



Pocket Assessment

A List of Activities for
Quick Formative
Assessments



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Quick Tools

Yes/No Cards: The teacher will ask a question. Students respond by holding up the appropriate card, whether they know the answer or not. In this way, they self-assess their assuredness on a topic.

Thumbs up/Down: This works the same as Yes or No cards. Students just use thumbs like at the end of a Roman Coliseum show.

Color Cards: This is also known as "Traffic Lights." Students rate their knowledge by holding up one of three coloured cards:

- Red (I'm completely lost)
- Yellow (Slow down, I'm struggling a bit)
- Green (I've got it, it's all good)

1-2-3 Fingers: This works the same as "Colour Cards." Students hold fingers up to respond:

- 1 finger (Lost)
- 2 fingers (Not quite lost, but searching)
- 3 fingers (Understood completely)

Daring Doodles: Challenge students to use a drawing rather than words to show understanding of a concept. This is the perfect exercise for those kids who have difficulty speaking out in class.

Roll the Die: Put a 6-sided dice at each desk. At the end of class, each student rolls and briefly answers aloud a question based on the number rolled:

1. I want to remember ...
2. Something I learned today
3. One word to sum up what I learned
4. Something I already knew
5. I'm still confused about ...
6. An "aha" moment that I had today

Write or Draw: Learners write a few sentences or draw a picture or diagram to summarize or relay ideas.

Highlight an Example: Have students choose one question or example from a list and jot a sentence or two about it on a sticky note, and attach it to the problem.

Quick Summaries: Students can be asked to summarize important lessons or concepts. You can even add a summary challenge using social media. Have them Tweet their summaries, for example; the challenge there is that the limit is 140 characters. Students must be concise and brief with their entries.

Quick Tools (cont'd)

Square, Triangle, or Circle: This is about choosing a shape as a form of reflection: a square for something that squared with their thinking (reinforcement), a triangle for three key ideas, or a circle to represent a question still "circling around" in their mind.

Quick-Draw Showdown: This one is a fun competitive exercise. Square two students off against each other, and have them quickly write down a sentence or draw a quick sketch of a learning concept. It works better if they are both using the same thing. When you say "Go!" the fun begins. The first one to finish wins the quick draw.

3 Things: Students list 3 things that a fellow student might need help with on a topic or lesson.

Twitter Board: Students summarize what is learned from a lesson within a short sentence using Twitter.

Four Corners: Corners of the room are labeled "Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree." Statements are read aloud and students go to their respective corner. This is then followed by open discussion.

EQ Test: Can the students answer the Essential Question from the lesson (either verbally or written)?

Collaborative Tools

Strategic Questioning: Questioning strategies may be used with individuals, small groups, or the entire class. Effective formative assessment strategies involve asking students to answer higher-order questions such as "why" and "how." They require more in-depth thinking from the students and can help the teacher discern the level and extent of the students' understanding.

Round Robin Charts: Each group of 4 or 5 students begins with a chart and some markers. The group records an answer to an open-ended question. They can also share knowledge they have on a topic covered in class. Once the students finish with the chart, they pass it on to the next group. Once every group has worked on every chart, responses are discussed as a class.

3-Way Summaries: The idea here is to use different modes of thinking and attention to detail. Students can work in groups or individually. In response to a question or topic inquiry, they write three different summaries:

- 10–15 words long
- 30–50 words long
- 75–100 words long

You can even have students use Twitter. They'll have experience communicating messages with minimal wording and characters.

Collaborative Tools (cont'd)

Think-Pair-Share: The teacher asks a question, and students write down their answers. Students are placed in pairs to discuss their responses. Teachers move around the classroom and listen to various discussions to gain valuable insight into levels of understanding.

Testing Preview With a Buddy: Learners can buddy-up with a partner to discuss the answers for a test. This can help students learn from each other what holes they might have in their comprehension.

Mind Maps: Mind Maps should be taught, so plan this ahead of time. It's a great self-assessment tool to use as students get older. Building mind maps is a great critical thinking exercise that can help students expand on their understanding of something. Also use them to have students connect learning to other concepts.

Carousel Brainstorm: Large sheets of paper are stationed around the room with topics at each top. Groups go around to each chart, brainstorming their ideas on the topic. When the "carousel" stops, students discuss their findings.

Turn and Talk: The teacher asks a thought-provoking question about the topic. Students "turn" to the person beside them and discuss their insights about it with each other.

Talk Show Panel: Students are assigned a position about a topic (whether they agree or disagree). They must internalize the position and then discuss it in a panel, debate-style.

Misconception Check: The teacher states a common misconception about a topic. Students agree or disagree, and discuss.

Peer Quizzes: Students can write their own questions about the content and then quiz each other. They would also spend time going through the incorrect answers with each other to heighten their understanding.

Talk it Out: Students can host their own talk show and discuss the important points of any lesson. They write their own questions and answers, and can even play characters of their own creation.

Student Interviews: Groups of 2 or 3 students take a few minutes at the end of class to discuss what they've learned. Each student takes a turn interviewing the other. You can give them guiding questions like:

- What was the most useful thing you learned?
- What did you struggle most with?
- What will you ask for help with next class?
- What can you do to help somebody else learn better?
- What's your learning goal for next class?

Collaborative Tools (cont'd)

Peer Teaching: You know students have truly learned a concept when they can teach it to other students. This can be done in groups of 2 or 3, but that's a recommended limit. Bigger groups require the kind of attention-wrangling skills students don't yet possess.

Mini-Whiteboards: Each group of students is given a miniature board or a tablet with a whiteboard app. As they work through problems, ask them to share them with the class, or you can walk around the classroom and view their work.

Teach Younger Kids: Your students can teach younger students the concepts in a subject after learning them, similar to Peer Teaching.

Jigsaw Collaboration: Students work in groups on a different section of the content until they know the concepts cold. Next, you switch the groups around so each new group has a member that has read a different section of the content. Each "expert" then shares what they know with the rest of their new group.

Student-Led Conferences: Student-led conferences mean learners can bring their own special creative ideas for hosting to the table. These kinds of events end up being unique and enjoyable for everyone. It's a great way to assess students' abilities while fostering the leadership mindset.

Writing Tools

3-2-1 Countdown: Give learners cards to write on, or they can respond orally. They are required to respond to three separate statements:

- 3 things you didn't know before
- 2 things that surprised you about this topic
- 1 thing you want to start doing with what you've learned

You can also ask them different kinds of questions. These are suggestions, so feel free to make up your own.

Exit/Admit Tickets: Exit tickets are small pieces of paper or cards that students deposit as they leave the classroom. Students write down an accurate interpretation of the main idea behind the lesson taught that day. Next, they provide more detail about the topic. Admit tickets are done at the very beginning of the class. Students may respond to questions about homework, or on the lesson taught the day before.

One-Minute Papers: Students must answer a brief question in writing:

- Main point of the lesson/content
- Most surprising concept
- Most confusing area of topic

An innovative formative assessment strategy like this can take failure out of the classroom. Make up your own questions as well.

Writing Tools (cont'd)

Daily Student Current Events: Assign each learner a day to report on current events in front of the class. You can make this like a newsroom by having the “reporter” sit at a desk in front of the class. Do this on an ongoing basis each week by assigning each student the day’s news the night before. That way they can get educated on newsworthy events to present to the class.

Invent the Quiz: Have students submit their own questions for making the test up, and vote on the best ones. By answering their own questions, they’ll be ready for the final.

Teacher For The Week: Assign each student a week where they get to act as the teacher for a set amount of time. They pick a concept or idea to show the class a little bit of each day for an entire week. They can plan their lessons in advance. Be on hand to offer them insights on how best to do this. You can also do just a day or two.

KWL (Know, Want, Learn) Charts: These are great critical thinking tools that get students interested in new topics. They ask these three questions that students write answers to:

- What do you know already?
- What do you want to know?
- What did you learn?

Exploration Table: At the end of class, each student answers the following questions presented to them on index cards:

- What did we do in class?
- Why did we do it?
- What did I learn today?
- How can I apply it?
- What questions do I have about it?

Enthusiasm Example Chart: This chart is great for not only collecting feedback but also introducing scatter plots to students. Students rank what they learned that day and how much they enjoyed the lessons. They then elaborate on a Post-It, offering details about what they found helpful to them in having a successful learning day. They can also share what prevented them from having a fulfilling day. Compile the data and discuss it in class the next day.

Quick Quotables: Have students create two columns on a piece of paper. On one side have them write 5 or 6 of their most favourite quotes from people they admire. In the adjoining column, have them write their own interpretation of what the quote means to them and how it connects to the day’s learning. If they’re feeling good about it, have them consider what makes a great quote as they write their own original quotes.

Writing Tools (cont'd)

Career map: Have students write or create vision boards in response to these questions, or ones you create yourself:

- What are your big goals outside of this particular project?
- Can you see any skills you acquired by working through this project?
- How did this bring you closer to your goal?

Portfolios: Learners document their achievements by building a portfolio. This is key to seeing their progress and preparing for the job market with stuff they're proud of.

Open-Ended Questions: These are content questions that really get students thinking about what they've learned. They can chat about or write their responses. Give students a chance to really think about the learning that took place.

Daily Learning Journals: Journalling has been proven to be one of the best reflection tools around for learning. This is a daily brief reflection exercise that some students may resist. Some may not enjoy writing daily reflections. If so, they could do it using screencasting or simple audio recording. Younger students can create vision boards or collages, relating imagery to what they've learned. They may also choose to share their excerpts on a class blog or web page. This is a great classroom community-building exercise.

5x5 Journal: Have students journal about the five most interesting ideas they discovered during a lesson. Next, they identify five things that resonate with them about each one and explain why.

Self-Grading: Students can use this one to grade their own progress. Have them give themselves a grade on the material covered. They must then explain why they feel they've earned that grade.

Transform the Test: The most common feedback we give students is usually a number. This is, unfortunately, a summative practice that does not identify strengths and weaknesses or provide feedback for learning and development. An example of how to change this is to shift our approach to quizzing and make it into a rich and collaborative learning opportunity. Try these strategies:

- The students mark the quizzes themselves and then individually undertake the learning activity that reinforces the identified area of weakness.
- The students mark the quizzes and identify which activities are needed, and then form learning groups to complete the activities identified.
- Instead of a quiz, the teacher presents the questions one at a time, and the students attempt the answer. The students then break into groups and work collaboratively on the activity to reduce the gap, supported by their peers.

Writing Tools (cont'd)

Hold Up a Mirror: Self-questioning and self-verbalizing are metacognitive strategies in which the student creates appropriate questions, then predicts the answers, validates these answers, and then summarizes them. Ask students to record the answers to these three key questions:

- What can I do?
- What can't I do?
- How can I do better?

Hand & Pass: Students respond to questions on paper anonymously. They then hand their papers in and they are handed back out to students randomly for grading. Results are then discussed as a class.

Whiteboard Crash: This is where a group of students write a prompt or a response to a question on the board all at the same time. They can also use Twitter or a Facebook page for this exercise.

Transfer Check: Check to see if students are able to transfer a concept from one domain to another. For example, can they identify the climax in a short story, a novel, a movie, and an advertisement?

Predictions: Have students make a prediction about an experiment or a demonstration and explain it. After the experiment or demo, discuss why their predictions were right/wrong.

Survey/Quiz Tools

Classroom Polls: Polls let students give responses quickly and accurately. A silent poll is perfect for those "shy" students who have trouble speaking up. These are also a quick way to check understanding using mobile technology.

Student Surveys: Surveys are a tried-and-true method for checking understanding. Encourage students to build their own and to make them challenging enough so they are invested in seeing the results. Examples of engaging questions might be about what they want to learn next, or the best thing they learned in the previous lesson and why. Pie graphs and charts can also be made by the students from the findings in the survey.

Weekly Quizzes: Create a daily or a weekly subject challenge for the students to solve through Twitter communication. Try a word puzzle, a math challenge, or a quest to uncover a mystery.

Question Periods: Schedule "question periods" so students can ask questions on the spot in an organized manner so as to avoid teachers having to field too many questions at one time.

Questionnaires: Questionnaires can be used in various subject areas. When used as a formative assessment strategy, questionnaires give teachers valuable information on student learning that they can use to plan further instruction.

Creativity Tools

Creative Extension Projects: Students can create a large scope of projects to demonstrate comprehension. Quick projects help them apply the higher-order levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. These don't have to be big and complicated. They can take a day, a half-day, or even an hour. Here are some extension ideas for quick projects:

- Create a poster or collage illustrating the subject matter
- Record a rehearsed skit or podcast discussing the topics covered
- Build a diorama about the subject and create a narrative behind it
- Let students design their own flashcards to test each other with
- Keynote presentations made by students on the topic

Student Discussion Leader: When discussing a book or idea, it's always beneficial to have a student lead the discussion at times. It's a great way to enhance a sense of responsibility for learning, aside from also developing leadership skills. The student in charge can ask questions of the other students that you as the teacher might not have thought of. It can lead to a much more organic and riveting discussion when a student is at the helm. They can come up with themes from the book exclusive to their thought process and engage their peers this way.

Illustration/Sketch: Students collect or create images and use these pictures to establish connections to the content and explain them. It's a great creativity builder, too.

Dress-Up Bio Day: Have each student read a summary of an autobiography or biography of their choice. Then they dress up as that person and present themselves to the class. It's a cool and creative confidence builder that really shakes things up. Kids are learning through creativity and explaining the life of someone else in an easily understandable way.

The "Science Guy/Gal" Project: Have each child present a simple science experiment to the class. They are essentially playing themselves as the "science guy or gal." Have each of the kids come up with their own simple experiments to show and explain to the class. A costume they can wear makes this project even more fun.

Pamphlet/Multimedia Poster/Infographic: This could be considered part of the creative extension projects activity if you like. You can have students use any number of tools for this. You can also go old-school and use traditional materials.

Comic Book: Use tools like PuppetPals HD or Comic Life to illustrate a concept. Or again, go old-school and draw freehand.

Top 10 List: These kinds of lists focus on the big important ideas. Students can write out their ten most important takeaways from a lesson plan or a class discussion. Encourage them to create lists that are humorous and fun.

Creativity Tools (cont'd)

Podcasting: Tools like Easy Podcast, djPod, Podbean, or Audacity make it easy. Students can speak as the expert on a topic with a podcast. It's a great exercise for media knowledge and creativity as well as oral skills.

Dramatic Interpretation: In this one, students enact scenes from a book or any concept for that matter. Imagination is the ticket here.

Past Postcards: Have students adopt the personality of a historical figure and write a postcard to another historical figure from the same era. They can discuss a significant event from history that has just occurred to show they understand it.

Cool Collages: Ask students to make a collage or poster from magazine photos for demonstrating their understanding of a concept. They can use standard art materials or use apps designed for drawing.

Visualization Practice: Read a page of a story and have each student create an illustration that describes what is happening in that portion of the story.

Photo Assessment: Choose two or three photos that represent a particular process or concept. Have students write captions for each photo followed by a short summary of each one.

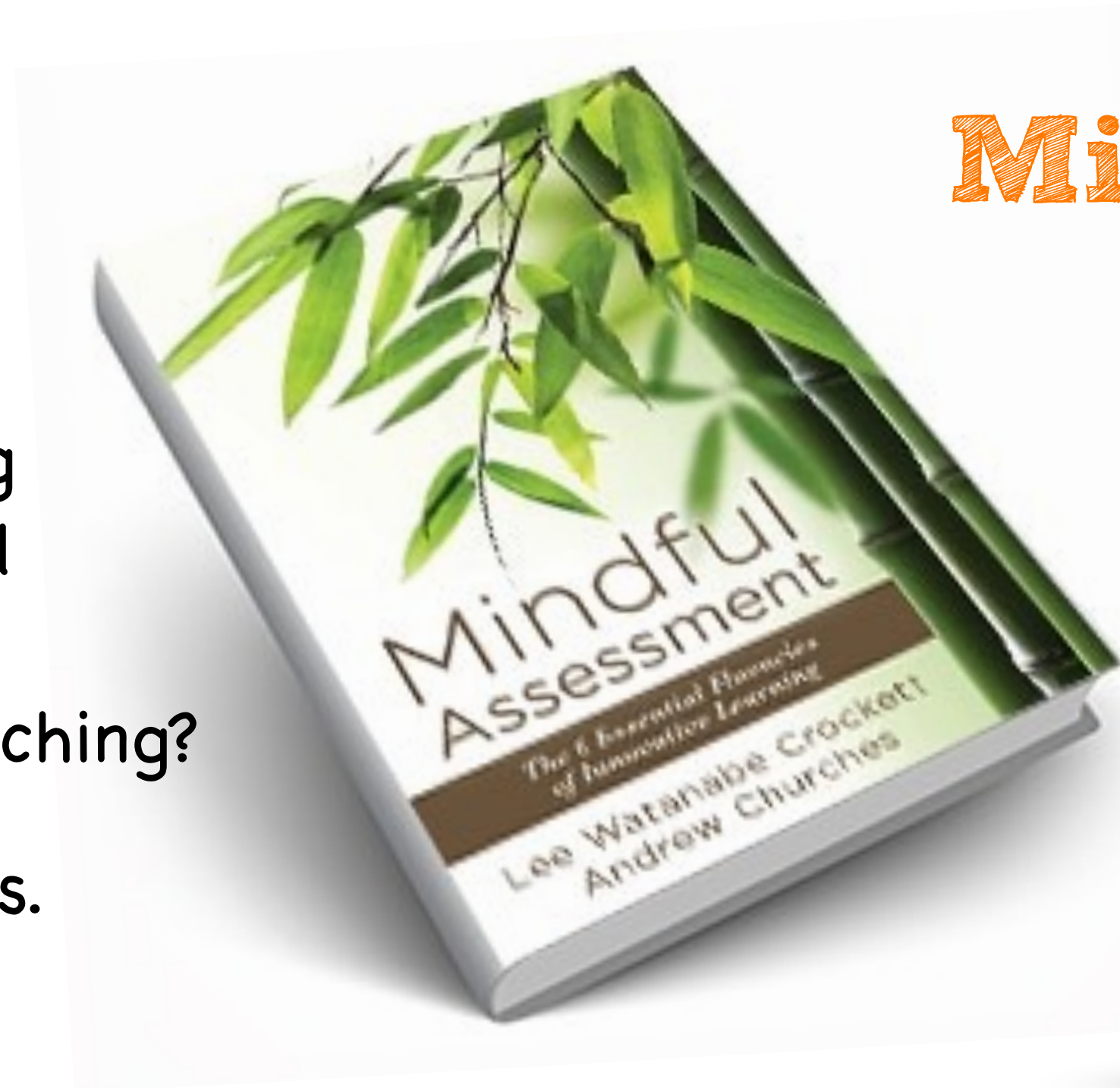
Graffiti Party: Cover a part of your classroom wall with white paper. Next, get students to write or draw what they have learned about a topic. They can write down facts, personal opinions, or sketches and doodles to connect to their learning concepts.

Graphic Organizers: These are creative ways of organizing thoughts and concepts connected to learning, and can a number of different forms.

The Next Steps

What is “mindful assessment” and how is it unique among other learning assessments? Why is it so special and valuable to our students? Most of all, how do we make it happen in our teaching?

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