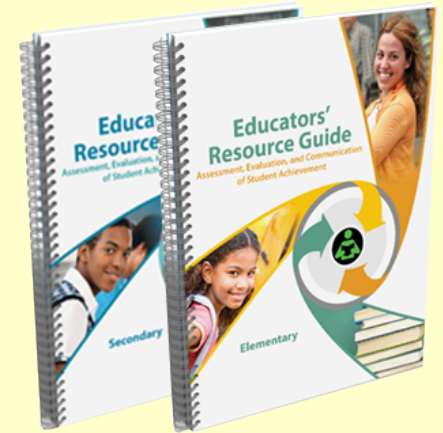


Educators' Resource Guide Assessment FOR Learning (Chapter 4)

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“Assessment serves different purposes at different times:

it may be used to find out ***what*** students already know and can do;

it may be used to help students ***improve*** their learning; or

it may be used to let students, and their parents, know ***how much*** they have learned within a prescribed period of time.”

Damian Cooper

Effective Assessment FOR Learning

The purpose of assessment is to improve student learning and guide teaching instruction. It should reduce the amount of marking and increase the amount of descriptive feedback to students. When assessing student work at the formative stage, provide clear and timely feedback to students to ensure that learning will take place.

The most effective assessment is that which is designed specifically to help students improve their learning- in other words, “assessment FOR learning”.

Assessment FOR learning exhibits the following characteristics (or differs from assessment OF learning in the following ways):

- “ it is responsive to all learners by indentifying areas of strength and need;
- “ it is descriptive, not evaluative;
- “ through the use of high quality feedback, it informs students about what they have done well, where they have had difficulty, and what they need to do differently to improve their work;

- “ it is frequent and ongoing;
- “ it causes students to reflect upon their work and learning, and take specific actions to improve them;
- “ it expects students to make errors and directs them to examine these errors to improve their learning;
- “ it involves students in structured self and peer examination of their work;
- “ it is planned and used in ways that scaffold students’ learning toward the assessment **OF** learning that will be used for grading and reporting purposes.

“If students have left the classroom before teachers have made adjustments to their teaching on the basis of what they have learned about students’ achievement, then they are already playing catchup.....the most important formative assessments are those that occur minute by minute and day by day.”

Leahy, Lyon, Thompson, and William, 2005

Comparing Assessments

Assessment For Learning

Why Assess?

FOR

to enable teachers to determine next steps in advancing student learning

AS

to guide and provide opportunities for each student to monitor and critically reflect on his/her learning and identify next steps

OF

to certify or inform parents or others of each student's proficiency in relation to the curriculum expectations

Assessment For Learning

Assess What?

FOR

each student's progress and learning needs in relation to the curriculum expectations

AS

each student's thinking about his/her learning, what strategies he/she uses to support or challenge that learning, and the mechanisms he/she uses to adjust and advance his/her learning

OF

the extent to which each student can apply the key concepts, knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to the curriculum expectations

Assessment For Learning

What Methods?

FOR

a range of methods in different modes that make each student's skills and understanding visible

AS

a range of methods in different modes that elicit each student's learning and metacognitive processes

OF

a range of methods in different modes that assess both product and process

Ensuring Quality

FOR

- accuracy and consistency of observation and interpretations of student learning
- clear, detailed learning expectations
- accurate, detailed notes for descriptive feedback to each student

AS

- accuracy and consistency of each student's self-reflection, self-monitoring, and self-adjustment
- engagement of the student in considering and challenging his/her thinking
- student records his/her own learning

OF

- accuracy, consistency, and fairness of judgments based on high quality information
- clear, detailed learning expectations
- fair and accurate summative reporting

Using the Information

FOR

- provide each student with accurate descriptive feedback to further his/her learning
- differentiate instruction by continually checking where each student is in relation to the curriculum expectations
- provide parents or guardians with descriptive feedback about student learning and ideas for support

AS

- provide each student with accurate, descriptive feedback that will help him/her develop independent learning habits
- have each student focus on the task and his/her learning (not on getting the right answer)
- provide each student with ideas for adjusting, rethinking, and articulating his/her learning
- provide the conditions for the teacher and student to discuss alternatives
- each student reports about his/her learning

OF

- indicate each student's level of learning
- provide the foundation for discussions on placement or promotion
- report fair, accurate, and detailed information that can be used to decide the next steps in a student's learning

*Assessment **FOR** learning is the process of **gathering** and **interpreting** evidence to provide clear, timely **feedback** to students to support their ongoing learning and achievement.*

Effective Feedback

For feedback to be effective, it must:

- “ be provided in a timely manner;
- “ be accurate, descriptive and help students develop independent learning habits;
- “ be given to students in words and may require visual supports to ensure clarity;
- “ include statements of student strengths and weaknesses and guidance on how to improve;
- “ provide one or two attainable learning goals or targets (next steps);
- “ require students to focus on the task and his/her learning (not on getting the right answer); and
- “ must involve students (and may involve peers).

Frequently Asked Questions- Assessment FOR Learning

Q: Can I offer formative feedback on a task that also includes a mark?

A: Yes; however, the effectiveness of formative assessment has been shown to be greatly reduced by the presence of a mark.

Q: My students won't do a task if it doesn't count for marks. How can I motivate them?

A: Students struggle with any change to their routine until the new practice ceases to be new. This coaching phase of teaching builds trust that allows the student to see the teacher-student relationship as one set up strictly to assist. Students will come to realize that these formative assessments do count, in that they lead to a better mark on those tasks that are counted for grades. The idea is to move the classroom from a performance-goal-oriented one to a classroom that is learning-goal-oriented.

Q: Should I assign a mark for each Assessment FOR Learning task?

A: Research has shown that quality, descriptive feedback is a great deal more effective than simply giving students a mark. Assigning marks to practice work inhibits learning.