

ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

VS

FOR LEARNING



Curated by



Traditionally, tests have told teachers and parents how a student 'does,' then offers a very accessible point of data (usually percentage correct and subsequent letter grade) that is reported to parents as a performance indicator. Class data can be gathered to imply instructional effectiveness, and the data from multiple classrooms can be combined to suggest the performance of an entire school, but a core message here is one of measurement and finality this is how you did.

However, it all boils down to purpose. What is the purpose of the assessment? Who is the assessment for? The teacher or the student? If you're not clear about why you're assessing (and what you're going to do with the data the test provides) you're wasting a lot of time, energy, and resources.

Think like a doctor: You have to have a plan of what you're going to do with what you learn from the data before you give the assessment. Ideally, before you even design the assessment, to begin with.

Assessment for learning is commonly referred to as formative, which is designed to inform instruction. If we can agree that the purpose of a test is to provide data to revise planned instruction, then the only type that's not 'for learning' is 'of learning,' commonly referred to as summative.

Assessments are generally broken down into three categories: before instruction (pre-test), during instruction (formative), and after instruction (summative). To further complicate matters, it could be argued that pre-assessment is both of and for learning, as it assesses 'prior knowledge' (as a pre-test) and that data is then used to revise planned instruction (making it formative).

Most of this is semantics and a bit confusing. There are many ways to measure understanding, and the primary distinction in most grades K to 12 classrooms is function: What is the assessment supposed to do? If you're using the 'test' to see what students do and don't know so that you can more accurately plan future learning lessons and activities, then it's *for* learning (even if you are doing so by conducting an assessment *of* learning).

If instead, the tool is merely a kind of benchmark to see "How well they can do" and you are moving on, then it's primarily an assessment of learning. There is significant overlap between the two; in fact, the same test given in one circumstance would be considered 'of learning' while in another circumstance be considered 'for learning.'

In short then, the difference is a matter of both the function and purpose. The assessment of learning is a way to see what the students can do, while the assessment for learning is a way to see what the teachers should do in response.

These are the five strategies that teachers can use when conducting assessments to test their students understanding of the material provided to them. The strategies are as follows:

1. Sharing learning expectations
2. Eliciting evidence
3. Feedback
4. Self-assessment
5. Peer assessment

This approach to assessment outlines the systematic approach ways of measuring understanding, including self-assessment and peer-assessment, feedback for learning, and clear communication of performance criteria.

What every assessment for learning should tell you

During assessment of learning, a test is given to communicate student understanding. Years of research have revealed that consistently hoping for 'understanding data' from your average classroom assessment is hopelessly problematic, not to mention reductionist, sterile, and institutionally centred.

However, it happens. But a simple shift to assessment for learning can quickly modernise the instruction in any classroom. Here, the change goes from exams that are evaluative to those that are reflective of both process and understanding.

The benefit of assessments for learning isn't merely a more clear picture of understanding; Used correctly, it can also inform the rest of the learning process, from curriculum mapping (what do we learn when?) to instruction (how will it be learned?) to assessment design (how should future learning ideally be measured?)

While the role of testing in instructional design isn't simple, it really might be. If the goal of any assessment is to provide data to refine planned instruction, then the primary function of any assessment, whether an authentic, challenge-based learning performance or a standardised test, should be to answer the following question for any teacher:

“What now?”

If the data doesn't provide a clear path forward for both students and teachers, it likely obscures more than it clarifies.

Source by:

<https://www.teachthought.com>



Stiggins, R.J. (1999). Evaluating classroom assessment training in teacher education. Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice. 18 (1), 23-27.; image attribution flickr user teo