

The Art of Assessment

The Art of Assessment

*Making Outcomes Assessment
Accessible, Sustainable, and Meaningful*

Andrea Susnir Funk

Foreword by
Judith Welch Wegner



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*To my parents, Martin and Carolyn
~ For every sacrifice you made and every
opportunity you provided*

*To my husband, John
~ For the life and family we have built together*

*To my daughter, Grace
~ For being the greatest gift and my reason for everything*

*Thank you.
I love you.*

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Foreword

*Judith Welch Wegner*¹

Today's legal educators live in an era when assessment has become increasingly important. The American Bar Association now requires law schools to set "learning outcomes" for students in their educational programs, adopt more comprehensive forms of "assessment," and develop plans for "ongoing evaluation" of their "program[s] of legal education, learning outcomes, and assessment methods." (ABA Standards 302, 314, and 315.) To some, such requirements raise the specter of intensified bureaucratic burdens. To others, the requirements offer a new arena for creative activity, a space for engaged inquiry, a means of helping students learn more effectively, and a framework for building institutional pride. In this book, *The Art of Assessment*, Professor Andrea Susnir Funk comes down on the side of open-minded hope rather than defensive disaffection.

Professor Funk's book focuses on how individual faculty members and their schools can create a culture of assessment, perhaps the most crucial but often invisible element in achieving an energizing and constructive assessment process. She is very effective in deconstructing opaque language and concepts, suggesting methods for getting started, and creating a sustainable assessment cycle. She offers important tips on building on existing practices, gathering and using information, grappling with doubts about why and how assessment can work, and building institution-wide interest and commitment.

1. Burton Craig Professor and Dean Emerita, University of North Carolina School of Law; Co-Author, *Educating Lawyers* (2007).

This is a book that gives readers important tools, but goes further, by illuminating the real potential of assessment for teachers, learners, and educational institutions. It puts me in mind of Parker Palmer's wonderful *The Courage to Teach*, with its uplifting willingness to confront fears but build on hopes that are dear to the hearts of the best law teachers: helping students learn, working with colleagues, and "teaching from the heart of hope."

Acknowledgments

I owe a debt of gratitude to so many. This book would simply not exist but for the support, encouragement, and inspiration I have received from the extraordinary people who have been placed in my path over the years. I have been enormously blessed and thank each and every one of them from the bottom of my heart.

I have had the good fortune to know and work with three truly special and uncommonly wise women who embody what it means to have a giving spirit; this book is better because of each of them:

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~To Patricia Leary, my person. She is like a beacon of reason, my true north. I thank her for the countless hours we have spent together thinking and talking about assessment, words, and life. I have been blessed with her incomparable and unwavering friendship. My world is better because she is in it.

I have also been fortunate to be influenced, inspired, energized, and touched by those already dedicated to the mission of improv-

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~To Andi Curcio, my new “old” friend, for being the generous, discerning, insightful colleague we should all be so lucky to have.

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And finally ...

~To my family. To my parents, for their unconditional love and for putting education and the best interests of

their children above all else; to my husband, for being the best human I have ever known and for supporting me always; to my daughter, for giving me a higher purpose in life. When I look at her, I see clearly what really matters. I love each of them more than words can ever say.

