



PRESENT TRENDS OF ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

Consistent with 21st Century learning and the benefits brought on by better assessment tools, assessment is becoming more student-centric, offering educators the insights that will help them determine the best instructional next steps and how to make learning more personal for the individual student.

Trading the punitive elements of policies like No Child Left Behind for the growth mindset presented in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states are now able and incensed to take advantage of alternatives to the expensive, high-stakes, end-of-level tests that have persisted for decades despite providing little benefit to the students.

Though a list of trends this may be, the growing practice of deliberate formative assessment is here to stay. When educators embed frequent, in-class assessments into daily instruction they're gathering the data they need to identify student levels of understanding, target intervention, and evaluate their instructional practices individually and across their teams.

Formative assessments, whether graded or ungraded, can and should be carried out in a variety of modalities (i.e. paper-and-pencil or online quizzes, verbal cues, informal observations by the teacher, etc), with each providing nuanced insights into student understanding that drive instruction. Teachers and students begin to view assessments as informative rather than punitive. Differentiated, ongoing assessments should address the varied levels of understanding that make up every classroom.

Key Words: Evaluation, Assessment, Teachers, Students, Innovative Methods, Level of understanding.

Introduction

Traditional grading approaches provide letter and/or number grades meant to show a student's overall academic standing, yet this offers students, teachers, and parents little to no insight into what the student has actually learned. When focused on what students actually know and don't know, teachers and stakeholders realize the need to identify deficiencies in a student's learning, using these insights to adjust instruction. Students can work to achieve mastery *prior* to moving on to more complicated skills and concepts. Progression is now based on understanding and readiness, rather than by some other schedule disconnected from the student's needs.

Among the shifting mindsets within K-12 education is the need for schools and districts to move from a culture of collecting data to one of using data. Formative and benchmark assessments provide data teachers can use, in the moment, to improve student outcomes. By upgrading the tech tools used in the assessment process, teachers can simplify and shorten the feedback loop, becoming increasingly accustomed to using data to drive their instruction.

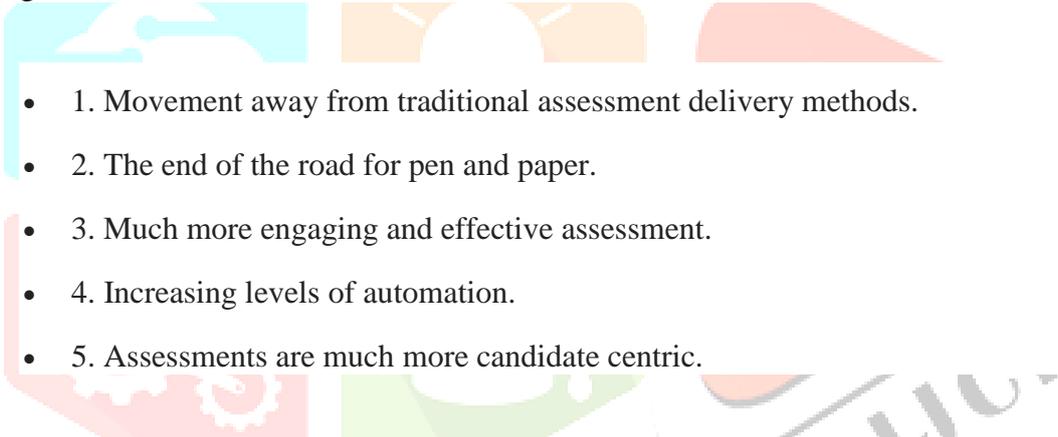
As teachers, schools, and entire districts find themselves using common platforms for gathering and using formative and benchmark assessment data, all aligned to common standards, such stakeholders are better able (and more willing) to collaborate around assessment data to support resource sharing, instructional best practices, and larger learning trends.

With the unacceptable results of high-stakes testing persisting each year, ESSA offered states much-needed relief with the opportunity to replace end-of-level tests with alternative, ‘innovative assessments.’

Among the alternatives being developed, breakthroughs in machine learning have allowed psychometric models (i.e. valid and reliable) that reduce assessment seat times and improve the quality of actionable data. These models can do far more to improve student growth while requiring much less of the students, from a testing standpoint. It’s a win across the board, but most importantly for the students and their academic growth.

For many, the word “assessment” translates into multiple choice questions or writing for hours in a crowded exam hall – it is something very defined and has a certain place in our education or career. The huge advancements in computer-based testing are now redefining the possibilities of assessment, particularly in terms of what can be tested, how and when. These advancements mean that there are many more applications for both summative and formative testing, applications that even a couple of years ago would not have been possible.

Based on working with a wide and varied client base, here are the top five trends we've identified that are changing how assessment is delivered:

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- 1. Movement away from traditional assessment delivery methods.
 - 2. The end of the road for pen and paper.
 - 3. Much more engaging and effective assessment.
 - 4. Increasing levels of automation.
 - 5. Assessments are much more candidate centric.

The use of professional remote invigilation, which recreates the exam hall experience in an online environment, means there is a move away from the use of traditional assessment delivery methods, such as running exams in a test centre. Remote invigilation (also known as online proctoring) means that a secure exam can be run from any location as long as there is an internet connection. This gives a great deal of flexibility to candidates, who can sit their exam at a time and place that suits them, rather than spend time and incur costs associated with taking time off and travelling to a test centre.

Live remote invigilation happens in real-time. This means that for the duration of an exam, an invigilator watches the candidate using video, audio and remote screenshare. The session is recorded and can be reviewed at a later stage if required. Any infringements can be raised as they happen e.g. if the candidate keeps looking away from the screen, the candidate will be advised to stop this behaviour. If infringements are severe e.g. the candidate takes a phone call or someone else comes into the room, the exam may be immediately stopped.

For organisations, the benefits of remote invigilation are numerous, such as a significantly reduced administration overhead, greater security and the ability to cater for candidates in any country worldwide. Exams can also be offered with greater frequency, so instead of one long test available once or twice a year, there may be multiple shorter tests run closer to the period of tuition.

Assessment is the gathering of information in the form of data. Students' conceptual knowledge and skill levels are measured and assigned a grade in the form of a number or letter. Concepts are what students know about a topic, and skills are what students can do. An evaluation is then made as a way to judge student achievement. Administrators also equate student assessment as a method of measuring teacher accountability.

Advantage

The benefits of using effective assessment for learning include:

- Improved relationships between teachers and students.
- Improved attainment and achievement.
- Improved confidence, resilience, and self-esteem amongst learners.
- Improved classroom culture and teaching and learning environments.

Disadvantages

Assessments may have a negative effect on student motivation, particularly for students performing below grade level. Careless implementation of assessments may have negative consequences, especially when the needs of special education students are not considered. Using only a written formal assessment does not provide an overall picture of student achievement. Students that perform better with oral and visual skills or who display superior creativity are at a disadvantage. Basing teacher effectiveness on standardized test scores may encourage teachers to narrow the curriculum to teach to the test. While it is unclear whether alternative assessments are effective, what is clear is that this debate will not be going away any time soon.

Conclusion

Assessments should be an integrated part of learning and development and demonstrate an individual's ability to apply knowledge - rather than just a measure of knowledge at a given time. Using online exam software opens up a suite of useful tools to simplify creation, delivery and marking of a range of assessment types. The trends towards flexible delivery, engaging assessments, automation and a candidate-centric focus are helping organisations move to a model where assessments are far more effective, and where the candidate experience is both positive and engaging.

Reference

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