

Different types of formal assessments and how they are used



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There are two types of formal assessments. First there are norm referenced test. These tests have stringent regulations. Schools are held accountable for implementing strict regulations regarding this test because these types of test are used to show the various levels of academic achievement from one student to the other. They are used as a model of comparison, sometimes between groups of students, or even schools of students.

One advantage of norm referenced test is that faculty, parents, and even students can see how the student scores side by side with other peers, or schools. Students could be examined against students of there same age, grade, or gender. (U. K, 2010) These tests are great tools for teachers to see where the children are at, what they have learned, or what they need to improve on. One disadvantage of these test are that they depend greatly on multiple choice questions. The reason for this is so the grading is done quickly using a machine rather than a person. (U. K, 2010) Testing in this fashion prohibits the student from being able to convey original answers. This kind of test only measures a wide range of knowledge, rather than what each student is individually capable of.

Next we have criterion referenced test. One advantage of these tests is that they are able to precisely measure a child's ability's in any given subject area. This test compares the student to a standard not like the norm referenced test which compares to other peer performances. (U, K, 2010) This test is able to show a child's expertise or lack there of in any given subject. One advantage of the criteria referenced is the fact that students are better prepared for the exam as they have been thoroughly taught all the materials that will be covered on this test. On the other hand

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standardized exams usually cover such a broad base of knowledge that it can hinder the child's ability to prepare for the exam. One disadvantage to criterion referenced test is that they can take a long time to prepare as the material must precisely cover each subject area.

Informal assessments are also a good tool for teachers. This type of assessment enables teachers to make give assessments that are able to give them timely results in order to help students progress. (Weaver, 2006) They can easily see where the students need extra attention and address accordingly. The first informal assessment that we will discuss is homework. Students are usually given homework that coincides with the lesson that was taught in class on any particular day. This is a great quick way to see whether or not the material covered in class was absorbed or not.

One advantage of this assessment is that it is a quick, efficient, and easily produced. Another advantage is that this type of assessment can be graded quickly. Students can simply trade papers in class in order to grade them. One disadvantage of this assessment is that some students do not do there homework. Therefore teachers can not assess there ability if they do not participate. Another disadvantage of this type of assessment would be that since this is done at home, teachers can not know if this is the students work or the work of someone else. Also students take textbooks home so it would be easy to just quickly look up the answer if it were unknown.

Experiments are another form of informal assessment. Experiments can provide much more to a classroom besides assessments. This can add quick fun and excitement for any lesson. They provide the student an opportunity

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to actually touch see or smell the lesson and have face to face interaction with it. One advantage of experiments is that the results are easily evaluated. If the students achieve the desired results upon completion of the experiment then they know the lesson. Another advantage is if the experiment is not successful, the teacher can review the lab explanations to find out what happened and correct the pupil. One disadvantage of experiments is that they can be costly. Especially if you have a large class, the materials alone will cost a great deal of money. Another disadvantage is that this type of assessment can take up lots of time. Teachers often have a hard time fitting just the lessons in without the experiments as well.

(Navarete, 1990)

The next form of informal assessments will be writing samples. One advantage of writing samples is that they are a great way to demonstrate the proficiency of language art skills as well as many other subject areas. Writing samples provides the student with the opportunity to show uniqueness and individuality. This allows the teacher a chance to evaluate the depth of knowledge the student has in any given subject or lesson.

(Navarete, 1990) Another advantage to writing samples is that you can not only evaluate the lesson that you are working on now, but teachers also have the chance to assess prior lessons through writing. One disadvantage of writing samples are that not all subjects can be assessed using this form. For example it would not be in the best interest to use a writing sample for a Science lesson. It would be next to impossible to evaluate student's achievements in Science through merely a writing sample. Maybe an experiment would be a better assessment tool. Another disadvantage would

be that they are time consuming. Gathering thoughts and proofreading can take up large amounts of time. Students all need proper amounts of time in order to show their competencies through a writing sample.

Debates are a great way to properly assess students' speaking skills. Writing samples could not assess oral skills but debates can. A debate is merely a discussion between two students that can clarify and also convey each student's knowledge in a subject area. One advantage of debates is that they can thoroughly show the teacher the depth and breadth of each student's knowledge. Another advantage is that it shows the teacher which students are comfortable with oral presentations, and which student's need more work. A disadvantage of debates is that they are hard to grade or assess because of the rapid pace at which the teacher has to try and keep up with during the debate. Sometimes important information can be unheard by graders. Another disadvantage is that oral debates can not completely cover every lesson plan, unless it is on oral speaking. (Weaver, 2006)

It would be feasible for teachers to use formal and informal assessments when assessing students, because as we discussed Science projects can not be assessed properly using only writing samples. It would not be smart either to use an experiment to teach a lesson on pilgrims. Debates although they are fun for students can only accurately assess oral presentation skills. Lastly homework can sometimes be ambiguous as teachers are not viewing who actually does the work or if student's work has been pulled from a book. All this said it is wise for teachers to combine the two types and use various styles of assessing to accurately judge a student's level of knowledge.

(Shellard, 2003)

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