

4-12-2010

Beyond the Rubric: Practicing Alternative Assessment In the Elementary Classroom

Erin Kueneman

Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Foundational Studies, Boise State University

Beyond the Rubric: Practicing Alternative Assessment in the Elementary Classroom

Erin Kueneman



College of Education

Inquiry Question

How do teachers effectively use alternative assessment in the classroom?

Purpose

- To evaluate how and when teachers use alternative assessment in their classrooms
- To more closely examine the rationale and strategies of multiple teachers who regularly practice alternative assessment
- To form conclusions drawn from this data that will help determine effective practices for implementing alternative assessments

Methodology

- Surveyed teachers on their current use of alternative assessment
- Evaluated responses for frequent users
- Interviewed selected participants for rationale and strategies used with alternative assessment

Participant Demographics

- Average Years Teaching: 19
- Preschool through High School
- All currently use Alternative Assessment

Research Bibliography

- Guskey, T. R. (2007). Multiple Sources of Evidence: An Analysis of Stakeholders' Perceptions of Various Indicators of Student Learning. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*. 26 (1), 19-27.
- Newton, P. E. (2007). Clarifying the purposes of educational assessment. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*. 14 (2), 149-170.
- Watson, D., & Robbins, J. (2008). Closing the chasm: reconciling contemporary understandings of learning with the need to formally assess and accredit learners through the assessment of performance. *Research Papers in Education*. 23 (3), 315-331.

Alternative Assessment as Responsive and Flexible

"...despite contemporary theoretical advances, assessment methods have changed little and have not been sufficiently responsive to changes in pedagogy and curriculum, particularly with regard to assessments that contribute to summative judgments of practice or performance."

(Watson and Robbins, p. 316, 2008)

"Knowledge in action captures the praxis of individuals in social contexts. Thus, what works as good practice in one context may not be appropriate for another context, but that does not imply that knowledge learned in one situation cannot be transferred...This points up the need for flexible assessment processes that are contextually specific, and responsive to the changing needs and demands placed upon learners."

(Watson and Robbins, p. 327, 2008)

Teachers' Rationales for Using Alternative Assessment

- "...immediate feedback."
- "...used midway through lessons and activities to highlight misconceptions."
- "...they add a variety that is needed to maximize engagement and learning."
- "Important information can be gathered that isn't captured in other types of assessments."
- "...shows me more about what the student can do with what they are learning rather than whether they can answer questions correctly..."
- "More representative of a student's performance and teacher effectiveness."

Important Findings for Influencing Practice

Data from Alternative Assessments is best used to:

- Evaluate student understanding or skill
- Plan and differentiate instruction
- Identify misconceptions
- Compose report card comments
- Assist in parent communication

Planning for Alternative Assessment:

- Frequently takes more time
- Requires tailoring of assessment to learning objectives
- Necessitates regularly seeking out new assessment types
- Should consider all learning styles

Evaluating Alternative Assessment:

- Can decrease or increase evaluation time based on type of assessment (self, peer vs. journals, writing)
- Can be subjective unless rubrics are used to determine evaluation criteria
- Can be tailored to the student or the task

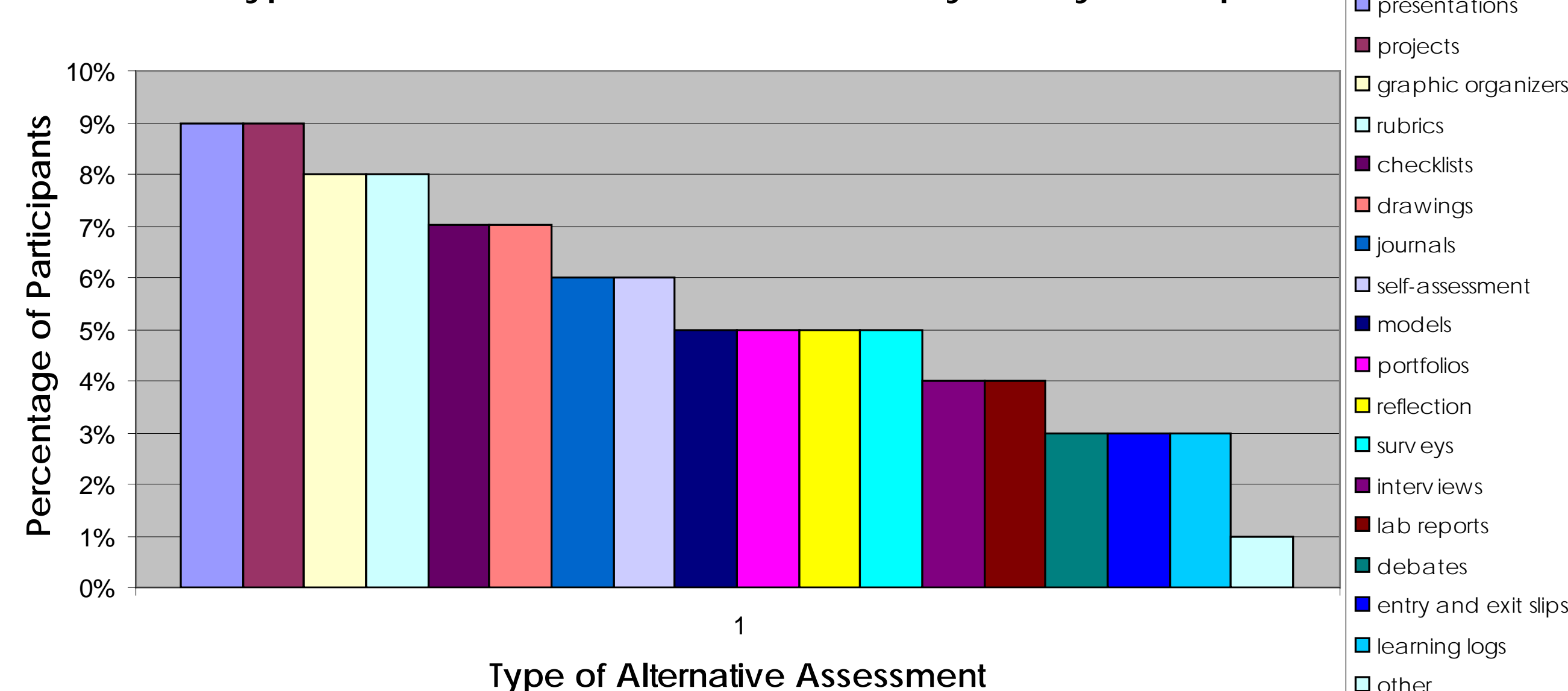
Improving Student Learning

"Teachers...may be more concerned with the purposes of improvement. Because large-scale assessments rarely offer the kind of detail or specification they need to make explicit changes in their instructional practices, teachers may favor sources of evidence related more directly to their ongoing classroom activities and responsibilities."

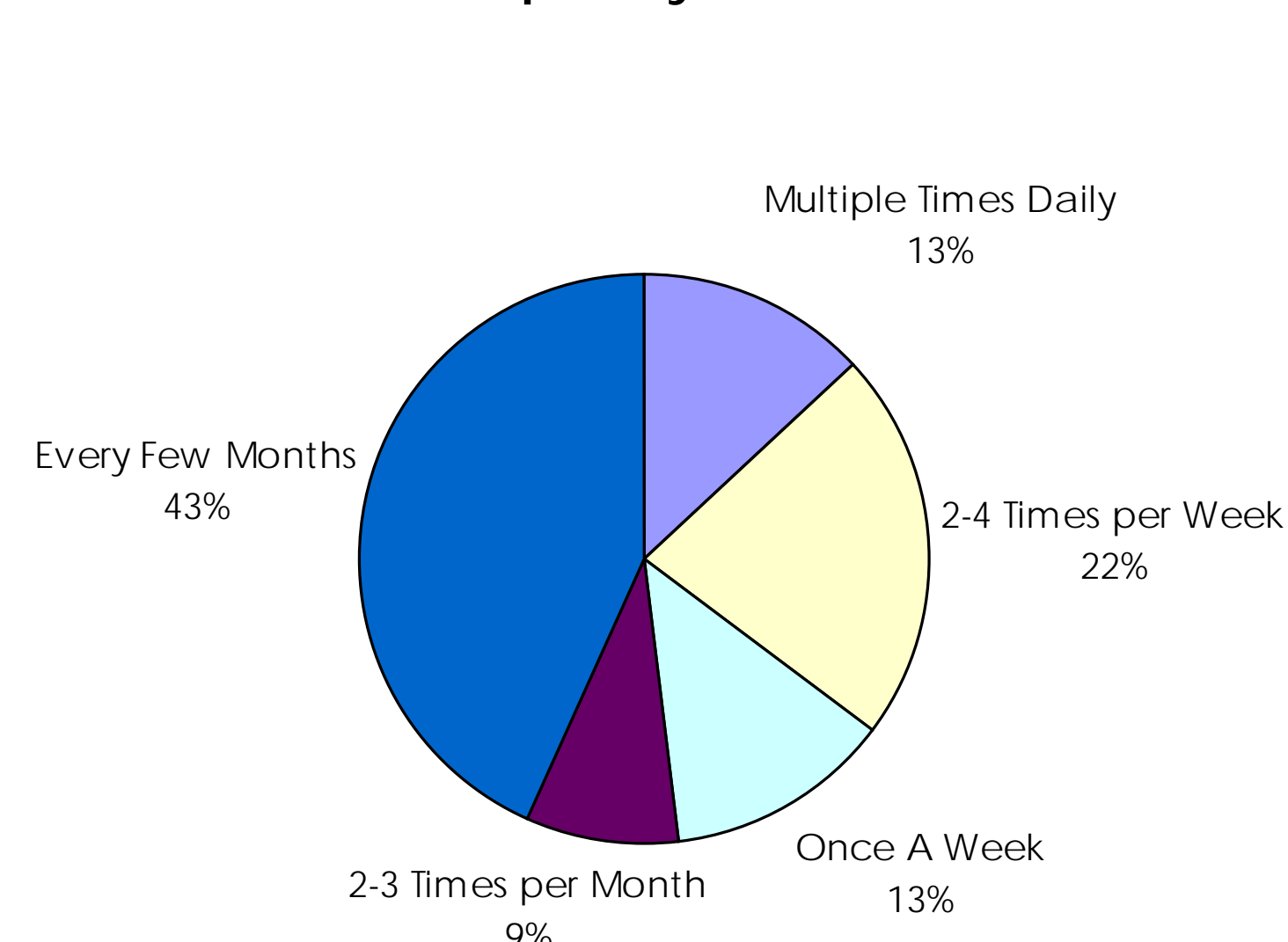
"...Evidence from teachers' classroom assessments, classroom observations, gathered formally or informally, can be used by teachers on a daily basis and used immediately to guide instructional revisions. Furthermore, the results of teachers' improvement efforts become immediately apparent in these indicators as well."

(Guskey, p. 25, 2007)

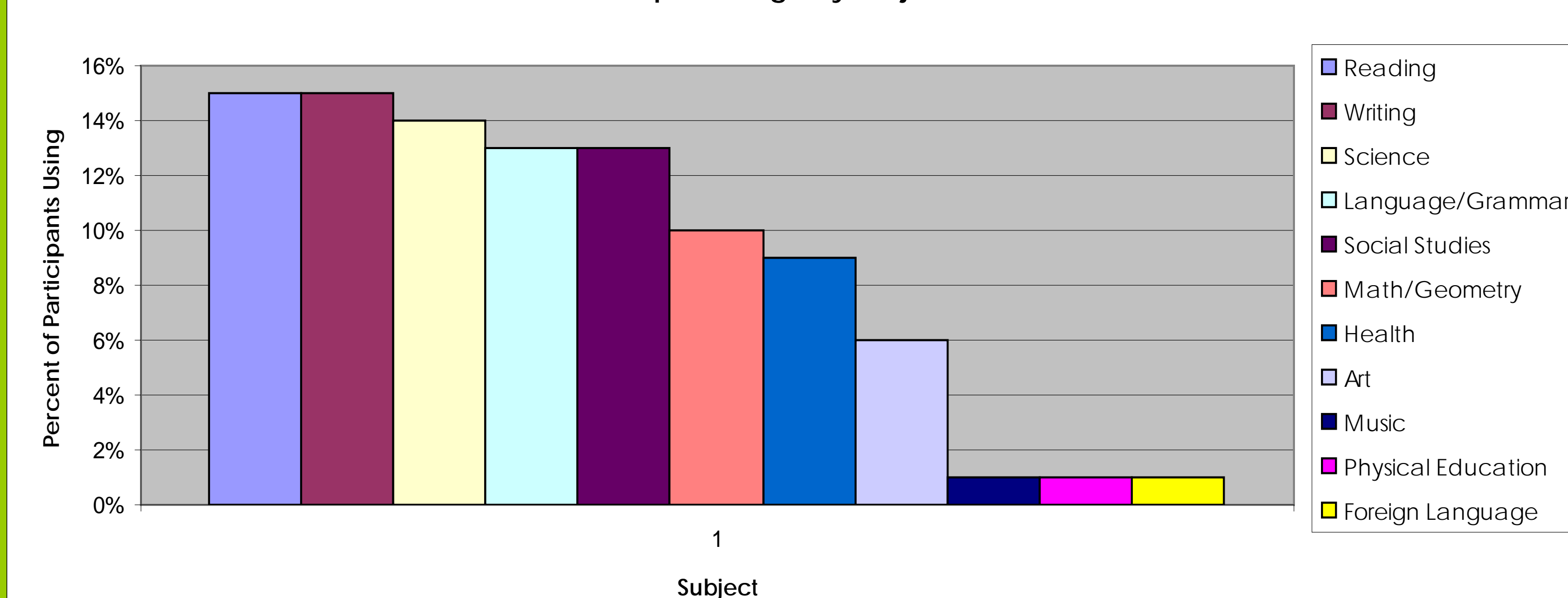
Types of Alternative Assessments Used by Survey Participants



Frequency of Use



Participant Usage by Subject Area



Findings cannot be generalized due to the small sample, but are important for personal and professional growth.