

Why is assessment important



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4 Why is assessment for learning important? Adopting strategies that support Assessment for Learning can transform learning and teaching and take away the stigma that haunts assessment. In fact, research has shown that Assessment for Learning can have a significant effect on how well pupils achieve in terms of their attainment, behaviour, motivation, engagement and their ability to work independently. a) It Improves Performance -Black and William's 1998 literature review examined 250 research articles from 160 journals published over a nine-year period.

From this, they documented significant, and often substantial, quantifiable learning gains due to Assessment for Learning practices. Their review of over 20 studies on classroom assessment showed increases in primary and post-primary performance ranging from 15 to 30% compared to control groups. In post-primary, differential effects were measured at approximately half a level at Key Stage 3, over half a grade at GCSE, and two full grades at GCSE after two to three years. They concluded that no other single improvement initiative improved performance levels to the extent that formative assessment did.

Subsequent research in UK schools has substantiated these figures. For instance, research conducted in primary schools through the Gillingham Partnership's Formative Assessment Project 2002 indicated improved standardised test scores in reading and numeracy as well as improvements in writing levels. Learning b) It Increases Learning Independence - Pupils who understand their own goals and their role in learning are more independent in managing their learning; they know what to do, how they have to work and take more responsibility for their own learning and assessment.

Assessment for Learning helps cultivate these valuable skills by giving pupils a role in determining these components of the learning as well as experience in providing feedback and assessing themselves and their peers. The learning is no longer something they receive; it becomes something they pursue and have a hand in shaping. This can help learners later in life as well as in the classroom. c) It Improves Morale, Motivation and Risk-Taking - Knowing the goals and success indicators may help pupils to gain learning independence, but they are not the only influencing factors.

Morale and motivation are also pivotal components, and here, too, Assessment for Learning plays an important role. Black and William found that many assessment approaches used in classrooms compare pupils with one another - particularly those that focus on marks and grades. Evidence shows that pupils interpret the prime purpose of these assessments to be competition rather than personal improvement. As a result, feedback from these types of assessment actually reduces pupil morale. It teaches them, particularly low-attaining pupils, that they lack ability, leading them to believe they are unable to learn.) It Enhances Relationships and Reflection - Assessment for Learning also helps foster a more positive classroom environment. It strengthens teacher-pupil relationships by increasing two-way communication. These interactions can make them more motivated to learn and more aware of their learning. Assessment for Learning can also improve planning and delivery of learning. This is because these practices lead you to analyse and make learning specific to pupils. It creates an opportunity to quality assure and amend activities to ensure they meet the learning needs.