

Formative Assessment Data Gathering Tools

designed for teachers and students to gather evidence of learning – not for evaluation or grading

Learning / Response Logs: Learning logs are used for student reflections on the material they are learning. In the log, students record the process they go through in learning something new, and any questions they may need to have clarified. This allows students to make connections to what they have learned, set goals, and reflect upon their learning process. The act of writing about thinking helps students become deeper thinkers and better writers. Response logs are similar to learning logs, but the students often respond to a specific prompt by the teacher. These can also be a teacher to student assessment tool if the teacher reads through them and writes responses to the students.

Windshield Check: Using the analogy of a windshield, students will decide which of the following best describes what they know about the concept:

CLEAR = I get it! I thoroughly understand the concept.

BUGGY = I understand it for the most part, but a few things are still unclear.

MUDDY = I don't get it at all.

Fist to Five: The teacher asks students to use their hand to signal their depth of understanding. A fist means, "I don't understand any of it," while all five fingers out means, "I understand it completely." Students can signal by raising 1, 2, 3, or 4 fingers also. The teacher can have those who hold up a five explain it to the class or to those with a 0 or 1.

Colored Cups: Each student has three cups – red, yellow, green. As students work independently, they display the appropriate color of cup to indicate their understanding of the concept. A green means, "I am working OK and encountering no problems." A yellow cup means, "I still have some questions because I can't do some of the work." A red cup means, "I am lost and I don't know how to proceed."

Think-Pair-Share: Ask students to reflect on a question or prompt. Give them a brief amount of time to formulate a response. Ask students to pair up or turn to their assigned partner. Ask them to discuss their response.

Thumbs up / Thumbs down: Students assess their comfort level with their understanding, and at the teacher's prompt indicate it with their thumbs. Up – I understand or agree, Down – I don't understand or agree, Side – I understand somewhat, or am neutral.

Thumbs-Up When Ready: Ask students to reflect on your prompt. Explain that when they have a clear thought about the prompt, they should put their thumb up as an indication they are ready to move on. Add a pair-share.

Quick-Writes: Select a prompt you would like students to address. Give students a specific amount of time to collect their thoughts and jot down a response. Follow this up with a pair-share, or another way to respond.

Quick-Draws: Select a “big idea” or major concept within the lesson. Ask students to reflect on the meaning of the concept and create a visual image that represents that concept. Have student share and explain their image with a partner, in a small group, or using a chalkboard-splash (next).

Chalkboard-Splash: Create a sentence starter, prompt, or question for which you would like all students to see all of their peers’ responses (can be a quick-write or quick-draw). Ask students to copy their responses onto random spots on the chalkboard. Have students walk around, analyze, and jot down similarities, differences, and surprises. Ask students to get in small groups and share what they noticed in terms of similarities, differences, and surprises, before asking for volunteers to share.

Similes: Create similes using some of the topics you are studying by making a connection between the topic you are studying and something unrelated. The topic is like ... Ask students to formulate an explanation of how the simile might be true. Have students to share with partner, group, or with chalkboard-splash.

Ranking: Select items that can be ranked in your unit of instruction. Ask students to rank them according to specified criteria and provide a justification for the way they chose to rank them. Share with a partner and re-rank if you change your mind.

Confer, Compare, and Clarify: Ask students to pair up (or assign pairs) and confer, compare, and clarify. Confer is getting together and sharing a one-sentence summary of what they believe is the most important part of the lesson. Compare gives students a chance to read each other’s notes and compare to their own. Allow them to borrow each other’s thoughts. Clarify means students write down any questions they may have. Join with another pair (group of four now) and share clarifying questions. Any questions that the group of four cannot answer should be written on the board. Teacher addresses the questions on the board.

Graphic Organizers: Teacher provides a graphic organizer (google for some) that fit the lesson presentation. Students fill them out. They hand them in and allow teacher feedback.

Anticipatory Guides: Create true/false statements related to the content you will be presenting. Ask students to read statements and predict the response. Students record responses in a “before” column. Address each statement as it comes up in your lesson. Have students use thumbs-up to share new answer and record in “after” column.

3-Sentence Wrap-Up: At end of presentation have student summarize in three sentences or fewer. Have small groups get together to share or refine their summaries. Have them hand them in so you can see how well they understood.

Anecdotal Notes: These are short notes written during a lesson as students work in groups or individually, or after the lesson is complete. The teacher reflects on a specific aspect of the learning (e.g. sorts geometric shapes correctly) and makes notes on the student’s progress toward master of that learning target. Anecdotal records can be organized in a notebook, on a form, with note cards, or with sticky notes.

Questioning: The teacher asks questions that prompt student reflection, probing, insight, and evaluation.

Exit Slips: Exit slips are written responses to questions that the teacher poses at the end of a lesson or a class to assess student understanding of key concepts. They should take no more than 5 minutes to complete and are taken up as students leave the classroom. The teacher can quickly determine which student have it, which ones need a little help, and which ones are going to require much more instruction on the concept. The teacher uses the information to plan the next day's lesson.

Admit Slip: These are like exit slips, but they are done prior to the beginning of class. Students may be asked to reflect on their understanding of the previous night's homework, or they may reflect on the previous day's lesson.

Four Corners: This is a quick strategy to gauge student understanding and engage students in a discussion of controversial topics. The four corners of the classroom are labeled as strongly agree, agree disagree, and strongly disagree. After the teacher presents a question, students move to the corner that best expresses their view. Students discuss their opinions and reasons for it in their corner. The teacher listens to their discussions. Students may also be asked to summarize their discussion for the entire class.

Constructive Quizzes / Online Polling: Periodic quizzes or polls given to provide feedback to students and the teacher on the students' degrees of understanding. The results are used immediately to modify instruction, and they are never used as a grade.