

# Assessment for Learning

Assessment for learning (sometimes called formative assessment) involves teachers gathering and using information about what students currently know and can do to inform their instructional decision making. It helps teachers to better understand the effectiveness of their chosen teaching strategies, and what, if any, adjustments could be made to further support each student in their learning. This information can be gathered through any formal and/or informal assessment activity occurring within the teaching and learning process.



## QUICK EXAMPLES



Watch a student execute a physical task and give them descriptive feedback to help them further develop that skill.



Have a conversation with a student about their understanding of a gameplay strategy or concept, then use this information to help fill in any gaps that might be present.



Establish and use success criteria with students on the topic of identifying mental health practices that support them. Teachers can use the success criteria to provide personalized feedback to students about how they are demonstrating their learning and what they can focus on to progress in their learning.

## DETAILED EXAMPLES



Before teaching students about volleyball, the teacher splits the class into teams and organizes teams to play games of volleyball. The teacher observes the class while they play, looking for what the students know and can do in the game.

Through these observations, the teacher has noticed that very few students know the basic rules of the game, how to position themselves and move on the court, or how to contact the ball. These observations help the teacher understand the need to focus on these areas before instructing more advanced concepts and skills of the game.

By gathering this information, the teacher can better support the students in their learning. They have a deeper understanding of where the students currently are – not where they thought the students might or should be.



### NOTE

This type of assessment – known as a pre-assessment or diagnostic assessment – is effective when introducing a new activity or concept to students. It provides details of what students currently know and can do – information which is very helpful for teachers to make informed instructional plans.



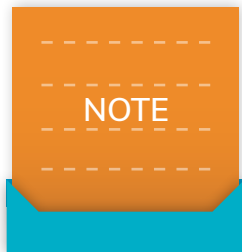


During a unit on mental health and well-being, the teacher gives students an exit ticket to share their perspectives and insights on what they learned that day in class.

In reviewing the exit tickets, the teacher identifies that most of the class either missed the point of what was being learned or demonstrated misunderstandings about the content of the lesson.

With this information, the teacher makes the decision to explore the same material the next class. But rather than doing the talking using a direct instructional approach, the teacher decides to implement a small group, interactive learning activity. This allows the students to be more actively engaged in the learning and have the chance to share thoughts and ideas with their peers.

At the end of the class, the teacher has the students complete exit tickets again. The results show a drastic increase in how many students understand the material and the depth to which they can speak about it.



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Changing a teaching strategy will not always provide a significant improvement in student learning as in this example. However, when students have not understood the goal of the learning, they are unlikely to “get it” by doing the same thing over again. In any case, gathering information about how well students are grasping what they are learning is important so teachers can make the best decisions possible to support each student in the class.

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The information from these assessments provides evidence for making informed decisions on what could best support each student to improve their learning based on how they are currently progressing. Without this information, teachers rely on best guesses for where students are in their learning and for what might help them improve. This approach can lead to ineffective teaching and learning experiences in the class, decreasing the likelihood of student achievement in learning.

Ideally, assessment-for-learning approaches occur within the teaching and learning process (i.e., when students are introduced to new learning and have time to practice, receive feedback, and refine their learning) and the assessment information is not used for evaluation or grading purposes. After all, students are still practicing and developing their learning throughout this period. They are not yet ready to show the entire depth of their learning. When used effectively, the assessment experiences throughout the teaching and learning process lead to high levels of student achievement in learning, thereby building capacity for students to progress and develop their abilities and understanding of what is being learned.

At the heart of assessment for learning is the belief that all students can learn, all teachers can support and improve student learning, and using evidence to make informed teaching and learning decisions can further support the learning process. By embedding and using an assessment for learning approach in physical and health education, teachers affirm to students the belief that they can all learn with success, and that a teacher is there to guide and support students in this pursuit.

