

**International Conference on Assessment *for* Learning** (September 2001) By Judy Arter

The Assessment Training Institute Foundation coordinated and participated in the First International Conference on Assessment *for* Learning. The goal was to explore commonalities among educators in various countries in their use of classroom assessment to improve student achievement. All participants are recognized in their own countries as leaders and advocates of assessment *for* learning, not merely assessment *of* learning.

Assessment *of* learning “is intended to summarize student attainment at a particular time whereas [assessment *for* learning] is intended to promote further improvement of student attainment.” (Terry Crooks, “The Validity of Formative Assessments,” University of Otago, Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand, 2001)

Although the details of external testing and educational organization varied among countries, there was consensus on many points, including:

- Productive student involvement in assessment can have a major impact on student motivation and achievement. Learning occurs when students want and feel able to learn.
- Teachers need to make learning targets clear to students for each lesson, articulate why these learning targets are important, and involve students in discussing what it will look like when each learning target is achieved.
- Teachers also need to involve students in tracking their progress over time and communicating their progress to others.
- All educators need to know the difference between sound and unsound classroom assessment.
- Teacher use of assessment information to plan instruction and make other classroom decisions is part of ‘assessment *for* learning.’
- Effective professional development in assessment requires extensive opportunities for dialogue among educators, input of new information, lots of time to practice in their own classrooms, and choice.
- Educators have not, in general, had the opportunity to learn what they need to know about assessment.

The International Conference was held in Chester, England, September 19-21. It included participants from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the US, England, Israel, Switzerland, and Belgium.