explicitly stated and implicitly understood. In order to complete the task the students will have to know what commandments smoking illegal drugs would violate, Scripture passages that teach about it, some of the common arguments used by peers, and real ways they might use to respond. This is just one example of how assessment and goals should align. It is somewhat authentic. It would be made more authentic if reflection were added. Different elements of authenticity could be added until it culminates in some sort of real-world activity. In this way authentic assessment is shown to be a valuable tool because it more accurately *assesses* what ideally ought to be assessed.

Aside from achieving the objective of accurately assessing goals, authentic assessment is valuable because it is an equitable way to assess students with different learning needs and styles. Many churches stand surrounded by changing neighborhoods or in immigrant communities. As stated above, the realities of increasingly diverse neighborhoods and globalization oblige pastors to address “the complexity of hybrid identities present in the global community.”<sup>137</sup> Learners may come from cultures that value things other than test score. Learners may have diverse needs. No matter the background of the student or their strengths and weaknesses, the truths taught in the catechism are for them. Not to mention the fact that they will interact with their new knowledge in a diverse world. Traditional assessment strategies are deficient for assessing content acquisition in these diverse settings. “Authentic assessments... engage students in real world tasks and scenario-based problem solving more than traditional measures such as multiple-choice pencil and paper tests.”<sup>138</sup> And that’s not all. Authentic assessment strategies are effective in diverse catechism-aged students especially when they create mini communities of learners within the classroom, focus on higher-level tasks, encourage cooperation over competition, and connect to a larger community in some way.<sup>139</sup> These things are all components of a larger education paradigm into which authentic assessment fits nicely.

Spencer Kagan sums it up well:

We as educators are becoming more aware that students are different, have different minds, come from different backgrounds and experiences, and learn differently. The world beyond the classroom values more than linguistic and logical skills and products.

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<sup>137</sup> Reck, 27.

<sup>138</sup> Moon, Brighton, Callahan, and Robinson, 120. – Quoting Darling-Hammond, L. *The Right to Learn: A blueprint for creating schools that work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.

<sup>139</sup> Moon, Brighton, Callahan, and Robinson, 120. Quoting The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development: 1990.

Therefore, learning tasks need to be varied to encourage and develop the various senses, intelligences, and learning and thinking styles. Good assessments seek to understand students along these multiple dimensions. We more accurately understand what students know and what students can do if we assess them under varied learning conditions.<sup>140</sup>

This all means that good catechism instructors assess in multiple dimensions, too. Instructors can't lose sight of the basics such as memorization and fact recall, but that shouldn't be the only assessment criteria for students living in a diverse and rapidly changing world. If the goal of assessment is to "see what they can do" then it ought to actually assess what the students can do in the context in which they live.

Clearly, authentic assessment is a single component in a larger system of education. Pastors may be able to sense the preceding issues with formative and summative goals, assessment of ideal goals, and diverse learners in a diverse world. Authentic assessment is one tool that can address these issues and open a window into the growing faith of those adolescents put under the care of educators. Authentic assessment has value in not only that assessment but also in the way it encourages as well.

### ***Authentic Assessment Is Immediately Practical and More Personal***

What many catechism-aged students value is immediacy of the content. If students can sense that what they are learning is not only important and useful but that is such *right now* they are more likely to be engaged in the class. The personal practical applications of authentic assessment make it ideal in addressing the immediacy needs of the students. The personal nature of authentic assessment makes it ideal for students that are beginning to form individual concepts of what it means to be Christian.

Authentic assessment strategies offer students the ability to take ownership of their own learning. Rather than depending on a sage to deliver knowledge to them they can begin to assume some of the responsibility for their own personal growth. "Put simply, young adolescents are in a perfect position to learn how to be responsible for monitoring their own academic growth with some assistance from their teachers."<sup>141</sup> Note that they shouldn't do so without help, but the teacher is more of a facilitator than a crutch. This includes student-formed goals. This is important because "Young adolescents should be involved in goal setting in order to begin taking

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<sup>140</sup> Kagan, 15.4.

<sup>141</sup> Brown and Knowles, 191.

responsibility for their own learning.”<sup>142</sup> Of course, the students don’t set the curriculum but they take part in the process of developing desired learning outcomes with assistance from their instructors. This engages students in the entire learning process of the catechism classroom. This is valuable because pastors want their students to become lifelong learners, sitting at the feet of Jesus. Student ownership of the class progresses the students toward one of Martin Luther’s educational goals: “Instruction that would bear fruit in everyday life.”<sup>143</sup>

Students might not immediately understand what confession is, but one can be certain that they are familiar with guilt. Imagine the practicality of teaching catechism students to confess and forgive each other. They know what it feels like to sin and the comfort of forgiveness is immediately practical. If the instructor confesses and absolves with them that is truly authentic and immediate.

Aside from the benefits authentic assessment offers to the immediacy part of the education equation it also contributes to how personal it is as well. The time spent in assessment is not wasted if it is reflective. That gives students a chance to integrate the new knowledge into their personal knowledge base and apply it to themselves on a cognitive level. As we have already noted, God’s Word and the truths it communicates are intensely personal so there is much benefit to this. There are three ways that students know what they know. They have received the knowledge, discovered the knowledge, or constructed the knowledge. All three are important but they all have their own dangers involved. Knowledge received seems efficient because a teacher or book can deliver a large amount of content in a short amount of time. The danger is that it can become the heart of the curriculum. Knowledge discovered encourages ownership because the responsibility of learning rests on the learner. The danger is that it may not seem as efficient. A perceived danger is that students may discover the wrong things. This fear is dispelled because the teacher is there to guide learning. Discovering leads smoothly to constructing knowledge or synthesis of new ideas. This is the most time consuming but also very powerful. Authentic assessment allows for all three modes of knowledge acquisition and most accurately assesses them as well.

Authentic assessment is valuable to individuals in the classroom because it is *authentic*. That is what many individuals lack. Students don’t want to see a stuffy teacher in the front of the

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Painter, 152.

classroom putting up a front as if he weren't a real sinner like them. Pastors and teachers are real people and utilizing assessment methods that recognize and embrace the authenticity of the class are undoubtedly beneficial. The instructor who appropriately confesses his sins to a student is being real. The instructor who uses authentic assessment is well served and serves well because he offers his students the ability to be real, too.

### ***Omnes Theologia Est Habitus Practicus***

*Omnes theologia est habitus practicus*—All theology is a practical aptitude. So goes the theological axiom. Everything the Bible teaches is important to people in their day-to-day lives. The doctrines taught in catechism aren't *made* relevant; they *are* relevant. Every theological thing we learn can be used practically. So why assess in an impractical way what was learned as a practical thing? If *omnes theologia est habitus practicus* then this author believes that authentic assessment is a more accurate way to assess the acquisition of practical aptitudes.

The entire Christian life is one of training. Once one stands justified, there is an ever-fluctuating life of sanctification that will be struggled with for the remainder of the earthly walk. Catechism is a foundational apparatus in that Christian walk. Learning to dribble a basketball is foundational in the career of a basketball player. First, they may be *told* what dribbling is. Next, they will most likely *visually witness* what dribbling is. However, if they are to become master dribblers they must *practice* and *train*. This is similar to a life of Christian living. The third use of the law *tells* catechumens how to live. They will most likely *witness* many mature Christians modeling this Christian life. Authentic assessment gives them an opportunity, in varying degrees of controlled environments, to *train* and *practice* those skills. Those skills need not only apply to the third use of the law. Students may *memorize* the components of the gospel. This can be easily assessed via traditional assessment methods. They may *cognitively understand* the content of the gospel. This also may be easily assessed via traditional testing means. They have undoubtedly witnessed the Gospel in action. However, authentic assessment gives educators the opportunity to witness students *experiencing* the Gospel. Authentic assessment then becomes a valuable and encouraging tool for both students and instructors. As students train through practical experiences they are preparing themselves for the variety of authentic events that will take place over the course of their very real Christian life.

Authentic assessment also demonstrates growth and maturity of faith. It may be difficult to see the growth in students from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Authentic

assessment gives the opportunity to document that growth or lack of growth in a systematic and empirical way. The work completed may be saved in individual portfolios so that the growth might be clearly seen from the beginning of the year to the end.

One of the stated goals of WELS schools is to “prepare students for their Christian lives with curricula, programs, and activities that serve the whole child.”<sup>144</sup> Catechism is a part of that curriculum and the *habitus practicus* of its doctrine does serve the “whole child.” In other words, it’s not just about academic achievement. It’s about growing in faith, too. While authentic assessment can’t accurately measure faith it can be used to demonstrate growth and maturity in a practical way.

### ***Authentic Assessment Accurately Assesses Preparedness of Confirmands to Be Confirmed***

Instructing the whole child and assessing that progress in an authentic way is an accurate way to assess readiness for confirmation. However, in order to start a conversation about how to assess for the preparedness of confirmands one must first know what the broad goals of catechism class are. While the topic of what those goals ought to be is beyond the scope of this paper one might comfortable say the following. A candidate for confirmation ought to demonstrate that he or she is prepared to participate in the Lord’s Supper and thus become an communing member of his or her local congregation and assume all the rights and responsibilities involved in that commitment. That involves demonstrating that they have become acquainted with the basic doctrines of the Lutheran church and are willing and able to confess them and uphold them. Candidates also ought to be able to demonstrate that they willing, able, and intend to remain Lutheran Christians until they die, by the grace of God alone. These are profound matters that we are asking eighth graders to participate in. The Christian Worship rite of confirmation asks, not only what confirmands believe but also, “Do you intend to continue steadfast in this teaching and to endure all thing, even death, rather than fall away from it?” and “Do you intend to conform all your life to the teachings of God’s Word, to be faithful in the use of the Word and sacrament, and in faith and action remain true to God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—as long as you live?”<sup>145</sup> Those questions come from the rite. They aren’t authentic assessments in and of themselves. They are a ceremonial way of showing what another

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<sup>144</sup> Task Force on Lutheran Schools, *Foundational Principles and Guiding Statements for WELS Schools*, (Milwaukee, WI: 2013), 2.

<sup>145</sup> Commission on Worship of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Christian Worship: Occasional Services*, Milwaukee (WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2004), 18.

assessment has already shown. So the catechism instructor will want to know that the students have learned what they are promising in those statements. This author believes that authentic assessment accurately assesses the confirmands' preparedness to make theses solemn and weighty promises.

In the two years leading up to the confirmation event, authentic assessment can play an important role in the instruction of catechism classes. As students are learning and being assessed in an authentic pedagogy, the instructor is clarifying the shortfalls and gaps in knowledge and understanding formatively on the basis of a diagnosis of the students' performance in authentic tasks. The authenticity reflects well the practicality of content of the catechism curriculum.

There is value to the authentic pedagogical paradigm in that it encourages active learning, personalization, reflection, growth in faith, and life-long love of learning about Jesus and what he's done. When these factors come together there is a powerful confluence of powerful ideas complementing the most powerful thing in the world, authenticity and God's Word.

## Conclusion

The literature and my work have defined authentic assessment and demonstrated that it is a good fit with the instruction and assessment of catechism students. It is a valid tool for the teaching of doctrine and a valuable arrow in the quiver of a professional educator like a pastor.

We have seen that authentic assessment is consistent with a Lutheran philosophy of education. It takes advantage of the content of the class and makes the best use of limited time. It aids students in making practical applications to new knowledge about God's Word. It complements rather than contradicts the efficacy and all-encompassing nature of God's Word. And it communicates and teaches effectively the fact that everything God tells us is practical.

This paper is not a "how-to" guide on the implementation of authentic assessment. It is only an analysis of its validity and an argument for its implementation. If one wishes to begin implementing authentic pedagogical components, there is more study that must be done.<sup>146</sup>

There was much beyond the scope of this paper. An analysis of the current pedagogical trends in WELS catechism instruction would be a worthy subject of study as would be a comparison of the stated goals and assessment methods of catechism curricula being used in our

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<sup>146</sup> There are several great resources available listed in the bibliography. They are denoted by an asterisk (\*) at the end of the entry.

circles. A study measuring the engagement of catechism students in relation to how authentic their instruction and assessment was might also be of benefit. An in-depth examination on the Lutheran philosophy of education would be another worthy area of study. More study of authentic assessment in the religious education of adults and other age groups would be beneficial. All of these things are commended to future research.

I pray that the information passed along by this thesis project is useful not only to pastors who teach the catechism but also to students who are in those classes. I imagine that the information gleaned from these pages would also have similar uses to the pastor teaching in a high school setting and for full-time teachers who are teaching other basic Bible truths to the students in their care. I'm certain that some of the strategies described have uses in the education of adults in Bible class and Bible information courses as well. May the Lord richly bless the educational ministry of our church body at large and the education of the individual confirmation classes. We do all things to his glory and submit always to his will.

+ SDG +

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\* All bibliographical entries with an asterisk denote that they are of a more practical nature and useful for the instructor wishing to implement teaching strategies along the authentic pedagogy continuum.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: An Example of a Grading Rubric

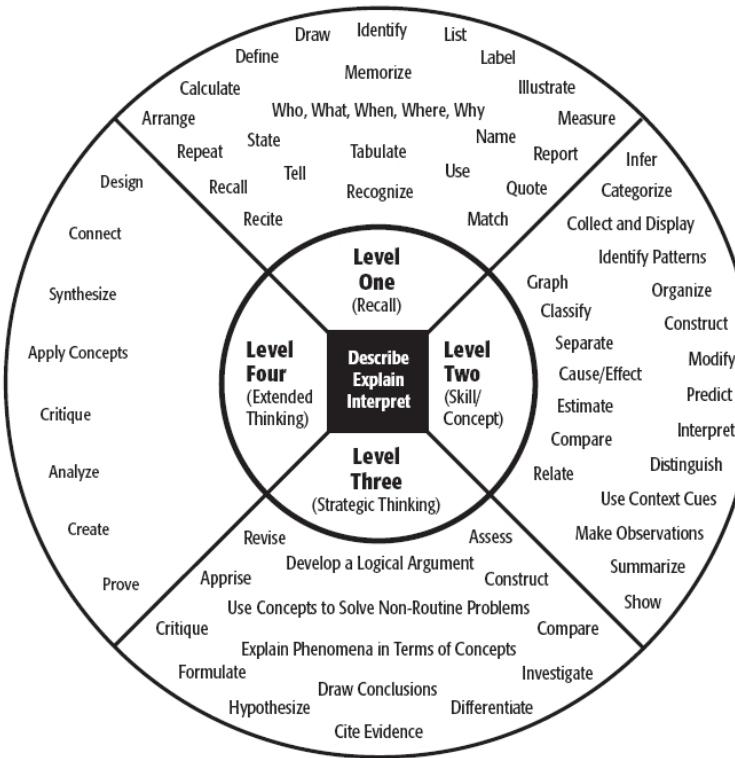
Instructors in the authentic pedagogy model seek to depart from assigning a letter grade to work done by students. One reason for this is that letter grades are sometimes ambiguous. A grading rubric seeks to clarify expectations and quantify how those expectations will be met. The following is a simple example of what a rubric might look like for memory work. Note there are four levels of proficiency, names for those levels, expectations, and examples of expectations. For more information on rubrics and how they can be used in a classroom consult Doug Lemov's *Teach Like a Champion : 49 Techniques That Put Students on the Path to College*, Kagan and Kagan's *Kagan Cooperative Learning*, or Grant Wiggins' *Educative Assessment: Designing Assessments to Inform and Improve Student Performance*. There are undoubtedly better rubrics out there and other sources that may assist in the crafting of rubrics.

#### Grading Rubric for Memorization Work

1	Excellent	No mistakes; no prompting needed	“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.”
2	Satisfactory	Fewer than 5 mistakes for a longer section fewer than 3 mistakes for a shorter section: wrong word, wrong order, prompts	“Give thanks to God, for he is good; his power endures forever.”
3	Needs Improvement	5 or more mistakes for a longer section and 3 or more for a shorter section.	“Give glory to God, for he is good; his power lasts forever.”
4	Unsatisfactory	Didn't do the work; didn't try	“I don't know.” “Whatever.” “Uuhhh...”

## *Appendix B: Tools for Deeper Knowledge and Higher Order Thinking*

The following is an example found online of Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DoK) wheel. The verbs listed may be helpful in putting together lessons that intentionally pursue deeper levels of knowledge and higher order thinking activities. Please note that this is *only an aid* and it must be used in conjunction with a unified teaching style not as some sort of silver bullet for student engagement. Let it offer the reader food for thought and ideas on deeper instruction.



<http://qcsdsi.weebly.com/webbs-depth-of-knowledge.html> (accessed March 5, 2014)

The following is a description of Blooms Taxonomy found on teachervision.com (<https://www.teachervision.com/teaching-methods/curriculum-planning/2171.html?detoured=1>, accessed March 10, 2014). It is a concise explanation that can give a basic idea of what is commonly accepted as levels of thought from lower order to higher order. On the basis of a quick internet search, one will see easily how the taxonomy has been revised and how educators don't universally accept or practice consistently what the taxonomy represents.

According to Bloom's Taxonomy, human thinking skills can be broken down into the following six categories.

1. **Knowledge:** remembering or recalling appropriate, previously learned information to draw out factual (usually right or wrong) answers. Use words and phrases such as: how many, when, where, list, define, tell, describe, identify, etc., to draw out factual answers, testing students' recall and recognition.
2. **Comprehension:** grasping or understanding the meaning of informational materials. Use words such as: describe, explain, estimate, predict, identify, differentiate, etc., to encourage students to translate, interpret, and extrapolate.
3. **Application:** applying previously learned information (or knowledge) to new and unfamiliar situations. Use words such as: demonstrate, apply, illustrate, show, solve, examine, classify, experiment, etc., to encourage students to apply knowledge to situations that are new and unfamiliar.
4. **Analysis:** breaking down information into parts, or examining (and trying to understand the organizational structure of) information. Use words and phrases such as: what are the differences, analyze, explain, compare, separate, classify, arrange, etc., to encourage students to break information down into parts.
5. **Synthesis:** applying prior knowledge and skills to combine elements into a pattern not clearly there before. Use words and phrases such as: combine, rearrange, substitute, create, design, invent, what if, etc., to encourage students to combine elements into a pattern that's new.
6. **Evaluation:** judging or deciding according to some set of criteria, without real right or wrong answers. Use words such as: assess, decide, measure, select, explain, conclude, compare, summarize, etc., to encourage students to make judgments according to a set of criteria.

### **Appendix C: Sample Authentic Assessment Task Template**

The following is brief example of how an instructor might prepare for an authentic pedagogical experience. For more information on task templates refer to Grant Wiggins *Educative Assessment*, chapter 6.

Instructor: Vicar John              St. Jehoshaphat Lutheran Church

Unit 6: The Lord's Supper: Part 4

*Your task:*

You are at a family dinner for Thanksgiving. Your extended family members belong to a variety of different churches. Some are WELS, others ELCA, Catholic, and agnostic. They are familiar with your stance on fellowship and they like to tease you about praying together before dad carves the turkey.

The next Sunday they are still in town and planning on attending your church. You know that this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month and there is always communion on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday. The discussion has come up before and last time your uncle made some stinging, passive-aggressive remarks about the law of love.

You will craft a concise explanation in paragraph form that:

- is evangelical; you don't want to start fights you want to share the gospel
- is clear
- is brief; no more than 7 sentences. Make every word count. It can be shorter if it is sufficient
- uses at least 2 quotes from Scripture
- is to be presented *before* you get to church so that your family members don't feel ambushed.

Your family is close and you all love each other. Craft this paragraph in a natural enough way that you might be able to use it in real life. Remember you must be *brief*, *clear*, and *justifiable on the basis of God's Word*.

*Achievement Targets:*

Performance Competencies:

Processing Information  
Problem Solving  
Communication  
Courage/Evangelical Attitude

Content Standards:

1 Corinthians 10:17  
1 John 3  
8<sup>th</sup> Commandment  
Fourth Part of Communion

*Criteria for assessing performance:*

Impact:

Persuasive  
Evangelical

Work Quality:

Clear  
Concise

Content:

Scripture based (accurate, relevant, focused)  
Based on traditional Lutheran doctrine and practice

*Rubric:*

A holistic rubric will be utilized that divides performance into 4 levels of proficiency.

*Feedback to be given to students:*

The students will receive a score (1-4), a rubric to explain their score, personalized written comments, and personalized oral comments and encouragement.

*Performance Standard*

There are no standardized requirements for this section of Catechism yet. The church is working on completing them.

*Person Assessing the Performance:* Vicar John

*Task Title:* “Sticky situations: The Lord’s Supper”

*Brief Description of Task:*

The students are asked to write a concise paragraph that may be used to explain communion to a family member, using God’s Word and applying it in a loving way.

*Requirement of successful performance:*

The task must be completed:

1. On time
2. Legibly/on a word processor
3. On the basis of Scripture/Orthodox doctrine
4. According to the aforementioned guidelines that will be outlined in the rubric

*Evidence to be collected:*

The only item to be turned in will be the final paragraph.

*Performance Task Guidelines:*

*Curricular Context:*

The students have learned the difference between law and gospel and have begun to learn to apply it. The students have memorized the fourth part of the Lord’s Supper and Scripture pertaining to the Supper and Fellowship. The students have demonstrated evangelical dispositions and written reflective essays on the importance of lovingly telling the truth. This will be in the Communion Unit at the very end.

*Resources Required for Successful Task Performance:*

Previous worksheets on communion              Bibles              Catechism Books

*Possible Extension(s):*

- Crafting a communion announcement that will be used in the bulletin
- Role play with Vicar or other students playing devils advocate

*Due Date:* April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014

#### ***Appendix D: Ideas for Authentic Pedagogy Tasks***

The following is a brainstorm of authentic tasks that Catechism instructors might consider implementing in their classes.

- The students could fill out a reflection journal throughout the week reflecting on the 10 commandments. Possible areas of focus might be: conversations with parents about the commandment taught that week, a confession of sins against each command, opportunities to forgive neighbors, specific thoughts about that commandment.
- The students could create bulletin cover art for each chief part of the catechism that will be used on actual church bulletins.
- The students could make shut-in visits, outreach visits, or door-knocking/ethnographic interviews for the church with the pastor or elders.
- The students could serve as lectors in the church service.
- The students could write letters to a Christian brother or sister in prison to encourage them in their walk of faith.
- The students could confess their sins to each other and absolve each other.
- The students could write a letter or short column for Forward in Christ or the religion section of the local paper.
- The students could create their own Bible study and spiritual growth plan, including a prayer plan and ideas for troubleshooting difficulties in devotional life.
- The students could create a simple lesson teaching one of the commandments to a lower-grade group.
- The students could create a video based on a role play.
- The students could create a comic strip for an upcoming Bible study on a certain topic.
- The students could help create and collate a glossary of catechism vocabulary that explains the words in their own terms.
- The students could write a reflection on what they would've felt like if they could remember their own baptism.
- Plan a celebration of baptismal birthdays for the students.
- The students could create a baptism book for the sponsors of recently baptized babies.
- The students could design the banner that will be used for their own confirmation that clearly expresses their faith.