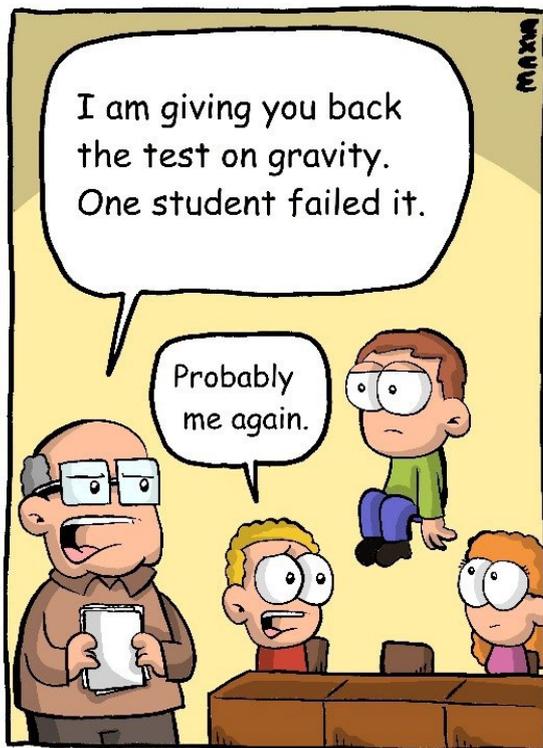


Assess@Learning newsletter

Empower students with **digital formative** assessment

1st Issue - December 2020



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How do teachers know what their students are actually learning? How can students become more empowered in their own learning? How can digital tools support learning? And does Covid-19 change the way we think about these questions?

This newsletter aims to engage policy makers, teachers, school heads, organisations working on assessment and anyone else interested in an exchange around these questions.

Share your views with us!

What is learning and assessment for you in 1 or 2 sentences? [Share your views with us](#). We will present some highlights of your answers in our next issue.

Subscribe to our newsletter

Do you want to join us on our learning journey? [Just subscribe!](#) This newsletter is published twice a year until February 2023.

Why do we **assess** student learning?

Assessment can guide students in their learning, support their motivation to learn and improve how teachers teach. It can also serve other purposes, such as certifying student accomplishment, evaluating the output of educational programmes, measuring the performance of educational systems and making comparisons across systems.

Assessment for summative purposes is usually performed at the end of a course or unit, frequently against standardised criteria and often given a grade. While predominant in most education systems, summative assessment rarely provides students and teachers with feedback that they can use to understand and improve their learning and teaching.

In contrast, formative assessment aims to provide students with opportunities to better

understand their learning needs and teachers with possibilities to adjust their teaching. Clearly framed within active and personalised learning practices, formative assessment is receiving increased attention from educational policy makers and practitioners.

Formative and summative assessment are best thought of as descriptions of the use of assessment information, rather than of the information itself, or the instruments that produce the information, according to Dylan Wiliam.

What is the main purpose of assessment for you? Let us know via this short [form](#). We will present a selection of your answers in the next issue of this newsletter.

Does Covid-19 change our thinking about learning and assessment?



A [world bank blog article](#) published as early as April 2020 invites us to rethink if and how learning is different when schools are fully or partially closed. Over the course of the last year, teachers and parents had to quickly adapt to teaching in this new reality to ensure that students engage in learning.

Finnish schools, for example, coped overall well with the transition to distance education, but students hope for more interaction, according to a [Finnish study](#).

Students need more opportunities to interact both with their teacher and their peers, according to the study.

Prior to the Covid-19 crisis, all modalities of learning assessment had been strongly dependent on students' physical presence - either for administration or for observing the learners' daily progress. Repeated (partial) school closures require us think of alternative approaches to providing students with effective feedback on their learning. In the current setting, it is crucial for teachers but also for parents-turned teachers to understand whether



students actually absorb the learning content delivered to them in formats quite different from business-as-usual. While all types of assessment of student learning are important, the need for formative assessment is therefore particularly critical (see also the [world bank article](#)).

Is the situation similar in your country, do you agree with this article, and has remote and blended learning due to Covid-19 changed your thinking about learning and assessment? [Let us know](#).

3 questions about learning and assessment – Interview with Dylan Wiliam

Are you also a professional working on the topics of learning and assessment and would like to appear here? [Just let us know!](#)



[Dylan Wiliam](#) is Emeritus Professor of Educational Assessment at University College London. In a varied career, he taught in urban public schools, directed a large-scale testing programme, served a number of roles in university administration, including Dean of a School of Education, and pursued research on assessment for learning.

Dylan Wiliam will contribute to this newsletter with a short series of articles. Do you have a specific topic around learning and assessment that you would like him to address? [Let us know.](#)

You can't wait to read more from Dylan Wiliam? Check out already this [article on digital formative](#) that Dylan Wiliam already wrote for the school education gateway.

- **What is formative assessment for you?**

I think the best definition of formative assessment is any assessment that forms the direction of future learning. The primary purpose of formative assessment is to tell you where your students are with their learning and where to go next.

- **What is the value of formative assessment?**

In classrooms all over the world, when teachers want to decide whether to move on with their class or to reinforce a specific point again, they will typically ask a question to the entire class. Maybe 6 students will raise their hands, the teacher will pick one of these students and if that student gives the correct answer, they will move on to the next topic. In this scenario the teacher does not have very good evidence on what is happening in students' heads. Formative assessment requires the teacher to collect evidence of learning that is both broader by asking all students instead of just the most confident ones and deeper by asking better questions.

- **What is the importance of formative assessment now in times of Covid-19?**

Formative assessment has always been important in face-to-face environments because it provides evidence about what is going on in students' heads in a systematic way. In virtual environments, formative assessment becomes even more important because teachers do not have the same clues they would normally get in their classroom like students' facial expressions. I do not think that we should be trusting expressions on students' faces anyway but the real interesting point for me is that the closures of schools around the world have made it even more clear that teachers need better evidence on what is happening in students' heads so they can make better decisions that result in better learning.

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Country focus - Assessment in Greece

In secondary education in Greece, student's assessment is based on co-evaluating five criteria:

1. overall participation in the educational process (i.e. interest, participation, collaboration with peers, etc.), which the teacher takes into account to assess the student's knowledge and comprehension, problem-solving, communication, critical thinking and creativity competences
2. assignments performed by the student within the everyday learning process at school and at home, individually or in team work
3. synthetic/creative/cross-thematic, individual or group projects
4. hourly written tests
5. other written tests (less than one hour)

This is performed within two didactical terms (September – January/ January – May). At the end of each term, parents are informed and receive the student's individual progress fact sheet.

At the end of the school year, in June, there is also a final summative assessment in the form of a written 2-hours test on the 2/3 of the curriculum taught, conducted under the responsibility of the school's principal and the teachers' association. The student's final yearly assessment (grade) derives from a combination of the assessment for each of the two terms and the result of the final written assessment.

The assessment processes and criteria are centrally defined by the Ministry of Education in related legislation, regulatory decrees and official bulletins. Recently, the Ministry has announced plans to partially centralize it through a common national digital database of assessment items.

About our newsletter

We aim to provide you with new evidence on student learning and assessment with digital tools in an easy and engaging way. We warmly invite all newsletter readers to contribute with their own views and questions to the newsletter – it does not matter if you are an expert or novice to the topic!

Does this sound ambitious to you? Do you have a particular question that you would like us to address? Provide us with your [anonymous feedback](#) on our newsletter and let us know what you still would like to improve.

Next issue to be published in February 2021

In our next issue, we will:

- look a bit more at what are actually formative assessment practices
- hear from Eric Welp, Kennisnet (Netherlands) about the potential benefits of digital tools and how to keep safe while using them
- look at how the current Corona situation has amplified the need for formative assessment
- put our country focus on Spain

About the Assess@Learning project

Do you want to find out more about the project? Check out our [website](#).