Assessment for Learning:

Motivating students, monitoring progress, and ensuring mastery of content
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Instructional Coaching

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Assessment for Learning

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ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING AT A GLANCE

Assessment for learning is a crucial component of effective instruction. When students clearly understand their progress toward learning targets, they are more motivated. Additionally when teachers clearly understand how well their students are learning content, they can make better decisions about how to differentiate and pace learning experiences in the classroom.

The Process
This approach to developing assessment for learning involves six components:

One: Develop Unit Questions
Effective questions should be comprehensive—that is, if students can answer all of the unit questions well, they should be do well on the end of unit assessments—and easy for students to understand.

Two: Develop Answers to the Questions
Prior to teaching a unit, teachers should identify (a) what students need to know to be able to answer the unit question successfully, and (b) what students need to be able to do in order to successfully answer each unit question.

Three: Write Propositions
Once answers are determined, or while identifying answers, create a list of propositions: short sentences that summarize the content or abilities students need to learn, demonstrate, or master.

Four: Identify Assessments
Review the list of possible assessments. Identify assessments for each written proposition.

Five: Use Assessments Effectively
During the class, employ the assessments in a way that ensures you are assessing all students.

Six: Revisit, Reflect, Revise
After you've used the assessments, and at the end of the unit, consider whether or not the unit questions and the assessments for learning were effective. Where necessary, revise the assessment to make them are more effective.

Going Deeper

The ideas contained here are influenced by the work of Richard Stiggins, Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, Judith Arter, Grant Wiggins, and Jay McTighe.

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IC Cheat Sheet

1. Identify unit questions
2. Develop answers (what do my students need to know/need to be able to do to answer this question?)
3. Write propositions.
4. Use assessment tool to identify formative assessments
5. Teach them effectively (model, observe, explore)
6. Revisit, reflect, revise

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DEVELOP UNIT QUESTIONS

Questions about Critical Questions	Yes or No?
Do the questions effectively address the standards for the unit and course?	
Have I written questions rather than objectives or commands?	
Are the questions written at the appropriate higher-order or lower-order level?	
Are the questions written in a form that requires an extended verbal explanation?	
Do the questions identify ways in which students should understand the information to be learned?	
Do the questions communicate how students should learn the content?	
Do the questions help students think not only about the content but also about how the content is meaningful or important?	
Do my questions include expectations for learning how to use the content in and out of the class?	
Do my questions help students identify the critical content structures, concepts, or ideas to be learned?	
Have I limited my number of questions to six or fewer?	

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SUGGESTIONS FOR CREATING EXCELLENT PROPOSITIONS

1. Ask yourself, what do my students need to know, need to be able to do to answer this question.

2. Write short sentences that describe every component of the answer.

3. Be concise. Write simple (not simplistic) statements.

4. Be comprehensive. The complete list of propositions should add up to a complete answer of the question.

5. Be precise.

    - Don't write: "Students need to know how to identify subjects and verbs."

    - Write: (1) A subject is a noun that says what the sentence is about.
      (2) A noun is a person, place, thing, quality, or idea.
      (3) A verb is a word that describes a mental or physical action or state of being.
      (4) Identify subjects and verbs by (a) first identifying the verb, and then (b) asking who or what plus the verb.

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QUICK INFORMAL ASSESSMENTS

THUMBS UP, DOWN, and WIGGLY: Explain to students that "thumbs up" means "I understand/agree, "thumbs down" means "I don't understand/agree," holding thumbs horizontally and wiggling your hand means "I'm not sure if understand or agree."

PARAPHRASING: Ask students to retell what they have learned in their own words, not repeating the words they read or heard when they learned whatever is being learned.

TURN-TO-YOUR NEIGHBOR: After students complete some kind of learning task, ask them to compare their answer or idea with their neighbor (one other student) to see if they have the same answer. If yes, give the teacher a "thumbs up". If not, give the teacher a "thumbs down."

GROUP ANSWERS: Put students in groups. Give them a task to complete, question to answer, term to memorize or some other task. Tell that the group is responsible for everyone's learning, and that you'll check with one group member, but that they don't know who, to check that everyone has learned what needs to be learned.

THINK, PAIR, SHARE: Give students a task to do on their own, then have them share their work with one other person to identify similarities and differences and consider revising based on what they've learned from their partner. Then ask the partners to share their answers with the class. One alternative is to give each partner a specific amount of time to talk.

QUESTION EVERYONE: Tell students to be prepared to answer questions (either open ended or close ended questions). Then, call on students randomly, or make a point of targeting groups of students (such as HALO questioning, High, Average, Low, Other). Some teachers say, "l'll be picking the student that looks least interested." Others draw names from a brown bag or write student names on popsicle sticks, and pull names out randomly. If a student does not give an answer, ask it again phrased differently. If the student still does not answer, ask a smaller part of the question.

WHITE BOARDS: Give students questions or tasks and ask them to write their answer on a white board. Then, ask all students to hold up the white board at the same time. If students give conflicting answers, open discussion by saying something like "It looks like we've got a disagreement here, let's discuss this to come to an agreement." Then lead a clarifying discussion.

RESPONSE CARDS: Use response cards in the same way you might use white boards. Response cards can include index cards with a yes on one side and a no on the other side, drawings of traffic lights (with red meaning no, or I don't understand, yellow meaning,

not sure, and green meaning yes, or I understand). You can also hand out red, yellow and green index cards to show the same meaning.

HOT POTATO: Ask a student to test their understanding of content. If the student gets the answer right, he gets to ask another question that tests another student's understanding. The student asking the question has to be able to confirm whether or not the new student gets the correct answer.

SOCCER, HOCKEY, BASKETBALL: Organize the class into two teams. You can let them choose their team based on their allegiance to a particular team or assign to two teams, (the green and blue teams, for example). Then quiz students. If a team gets a correct answer, they move the ball or puck closer to the other teams goal. If they get it wrong, the ball or puck moves toward their goal. If the ball or puck gets in their zone, and they get a wrong answer, or the other team gets a right answer, they score a goal or basket. You can play this game using hot potato as well.

GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS: David Scanlon, an expert in graphic organizers suggests *Order Routine* (2000) we teach students how to draw at least four common graphic organizers to demonstrate their understanding of what they are learning: descriptive, sequential, problem-solution, and compare and contrast. Another commonly used graphic organizer is cause-effect.

WRITING: Students' understanding can be assessed using numerous writing assessments. Students can be prompted to write a response to a passage they've read, answer a question with a few sentences, write a letter to an author, write a letter of complaint, write a short story to illustrate a concept that has been learned and so forth.

GAME SHOW: With a little effort, you can develop your own version of popular game shows such as Jeopardy, Who Wants to Be A Millionaire, Wheel of Fortune, or FAMILY FEUD. Consider dividing the class into teams, and consider giving each team review time prior to the game.

JIGSAW/GALLERY WALK: Organize students into groups. Then, have the students create a poster on chart paper that they can post in the room. The poster should demonstrate the students knowledge of content covered and might be, for example, a few bullet points, a picture, a metaphor, or a graphic organizer. Reorganize the students into other groups so that each new, larger group has a member from each of group that created a poster. Have the groups rotate around the room stopping at each poster. Whoever created the poster, explains it to the rest of their new group.

FOUR CORNERS. Give students a question. Then ask them to move to a corner of the room based on their answer or to the middle of the room if no answer applies.

QUIZZES OR TESTS Multiple choice, true or false, fill in the blanks, and short answer quizzes and tests are used frequently to gauge students. Quizzes or tests can be used with many of the above assessment techniques, such as Turn-to-Your-Neighbor, Think, Pair, Share, Baseball, Bell Work, Exit Tickets and so forth.

BELL WORK Create a short task for students to do as they walk into class. The task could be a writing assignment, a short quiz, a question students can respond to in their journals or any other task. Communicate the expectation to students that they will start the task when the bell goes at the start of class. After providing sufficient time for students to complete the task, gather student work and discuss it with class. Some teachers use Bell Work as a starting routine for every class.

EXIT TICKET Create a short task for students to do before they leave the class. As with Bell Work, the task could be a writing assignment, a short quiz, a question students can respond to or any other task. Tell students the task is their ticket out of class, and they need to give the completed task to you on their way out the door. Some teachers use Exit Ticket at the end of every class as a closing routine. Consider giving students tasks that are untimed, "such as, "write as much as you know about this topic up until you hear the bell."

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SUGGESTIONS FOR USING ASSESSMENTS EFFECTIVELY

6. Use at least a 3-1 ratio of positive to critical comments in my classroom.

7. Ask questions of all students in my class.

8. Ask the same number of questions of all students.

9. Ask students to explain their answers.

10. Use connect and redirect. (Affirm and encourage each student response, but ask clarifying questions of student—or call on other students—to expand and correct answers.

11. Read students non-verbal messages indicating understanding or confusion.

12. Avoid giving away answers when asking questions.

13. Use signals with class-wide assessments such as white boards.

14. Consider giving the students progress charts so that they can monitor their own learning. Consider, also, keeping your progress charts to keep track of student progress.

15. Consider giving the students a pre-test at the start of the class to see how well they are learning.

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REVISIT, REFLECT, REVIZE

After you have used a quick formative assessment and at the end of the unit, stop and consider how effective your questions, propositions, assessments, and use of the assessments were. Consider the following questions along with other questions you construct to help you get a rich understanding of what worked and didn't work with your assessment for learning approach.

1. Did my question(s) effectively address the key learning and standards?
2. Should I change my questions in any way to make them more effective?
3. Did the quick assessments assess the right learning?
4. Was I able to monitor all students' progress?
5. Did students have a clear understanding of their own progress?
6. Were the assessments fun for the students?
7. Did I mix up the assessments sufficiently or should I revise some to increase variety?
8. Should I use other assessments to assess important learning that I did not assess?
9. Consider giving the students progress charts so that they can monitor their own learning. Consider, also, keeping your progress charts to keep track of student progress.

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GOING DEEPER

This mini-manual is simply a quick overview for coaches interested in helping teachers use assessments for learning. To really refine and develop their learning, coaches should read widely in the field. Several excellent works, that influenced this mini-coaching manual, are listed below:

Arter, J. and McTighe, J. (2001). *Scoring rubrics in the classroom: Using performance criteria for assessing and improving student performance.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Fisher, F, & Frey, N. (2007). *Checking for understanding: Formative assessment techniques for your classroom.* Alexandria, VA. ASCD.

Popham, J. W. (2008) *Transformative Assessment*. Alexandria, VA. ASCD.

Stiggins, R.J. (2005). *Student involved assessment for learning, fourth edition*. Upper Saddle River, NJ. Pearson.

Stiggins, R.J., Arter, J.A., Chappuis, J., and Chappuis, S. (2004). *Classroom assessment for student learning: Doing it right-using it well.* Portland, OR. Assessment Training Institute.

Tomlinson, C.A., & McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrating differentiated instruction and understanding by design: Connecting content and kids.* Alexandria, VA. ASCD.

Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J, (2004) *Understanding by design.* Alexandria, VA. ASCD.

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Table 7.3 Proposition Form

Unit Question:		
Proposition #	Proposition	Assessment