30 Fresh Ideas for Adding Formative Assessment to Your Teaching

Today, educators have a wealth of tried and tested techniques to implement effective formative assessment. Here are 30 bright ideas from educators to get your wheels turning.

1 Classroom Polls

Polls let students give responses quickly and accurately. Also a silent poll is perfect for shy students who have trouble speaking up. Try tools like Poll Everywhere or SurveyPlanet.

2 Corners

Have each corner of the room represent different answers or different levels of students' comfort with a topic. Students can go to the corner that best matches his or her answer or comfort-level. Students can change corners as discussion progresses and their opinions evolve.

3 Think-Pair-Share

Students write answers to instructor questions. Pair each student with a partner to discuss their answers.

4 Admit/Exit Tickets

Students write the main idea of the lesson and details of what they learned on a card. They can drop these cards in a bin when they enter or exit class. A review of student responses can show which students have it down and which are still struggling.

5 One-Minute Papers

Groups or individual students answer a brief question in writing. This question can be about the main point of the lesson, unanswered questions, what confused them the most, the most surprising concept, or something that might show up on the test.

6 3-2-1 Go!

Students write three things they didn't know before, two things that surprised them, and one way they want to apply what they learned.

7 Popsicle Stick
Randomize your Socratic questioning by putting students' names on popsicle sticks. This way you aren't calling on the same students all the time.

8 Fresh Take
Pick a topic. Ask students to describe a brand new example or approach that wasn't discussed in class.

9 Teach the Essence
In one or two sentences, students explain the essence of a given topic to an audience of their choosing.

10 Dos & Don'ts
Students list three dos and three don'ts for applying the concept in real life.

11 Tablets
Ask students to write their answers to discussion questions and reveal them all at once. Whether they use iPads (expensive) or small white boards (inexpensive), understanding and misunderstanding is instantly apparent.

12 Draw It
Have students diagram and draw what they understand. This can be especially helpful if you've reviewed Dan Roam's principles for visual communication in Back of the Napkin.

13 Compliment Sandwich or "Two Stars and a Wish"
Deliver feedback as two areas of excellence and one area that could improve. This can be used for instructor or peer feedback. It can also be turned around so students assess their own work.

14 Anonymous Review
Review an anonymous piece of work with the entire class and have all students provide feedback.

15 Carousel Brainstorming
Divide the class into groups of four to five students. Using colored markers, each group writes their answers on a chart, which is passed to the next group after a set amount of time. The next group reads previous answers and adds theirs to the end.

16 Propaganda
Make a poster or collage illustrating a given concept and persuading an audience its importance.

17 Act it Out
Rehearse and record a skit, song, or podcast discussing the material.

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18 Jigsaw

Put students in groups of four or six. Give each student a card with a question to read to their group. One student keeps a log of his or her peers who 1) get it, 2) sort of get it, 3) aren't sure, or 4) don't get it. Next, form new groups of the students who all read the same questions. Each group prepares a best answer for their question together. Then all the students return to their original group to share their top answer and re-score each group member's understanding.

19 Multiple Choice Cards

Give each student a set of cards corresponding to multiple choice answers. For each question you ask, students raise the card with their answer. If some students wait to see others' responses, require everyone to reveal their cards at once.

20 Diorama

Students build a diorama of a story that explains a topic or a scenario where it applies. This can be expanded to stop-motion video illustrating the concepts or narrative.

21 Flashcards

Let students design their own flashcards and use them to test their peers. Scorekeeping is optional.

22 Hot Potato

Pass a small beanbag or ball around the classroom as the discussion moves from instructor to students. Before they can pass it to someone else, they have to add something to the discussion. This lets students lead part of the discussion and engages more students than just the avid hand-raisers.

23 Three Most Common Misunderstandings

Students list what they think are the three most common misunderstandings for their peers for a given topic.

24 Prove It

Students must prove to teh instructor that they understand the course topics in diagram, written, or related form. Their delivery should be simple enough for a stranger to understand the concept.

25 Keynote Presentation

Students prepare keynotes including PowerPoint presentations, handouts, or multimedia illustrating a topic. This strategy is especially good if you've introduced your students to presentation principles from Presentation Zen and The Art of Public Speaking.

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26 Yes/No Chart

Students make two columns: one for what they do understand and one for what they don't. Then they list what they do and don't understand about a given concept. The instructor must disqualify overly vague responses.

27 Three Questions

Have students prepare three questions about the topic then rank them based on their perception of importance.

28 Big Picture

Rather than focusing on just the topic, students can diagram the context. Have them show how the topic fits into the big picture.

29 Venn Diagram

Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast a given topic to an adjacent or tangential topic.

30 Use GoReact

Ask students to record themselves performing the skill or demonstrating understanding of the concept. Then use GoReact to give time-coded feedback on students' videos. This is especially appropriate to online courses.

Sources

5 Great Formative Assessment Strategies That Never Miss Lee Watanabe-Crockett, Sep 2017.

22 Easy Formative Assessment Techniques for Measuring Student Learning Kathy Dyer, Jul 2013.

10 Assessments You Can Perform In 90 Seconds Terry Heick, Aug 2017.

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