

Learning to Soften the Hard Edges



Transforming Learning Summit

Session Outcomes

The participants will:

- Explore key assessment practices through scenarios
- Select and explore personally relevant hard edged assessment practices
- Apply a specific process to refine assessment design and processes

Softening the Edges means...

Clarifying our inner voice as
connected to:

- Our emotions
- Our beliefs and values
- Our needs

Softening the Edges means...

Clarifying assessment

- Its purpose
- Its impact
- Its potential

Transaction to relationship



Professional judgement

Where am I?
(Current
State)

Where am I
going?
(Goal)

Response

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graph LR; A[Where am I? (Current State)] --- B[Where am I going? (Goal)]; B --> C[Response];
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Softening the Edges means...

Creating Alignment through:

- Curiosity
- Research and exploration
- Design

Indicators of Edges

Hard Edges

- We feel “boxed in” by a practice
- We suffer emotional pain as a result of a practice
- Our sense of self and our intellectual, physical, emotional, social or spiritual capacity is diminished by a practice
- We feel helpless as a result of a practice
- We feel a separation between who we are and what we do

Soft Edges

- We have clarity about the actions we will take to grow
- Our processes invite flexibility, responsiveness, and creativity
- Our practices support investment, compassion, and optimism
- We experience efficacy and agency in decisions about our own actions
- Our voices are heard and our physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual needs are all met

First, two stories



Seek first to understand...

What was the intended purpose of the assessment?

Which hard edges exist for the student?
For the teacher?

What does the teacher need? What beliefs and values might be impacting things?

What does the student need? What beliefs and values might be impacting things?

Softening the edges...

How might the edges be softened with this assessment process? What could we suggest that would soften the edges for the teacher and the student?

Formative assessment

- Share criteria with students
- Equip students with strategies for growth
- Involve the students in decision-making
- Use formative assessment to guide differentiation
- Use both smaller and larger formative assessments
- Stay curious – What is going on? What do learners need?
- Be aware of students' pre-conceived notion about their place in the class

Summative Assessment

- Convey joy and optimism when discussing learning and assessment.
- Understand the difference between work and learning.
- Put summative assessment in its place. It is a moment in time. Be prepared to triangulate in order to make a professional judgment.
- Make sure students are ready. Ensure the summative reflects formative learning and assessment processes.
- Separate behavior and achievement.
- Be prepared for new learning which will require re-demonstration.
- Allow summative to become formative when new evidence replaces old.
- Foster emotional safety.
- Mix it up and be creative.

Softening the Edges

- 1. Start with an assessment process we suspect may have a hard edge. Allow ourselves to acknowledge this reality.**
- 2. Reflect on the intended needs we are trying to meet (intellectual).**
- 3. Review the holistic (emotional, physical, and social) needs of teachers and students; review our values and beliefs.**
- 4. Determine the degree to which our assessment process aligns and, if it doesn't, why.**
- 5. Consider alternatives (research when needed).**
- 6. Reframe the assessment and make new decisions.**

Keys to Softening the Edges



Time and processes for daily reflection



Opportunity to seek feedback, listen to, and converse with students



Strong assessment architecture – pre-designed and carefully considered



Strong purposes – for assessment and for learning contexts



Time and process for collaboration



Willingness to reveal vulnerability



Softening the
edges may mean...

Taking Learning back to Your Context

Select a Focus:

- Pre-assessment
- Formative Assessment
- Self-Assessment
- Summative Assessment
- Reporting

- What is its purpose? What needs are we trying to meet through this type of assessment?
- What methods do we use to engage in this type of assessment?
- When might it create a hard edge for teachers and/or students?

Softening the Edges



Select a single hard edge within an assessment type. Using the template on P. 5, work through a plan for softening the edges.

Softening the Edges means...

Creating Alignment through:

- Curiosity
- Research and exploration
- Design

Thank you!

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#atAssess (Tues. 8CT)