

Assessment

Written by Eileen Anderson

“There is a body of firm evidence that formative assessment is an essential component of classroom work and that its development can raise standards of achievement. We know of no other way of raising standards for which such a strong prima facie case can be made. Our plea is that national and state policy makers will grasp this opportunity and the lead in this direction.”

- Paul Black and Dylan William¹

We have seen that change is a constant in education. With the advent of new technologies, priorities in education have shifted to include problem-solving and higher order thinking skills not measured by traditional assessment methods. New assessment strategies are needed in today’s learner-centered environment.

For as long as the learning/teaching enterprise has been with us, pencil and paper “surprise quizzes” have been striking fear into the hearts of the hardest students. Updating our formal and informal assessment methods beyond those that only measure acquisition of information is now a priority.

Learning and teaching today is an *interactive* process. In this environment, teachers need new ways to enhance feedback between learners and themselves. In particular, assessment, to meet contemporary standards, must have learners actively involved in the process. Ultimately, the purpose of assessment is to modify learning and teaching activities in order to meet needs of the learners more effectively. This is a daunting notion with few tested models.

0020-0200
2ND-0200

Do you have a favorite way of assessing students’ growth?

Do your testing methods differ depending on the course you are teaching?

Learner-centered Assessment*

Faculty Responsibilities:

- N Clarify learning goals.
- N Use learning contracts.
- N Encourage self-responsibility.
- N Trust learners to get results.
- N Respect learners’ self-worth.
- N Give learners real choices.
- N Help identify learning styles.
- N Use project work.
- N Support risk-taking.
- N Use projects, case studies.
- N Promote independence.
- N Negotiate responsibilities.
- N Promote reflective thinking.
- N Work together to develop assessment criteria.

Related Web Sites



¹<http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kbla>

*http://ali.apple.com/ali_sites

¹<http://www.pt3.org/techology>

Assessment as a Learning Tool

At its best, testing should be *formative*, contributing to improving the learners' understanding of and performance in the curriculum. It can offer learners an opportunity to *review* and *integrate* the key elements studied to that point. With the help of their instructors, learners can become effective test constructors, helping to make choices of the topics to be tested and the forms of the tests.

Adult learners are experienced test-takers. With a little help, groups can prepare excellent test items while at the same time, reviewing key concepts with one another. Faculty who choose learner-centered test preparation, might want to have many more items prepared than will actually be used and then choose the final assortment. For further reinforcement and review, tests can be gone over in class allowing time for further clarification and re-teaching where needed.

2000-02-09

What do you see as the most valid reasons for involving learners in helping construct their own tests?

What reasons against it do you see?

When learners are asked to develop effective testing tools, they should be given samples of items that measure beyond simple recall and recognition. Well planned test items can measure critical thinking, and the ability to analyze, synthesize, and problem-solve. *Bloom's Taxonomy* is a good reference for learners helping them to prepare a wide range of test items. While our libraries are full of references for valid testing, there are few titles that encourage faculty to involve learners in the process.

Faculty Self-Assessment¹

A professor is student oriented who

- begins where students are.
- treats all with dignity and respect.
- welcomes individual differences.
- is supportive to all.
- involves students in setting goals.
- involves all in discussions.
- talks less than half the class time.
- stresses real issues of student interest and goals.
- lets students work at own pace.
- has students work in groups.
- encourages students to support one another.
- emphasizes formative feedback in assessment.
- focuses on student success and improvement not mistakes.
- views students as active creators of knowledge not receivers of.
- values comprehension and application rather than recall.
- provides student access to information.
- encourages flexibility and self-direction.

Related Web sites



¹<http://www.pt3.org/techology>

<http://www.edu.drake.edu/>. "Some Guidelines for Active Learning in the College Classroom"

Student Self-Assessment

New goals for learning/teaching have emerged and with them, the concept of student self-assessment. The progression from formative assessment to self-assessment was probably inevitable. Once students are invited to participate in developing their own assessment, it is only a short step to taking students' self-assessment seriously.

How would you begin with groups whom you want to initiate into this process? The key seems to be the quality of the classroom discussions in which students are led to talk about their understandings. For this strategy to be affective, students' discussion should not be led in such a way as to surface only the teachers' "right answers." Rather, discussions for this purpose should be seen as a way to help students work out their own understandings with the help of the professor and good clarifying questions.

A professor's philosophy of learning/teaching guides the type of assessment necessary to measure student achievement. If the professor's philosophy embraces knowledge to be transmitted by the teacher, learned by the student and later assessed, then summative assessments are appropriate. Where teaching through interaction is the accepted model, *formative assessments* are an essential component. A classroom culture of discussion and questioning arises in which students learn as much from peers as from instructors. They see themselves as life-long learners, responsible for their next steps in learning.

Topics for Discussion

on



Do you agree with this definition? "Ultimately, the purpose of assessment is to modify learning and teaching activities in order to meet the needs of learners more effectively?" Please prepare to explain your response on WebCT.

Is student self-assessment a process that you would like to incorporate into your assessment plans for this semester? Please comment on WebCT.

**C
O
N
S
I
D
E
R**

In addition to multiple choice, true/false, short answer and essay testing forms, what other types of assessment do you use regularly?

Which, if any, of these question types do you think students could construct to be used in your course assessments?