Middle School Mathematics Teachers’ Understanding
Of the Meaning of Classroom Assessment

Jean Palm
August 2001

Advisor: Prof. Helen M. Doerr

Research Apprenticeship Report Abstract

This qualitative research study examined middle school mathematics teachers’ understanding of classroom assessment through semi-structured interviews, examination of assessment artifacts, and classroom observation. Final analysis resulted in four broad themes: (1) issues related to the new curriculum, (2) how teachers know what students know, (3) how teachers use classroom assessment, and (4) broader assessment issues. Results from studying this cohort of middle school mathematics teachers’ assessment practice reflect the complexities inherent within understanding assessment. Discrete categories emerged, yet they are intertwined with each other. The teachers in this study found a reformed curriculum, past beliefs and practice, and accountability all influenced their assessment practice. A change in the nature of state mandated testing and a culture of learning both advanced these teachers’ perception to encompass a more robust understanding of classroom assessment.