



ARE ASSESSMENTS REALLY TEACHING?

What New Research Says About Hidden Messages in Assessment

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WHAT RESEARCH FOUND

Researchers investigated how students interpreted messages communicated through assessment practices in a college science course. Students often concluded that success depended on producing instructor-approved answers rather than understanding ideas deeply.

Assessment tasks, answer keys, and grading systems communicated powerful messages about what counted as knowledge. Over time, these messages shaped students' beliefs about learning itself.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Students learn more than content from assessments. They also learn what schools value.

CLASSROOM REALITY

Teachers Want	Students Often Experience
Deep understanding	Answer hunting
Scientific reasoning	Memorization
Evidence use	Key matching
Inquiry	Performance focus



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Research interpreted for real classroom

Theme: What Actually Helps Students Learn? Volume 3-11, 2026

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TRY TOMORROW

1. Ask students to explain reasoning.
 2. Use open-ended questions.
 3. Reward evidence-based thinking.
 4. Discuss multiple approaches.
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CAUTION

Assessment design can unintentionally encourage superficial learning.

ONE KEY TAKEAWAY

Students pay close attention to what assessments reward—and adjust their learning accordingly.

Keywords: assessment, epistemology, science learning, reasoning

Reference:

Schwarz, C. E., DeGlopper, K. S., Greco, N. C., Russ, R. S., & Stowe, R. L. (2025). *Modeling student negotiation of assessment-related epistemological messages in a college science course.*