What Teachers REALLY need to know about Formative Assessment

Chapter 4 (pp. 63-88)

Ongoing Assessment for Ongoing Learning

- Need to keep measuring learning & adjusting teaching throughout instruction
- Rick Wormeli (2006) termed ongoing assessment as 'formative dip-sticking'

Benefits:

- "Quick Pulse' Measurements of Group Understanding
- Insight into Individual Progress
- Development of Critical Thinking Skills
  - Allows teachers to monitor how deeply students are understanding & thinking about a topic and provides insights into students' knowledge
- Are there opportunities for students to 'self-assess' as part of the learning process?
  - Brings students' attention to areas requiring more review and areas of growth

7 Tools & Strategies for Assessing During Instruction (more strategies in Appendix B)

Signaling strategies include:

Voting Cards (colour coded (green/red) for yes/no, agree/disagree, true/false)

- Advantageous for shyer students
- *Think of a lesson and how you might use voting cards to assess during instruction

Fingers Up

- 1 (agree), 2 (disagree), 1-5 shows levels of understanding from which mixed ability groups can be organized
- Adding movement (body) to your lesson stimulates the brain
- Validity of this self-reporting assessment depends on the honesty of the students' responses

Line-Up

- Provides a way to assess students' sequencing ability - a way to organize knowledge
- Students are given a prepared card on which you have printed an idea to put in chronological or sequential order)

Graphic organizers (diagrams, mind maps, concept maps, tables, charts, matrixes)

- Examples: webs, Venn diagram (compare & contrast) and matrixes can be followed by a Think-Pair-Share strategy
- provide a window into students' thinking; shows how students are categorizing and connecting information and shows gaps in students' understanding
- used for whole-class brain-storming; help provide a snapshot of students' critical thinking

- only a part of formative assessment if data is gleaned from them and the data is put to use

Bump in the Road (pp 81-82)

- students are asked to write down a point they find confusing about the topic of instruction
    - illuminates areas of confusion or missing information
    - contributes to the teachers' understanding of the status of the class learning
- teachers can use these points to plan and to review/reteach with individuals or groups
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Questioning & the Socratic Method

- a specific form of questioning set up as a dialogue of question and response
    - teacher asks a question then follows up [probes] for further exploration
    - teachers only use second to lecturing as a teaching and assessing method
    - characteristics of skilled questioning (p. 83)
    - particularly effective in revealing the students' present ability to apply, analyze and synthesize information
    - determining appropriate wait time (3 sec vs 1 sec) is one of the hardest skills for new teachers but is one of the most effective ways to promote thinking and engagement
    - follow-up questions help reveal students critical thinking skills

Electronic Response Systems (demo)

- allows students to vote or respond privately during instruction
- similar to voting cards, fingers-up and other signaling strategies
- How might the responses generated contribute to the teachers' understanding of the status of class learning?, individual achievement?

Key Questions for Reflection:

Which of the strategies listed above do you use and find effective?

If you haven't used any of the strategies, which of the strategies do you think would be applicable/ might be useful and would try?

How often do you check for understanding during the instructional process?

How do you know that your students understand the learning intentions before summative assessment?

Responding Instructionally

- How do you use formative assessment data to inform your instructional decisions?
- Do you use assessment to data to gauge student progress towards instructional objectives?
- How do you determine which students have gained mastery of learning objectives and which students haven't?

  ➢ When students are not understanding concepts, re-teaching using the same strategies is less effective than changing the instructional strategies (Greenstein, 2005)

Making the Content more Accessible

- How do we make content more accessible for struggling readers?

Adjust Pace or Sequence

- Recognizes the importance of 'flexible teaching' where teachers should feel comfortable changing the order/sequence of concepts taught vs 'rigid teaching' where one chooses to teach concepts in a specific order because that's the way it has always been done.

Changing the Setting

- Recognizes the idea of organizing homogeneous vs heterogeneous groupings based on formative assessment data.

Provide Specific Feedback & Opportunities for Choice