

Thoughts on Assessment

from *Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessment and Grading in the Differentiated Classroom* by Rick Womeli

Don't take time to assess, unless you are going to take action with what you discover.

“Too often, educational tests, grades, and report cards are treated by teachers as autopsies when they should be viewed as physicals.”

“Assessment should always have more to do with helping students grow than with cataloging their mistakes.” Dr. Carol Tomlinson

Teacher Action	Result on Student Achievement
Just telling students # correct and incorrect	Negative influence on achievement
Clarifying the scoring criteria	Increase of 16 percentile points
Providing explanations as to why their responses are correct or incorrect	Increase of 20 percentile points
Asking students to continue responding to an assessment until they correctly answer the items	Increase of 20 percentile points
Graphically portraying student achievement	Increase of 26 percentile points

Formative Assessments:

These are in-route checkpoints, frequently done. They provide ongoing and clear feedback to students and the teacher, informing instruction and reflecting subsets of the essential and enduring knowledge. They are where successful differentiating teachers spend most of their energy –assessing formatively and providing timely feedback to students and practice.

Grades rarely used, if ever

- Marks and feedback are used
- Share learning goals with students from the beginning
- Make adjustments in teaching a result of formative assessment data
- Provide descriptive feedback to students
- Provide opportunities for student for self-and peer assessment

Samples of Formative Assessment

- Solve these four math problems.
- What three factors led to the government's decision to...
- Draw a symbol that best portrays this book's character as you now understand him (her), and write a brief explanation as to why you chose the symbol you did.

- Record your answer to this question on your dry-erase board and hold it above your head for me to see.
- Prepare a rough draft of the letter you're going to write.
- What is your definition of...?
- Who had a more pivotal role in this historical situation, _____ or _____, and why do you believe as you do?
- How would you help a friend keep the differences between amphibians and reptiles clear in his mind?
- Write a paragraph of 3 to 5 lines that uses a demonstrative pronoun in each sentence and circle each example.
- Play the F sharp scale.
- In a quick paragraph, describe the impact of the Lusitania's sinking
- Create a web or outline that captures what we've learned today about....

Tips:

Correlate all formal assessments with objectives.

Get ideas for pre-and formative assessments from summative assessments.

Spend the majority of your time designing/emphasizing formative assessments and the feedback they provide.

Design summative assessments first, and then design your pre-and formative assessments.

Give pre-assessments several days or a week PRIOR to starting the unit.

Design your lesson plans AFTER reviewing pre-assessment data.

Evaluating the Usefulness of Assessments:

What are your essential and enduring skills and content you're trying to assess?

How does this assessment allow students to demonstrate their mastery?

Is every component of that objective accounted for in the assessment?

Can students respond another way and still satisfy the requirements of the assessment task? Would this alternative way reveal a student's mastery more truthfully?

Is this assessment more a test of process or content? Is that what you're after?