Assessment *for* learning
Resource card I

What is Assessment for Learning?

Assessment for learning describes any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting students learning. It thus differs from assessment designed primarily to serve the purposes of accountability or of ranking or of certifying competences. As assessment activity can help learning if it provides information that teachers and their students can use as feedback in assessing themselves and one another and in modifying the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment becomes "formative assessment" when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet learning needs. (Black 2004)

Assessment for Learning focuses on the opportunities to develop students' ability to evaluate themselves, to make judgments about their own performance and improve upon it. It makes use of authentic assessment methods and offers lots of opportunities for students to develop their skills through formative assessment using summative assessment sparingly.

'Good' assessment benefits student learning... and staff

Well-designed assessment can encourage active learning especially when the assessment delivery is innovative and engaging. Peer and self-assessment, for instance, can foster a number of skills, such as reflection, critical thinking and self-awareness – as well as giving students insight into the assessment process. Discussing the ways in which you're assessing with your students can also help to ensure that the aims and goals of your assessments are clear. Utilising assessment that makes use of technology, such as the use of online discussion forums or electronic submission of work, can teach students (and perhaps your colleagues) new skills. If you design your assessments well they can also help to deter plagiarism by reducing the ways in which students can gather and report information. At the end of the day, taking some time to think about why, what and how you're going to assess your students is a worthwhile investment of time. It can help ensure you're assessing the skills and knowledge that you intended and it could open up new possibilities for different ways to assess your students, some of which may be more efficient and effective than the current methods you're using.

https://www.reading.ac.uk/engageir…ent-important/eia-why-is-assessment-important.aspx

Formative Assessment

Resource card II

Formative assessment refers to a wide variety of methods that teachers use to conduct in-process evaluations of student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during a lesson, unit, or course. Formative assessments help teachers identify concepts that students are struggling to understand, skills they are having difficulty acquiring, or learning standards they have not yet achieved so that adjustments can be made to lessons, instructional techniques, and academic support.

The general goal of formative assessment is to collect detailed information that can be used to improve instruction and student learning *while it's happening*. What makes an assessment "formative" is not the design of a test, technique, or self-evaluation, per se, but the way it is used—i.e., to inform in-process teaching and learning modifications.

Formative assessments are commonly contrasted with summative assessments, which are used to evaluate student learning progress and achievement at the conclusion of a specific instructional period—usually at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year. In other words, formative assessments are *for* learning, while summative assessments are *of* learning. Or as assessment expert Paul Black put it, "When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative assessment. When the customer tastes the soup, that's summative assessment." .

Many educators and experts believe that formative assessment is an integral part of effective teaching. In contrast with most summative assessments, which are deliberately set apart from instruction, formative assessments are integrated into the teaching and learning process. For example, a formative-assessment technique could be as simple as a teacher asking students to raise their hands if they feel they have understood a newly introduced concept, or it could be as sophisticated as having students complete a self-assessment of their own writing (typically using a rubric outlining the criteria) that the teacher then reviews and comments on. While formative assessments help teachers identify learning needs and problems, in many cases the assessments also help students develop a stronger understanding of their own academic strengths and weaknesses. When students know what they do well and what they need to work harder on, it can help them take greater responsibility over their own learning and academic progress.

While the same assessment technique or process could, in theory, be used for either formative or summative purposes, many summative assessments are unsuitable for formative purposes because they do not provide useful feedback. For example, standardized-test scores may not be available to teachers for months after their students take the test or the assessments may not be specific or fine-grained enough to give teachers and students the detailed information they need to improve.

http://edglossary.org/formative-assessment/ LAST UPDATED: 04.29.14

Summative Assessment

Resource card III

Summative assessments may be useful as they tell you (if they are reliable and valid) where you are ***but they do not help you improve*** as the information generated fails to identify the source of learning difficulty, nor does it suggest strategies for getting better. Summative assessments are a bit like going to your doctor with a pain and being told: "it's a 6 out of 10. Next!" There is no sense of diagnosis or guidance how to improve. The only consolation would be if the person next to you got a 5 out of 10.

The goal of summative assessment is to *evaluate student learning* at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark.

The key is to think of summative assessment as a means to gauge, at a particular point in time, student learning relative to content standards. Although the information that is gleaned from this type of assessment is important, it can only help in evaluating certain aspects of the learning process. Because they are spread out and occur *after* instruction every few weeks, months, or once a year, summative assessments are tools to help evaluate the effectiveness of programs, school improvement goals, alignment of curriculum, or student placement in specific programs. Summative assessments happen too far down the learning path to provide information at the classroom level and to make instructional adjustments and interventions *during* the learning process. It takes formative assessment to accomplish this.

Summary:
Summative assessment is more product-oriented and assesses the final product, whereas formative assessment focuses on the process toward completing the product. Once the project is completed, no further revisions can be made. If, however, students are allowed to make revisions, the assessment becomes formative, where students can take advantage of the opportunity to improve.

http://www.amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet/TabId/270/ArtMID/888/ArticleID/286/Formative-and-Summative-Assessments-in-the-Classroom.aspx
http://edglossary.org/assessment/

Assessment in a diverse group of students

Resource card IV

Multicultural/diverse groups will take longer to achieve the final outcome compared with homogenous groups because the group must first find ways to communicate effectively. Unless the task lasts for many weeks, if you are only assessing the final result, you may be inadvertently making diversity a disadvantage. If you assess both the product (ie what they must do) and the process (ie how they do it), you are telling students to put effort into both rather than aiming for a 'perfect' final artifact only.

Assessing multicultural group work is more effective if

- All students know what will be assessed and how marks will be allocated.
- Difficult aspects such as managing conflict effectively attract a percentage of the final mark that reflects the effort involved.
- It is clear how students track and record their own and others' efforts.
- Marks are allocated to reflect individual effort. Judging individual effort is problematic in all group work and even more so where multicultural membership is involved, especially if peer assessment is used. *Criteria for a 'good performance' needs to address the relative importance of language competence.*
- Creative presentation methods (eg a poster, video, drama or oral exam) are rehearsed with formative feedback on how to improve.

Adjusting the means of evaluating students is another important aspect of making curricular decisions. Several choices are available to fit the individual needs of students in inclusive classrooms, which are discussed next.

Criterion-Referenced Systems. Teachers who individualize their curricula to include students with disabilities in cooperative learning groups must select achievement tests that are criterion-referenced because norm-referenced tests will, by definition, automatically place students with disabilities in the failing ranges. Norm-referenced systems discriminate against every student with differences, whether cultural, educational or physical. Criterion-Referenced systems, however allow teachers to compare their students performances with a previously determined standard.

JoAnne W. Putnam – Cooperative Learning and strategies for Inclusion, 2008

Peer assessment

Resource card V

Peer assessment involves students taking responsibility for assessing the work of their peers against set assessment criteria. They can therefore be engaged in providing feedback to their peers (sometimes referred to as peer review), summative grades (moderated by you or your colleagues), or a combination of the two. It's a powerful way for your students to act as the 'assessor' and to gain an opportunity to better understand assessment criteria. It can also transfer some ownership of the assessment process to them, thereby potentially increasing their motivation and engagement. In doing so, your students might be encouraged to learn more deeply, building up their understanding, rather than just their knowledge of the facts, as well as gaining an insight into their own approach to an assessment task in comparison to their peers.
Good ideas before you start using peer assessment:

- Establish ground rules for peer assessment.
- Model assessment using an example of a child's work.
- Recap success criteria before starting peer assessment.
- Encourage pupils to give specific examples of what their partner has done well.
- Encourage pupils to work with a partner on improvements.
- Combine self and peer assessment with teacher feedback

https://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment/peer-and-self-assessment/peer-assessment/eia-peer-assessment.aspx

Example:

Students are put into pairs. The teacher sets up an activity in which each pair should work together to create something, following a certain criteria. This might be a drama performance, a joint piece of writing or an analysis of some material. When sufficient time has elapsed, the teacher asks students to get into groups of four, each containing two pairs.
In each group of four, the pairs take it in turns to share whatever it is they have produced. At the end of the sharing, the pairs then take it in turns to peer-asses each other's work, following clear criteria for success.

Mike Gersohon – Use assessment for learning in the classroom, 2013

Self assessment

Resource card VI

Self-assessment requires students to reflect on their own work and judge how well they have performed in relation to the assessment criteria. The focus is not necessarily on having students generate their own grades, but rather providing opportunities for them to be able to identify what constitutes a good (or poor!) piece of work. Some degree of student involvement in the development and comprehension of assessment criteria is therefore an important component of self-assessment.

You could use self-assessment in the form of reflective exercises, such as logs or diaries, or by encouraging your students to assess how well they've met the assessment criteria in more traditional tasks such as essays and presentations. You could use self-assessment in a stand-alone context, or in conjunction with peer assessment.
Self assessment isn't only about pupils giving themselves marks or grades. You can for example:

- Ask pupils to highlight the best section of their work and explain why they think it is good.
- Ask pupils to highlight where they have met each of the success criteria.
- Ask pupils to highlight uncertainties or areas they think need improving.
- Experiment with traffic lights: ask pupils to indicate how well they have understood a topic by holding up traffic lights/ drawing a symbol in their books.

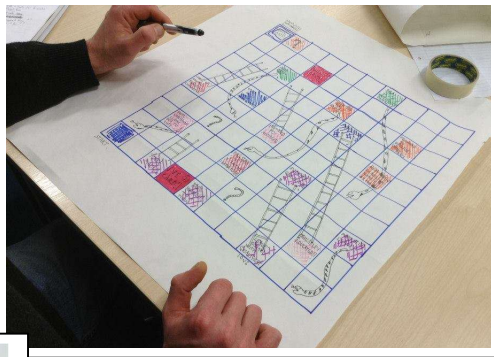
https://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment/peer-and-self-assessment/self-assessment/eia-self-assessment.aspx

"The more students are aware of that which they are judging their work against, the more accurate and precise their evaluation are likely to be. In addition, a better knowledge of assessment criteria will probably lead to a better quality of work. This is because students will know what it is they ought to do in order to achieve highly. "Mike Gersohon, 2013, p.82

Performance Assessment
Resource card VII

In its simplest terms, a performance assessment is one which requires students to demonstrate that they have mastered specific skills and competencies by performing or producing something.
Advocates of performance assessment call for assessments of the following kind: designing and carrying out experiments; writing essays which require students to rethink, to integrate, or to apply information; working with other students to accomplish tasks; demonstrating proficiency in using a piece of equipment or a technique; building models; developing, interpreting, and using maps; making collections; writing term papers, critiques, poems, or short stories; giving speeches; playing musical instruments; participating in oral examinations; developing portfolios; developing athletic skills or routines, etc.
https://www.learner.org/workshops/socialstudies/pdf/session7/7.PerformanceAssessment.pdf

Performance assessments typically require students to complete a complex task, such as a writing assignment, science experiment, speech, presentation, performance, or long-term project, for example. Educators will often use collaboratively developed common assessments, scoring guides, rubrics, and other methods to evaluate whether the work produced by students shows that they have learned what they were expected to learn. Performance assessments may also be called “authentic assessments,” since they are considered by some educators to be more accurate and meaningful evaluations of learning achievement than traditional tests. For more detailed discussions, see authentic learning and demonstration of learning.



Performance Assessment
Resource card VIII

WHAT'S WRONG WITH STANDARDIZED TESTS?

Multiple-choice & short-answer tests are poor measures of student achievement,

particularly of the ability to understand and use complex material.

High-stakes tests cause curriculum to be narrowed to just what is on the test.

Teachers feel pressed to boost scores, even to cheat, and educational quality often suffers.

Test scores are not reliable.

An individual's score may vary significantly from day to day due to testing conditions or the test-taker's mental or emotional state.

There ARE BETTER WAYS to evaluate achievement and ability:

Good teacher observation, documentation of student work, and performance-based assessment are most useful.

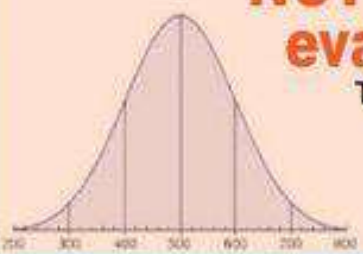
Tests do not reflect current knowledge about learning.

There has been enormous progress in this area. Tests are mostly based on outdated assumptions.

Test-makers can't remove all bias.

Cultural assumptions built into tests often remain.

Standardized tests are NOT fair & helpful evaluation tools.



They reward quick answers & do not measure deep or creative thinking in any field.

Standardized tests are not objective.

Decisions on what to include, how questions are worded, which answers are "correct," and the uses of results are all made by subjective human beings.

Find out more at www.fairtest.org