

# ASSESSMENT MATTERS

## PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT

Creating and implementing a strong assessment plan is important for evidence-based program improvement. But doing it in a silo just does not work. How is your plan created? Who implements it? Who reviews it? Who decides on the changes? Yes, gathering assessment data is important, but what you do with it is just as important. We recommend that the faculty discuss all assessment findings each semester or at a minimum, annually. This can be done easily at an end of semester faculty meeting, or annual retreat. By reviewing the data as a group, faculty will be able to identify patterns or maybe holes in the curriculum and work together to come up with an action plan that will, hopefully, fix the issue. Of course, there is always the possibility that the data reflect no issues and everyone can pat themselves on the back and congratulate each other on a job well done!

REALIZING THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE IS LONGER THAN WE USUALLY INCLUDE, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO READ IT AND THINK ABOUT SOME OF THE BASIC INFORMATION REGARDING COURSE ASSESSMENT.

## 7 THINGS THAT EDUCATORS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Assessment refers to judging a student's rate of academic achievement by analyzing the available evidence, such as quizzes, tests or written tasks. Assessments take different forms, and each one of them is created for a particular reason. Teachers' practice formative assessment by observing their student's progress in class and checking for understanding, and summative assessment by testing students at the end of a lesson or unit to see whether they mastered the materials or skills that were taught. Regardless of the form, effective assessments provide the feedback and motivation that students need to excel. In this article, we will discuss all of the things that educators should know about assessment and evaluation.

**What does assessment look like during a typical lesson?** Teachers assume different roles during a lesson; these will vary according to the focus of the lesson, the activity, the ages of the students, and the size of the class. Instructors can act as planners, when programming the aim of the lesson; as informers, when giving feedback or explaining a topic; or as monitors, when checking whether students are keeping up. When learners are engaged in an activity, teachers become monitors, checking for understanding and learning. After the lesson, teachers also assess how successful the plan was or which students had problems.

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***ALL TEACHERS WILL BE INVOLVED  
IN CLASSROOM ASSESSMENTS.***

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**What is data-driven assessment?** A major part of a teacher's time is devoted to planning and preparing lessons. As a result, the creation of effective assessment processes is often neglected or overlooked. It is crucial to take into account that assessments carry the same weight as planning; in fact, they become an essential part of building any learning program. Teachers can use the information and scores from formative and summative

assessments to plan effective lessons that ensure that all students are learning at an optimal level. This approach is known as data-driven instruction.

**When should you use assessments?** Assessments should be done at the beginning of, during, and at the end of instruction. When done at the beginning of instruction, teachers can use assessments to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the group, and address them appropriately. When practiced during instruction, teachers can check for student understanding and progress. When done at the end of instruction, assessment is highly effective as a measuring tool, as it assists teachers in the process of self-reflection: teachers get to revise different aspects of their own practice and reflect on the effectiveness of the lesson or unit. Also, they learn whether or not students mastered the objectives that were taught. The primary goal of assessment is to better understand the learning process of our students so that we may better educate them.

**What purposes do assessments serve?** The main purpose of assessments is to gather relevant information about student progress, or to determine student interests. Standardized assessments can indicate a student's level of performance, in order, for example, to know which level of a language class he or she should enter. Progress monitoring can show how well students are learning. Diagnostic tests are useful in pinpointing areas where a student may have trouble learning. Evaluation tests allow a teacher to measure student achievement following a period of input.

**What types of assessment exist?** Standardized assessments are highly consistent. They are taken by a large quantity of learners under the same conditions. High-stakes tests have a defined outcome: for example, a passing mark allows a student to graduate from a school. The tests have demonstrated issues with unreliability, and increase teacher stress.

Alternatives to high-stakes tests focus on "authentic assessments," looking at how children respond to real-world scenarios. Benjamin Bloom's notion of higher order thinking skills — analysis, synthesis, and evaluation — may be useful in creating functional assessments.



All teachers will be involved in classroom assessments. A system such as letter grades or rubrics will be employed. Formative assessment includes observing, questioning, and checking for understanding while presenting material.

Summative assessment, on the other hand, takes place after the material has been presented, and evaluates how well students have learned the material. Options for testing include alternate choice, multiple choice, matching, completion tests, essays, and critical-thinking tests such as oral reports. Teachers should be aware of the variety of testing methods at their disposal, and should be creative in employing these.

**How does grading work?** Grades should represent the extent to which the learner has met the defined standard. They should provide feedback, help students evaluate strengths and weaknesses, and communicate student achievement to others. You need to be aware of grading structures and policies, and know when to use "norm-referenced" and "criterion-referenced" grading models. You will also need to decide how factors such as effort and motivation are included in grading. Ideally, learning goals will be defined in advance, so that grades reflect the levels of achievement that were decided upon at the beginning of the year.

**How can teachers provide quality feedback to students?** We make a distinction between two types of assessment: performance feedback and corrective feedback. Performance feedback is concerned with the information that students receive after completing an assignment; correction feedback usually occurs during the process of completing the assignment. It is important to find a balance between praise and corrective feedback. Different students may require different levels of praise or correction. Feedback should be explicit and focused, and encourage the student to find and correct the mistake him or herself.

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