

# Assessing For Learning

Snow, Vance and Associates

www.snowvance.com

## Formative Assessment Tools from Our Three-Day Professional Learning Series

- 1. First Word/Last Word.** *First Word/Last Word* is a technique used for pre- and post-assessment to check for understanding. To begin, identify a word and ask students to write the word vertically. Students then create an acrostic using each letter in the identified word to associate key understandings. As a post-assessment, students repeat the process.
- 2. Circle Map.** *Circle Map* is one of the eight Thinking Maps that can be used to examine students' understanding of an idea. The topic is placed in a small circle in the middle of a larger circle. Students generate examples of their learning, which helps the teacher assess the extent of their knowledge.
- 3. Word Clouds.** *Word Clouds* can be created by students at [www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net) or [tagxedo.com](http://tagxedo.com) to represent their understanding of a concept. Students write a paragraph about a concept and a word cloud is created using the words from the paragraph. The clouds show greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the paragraph.
- 4. Two Stars and a Wish.** *Two Stars and a Wish* is a simple technique for initiating peer assessment in a classroom. Students provide feedback on another student's work by giving two commendations or *stars* on the work and a suggestion or *wish* for improvement.
- 5. CASH Out.** *CASH Out* requires students to reflect on a reading passage, article, video or presentation using four guiding questions:
  - (1) What did you learn about the topic? (Cognitive)
  - (2) How did you react to the topic? (Affective)
  - (3) What surprised you about the topic? (Surprise)
  - (4) What idea or topic was helpful to you? (Help)Students respond individually after reading the passage or viewing a video. *CASH Out* could be followed by a *Timed Pair Share* in which each partner has one minute to share his or her responses to each question.
- 6. Timed Pair Share.** *Timed Pair Share* is a Kagan Cooperative Learning structure where partners take timed turns listening and sharing. The structure becomes a formative assessment tool when the teacher listens in order to assess students' understanding and adjusts instruction. Steps in the process include: 1) Teacher announces a topic and states how long each student will have to share; 2) Teacher provides think time; 3) In pairs, Partner A shares; Partner B listens; 4) Partner B responds; 5) Partners switch roles.
- 7. I Used to Think...But Now I Know.** *I Used to Think...But Now I Know* asks students to compare their ideas from the beginning of a lesson to the ideas they have at the end of a lesson or unit. Students can respond in writing or orally.
- 8. Cloze.** *Cloze* is a technique in which words are strategically deleted from a passage. The passage is presented to students, who insert words as they read to complete and construct meaning from the text. The technique is used to assess the extent of students' vocabulary and knowledge of a subject, to encourage students to monitor for meaning while reading and/or to encourage students to think critically and analytically about text and content.

# Assessing For Learning

Snow, Vance and Associates

www.snowvance.com

9. **Four Corners.** *Four Corners* is used with a multiple choice question to identify groups of students with similar responses to the question asked. Students move to a designated corner of the room to match their response or similar way of thinking. By meeting “in the corner” with students who have similar ideas, students can further discuss and clarify their own thinking with others before returning to the seats and engaging in a debate with the class or small groups of students with different ideas.
10. **Save the Last Word for Me.** *Save the Last Word for Me* is designed to expand students’ thinking about an issue, to provide a different look at an issue, to clarify thinking about an issue, and to question one another’s assumptions about an issue. All participants read a passage or article. Then, each participant identifies one significant quote from the text they wish to share. It is recommended that the students also identify a backup quote in case their first one is shared. The first person begins by reading a quote from to which they want the group to respond. This person cites the page, paragraph and line where the quote is located. Each person responds to the quote in a clock wise rotation in a designated time. After each person responds, the first person has the “final word.” In no more than one minute, the presenter responds to what was said by each student and explains what value add was gleaned from the sharing. This process continues until everyone has had the opportunity to share their quote and have the “final word.”
11. **Plus/Delta.** *Plus/Delta* is a way for students to consider the *pluses* about their learning experience or what went *well*, and the *deltas*, what they would like *changed* or done differently. Plus/delta can be used any time feedback is needed. Ask the team or class to think about what worked well and what did not. One thought is written per sticky note. At the top of the sticky note, students write a plus (+) or delta ( $\Delta$ ). When a team or the class has finished, sticky notes are placed on a plus/delta class chart for assessment.
12. **Visual Synectics.** In *Visual Synectics*, students use *pictures* to draw analogies, metaphors or similes from the content. Students fill in the blanks to give evidence of their understanding. For example, “\_\_(picture)\_\_ is like a \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_”. Students’ understanding is deepened when thoughts are shared and group connections are made to build on one another’s thinking.
13. **Chain Notes.** *Chain Notes* begin with a question printed at the top of a paper. Student work in groups of three or four and each student begins with a different question. The paper is then circulated from student to student. Each student responds with one or two sentences related to the question and passes it on to the next student. Upon receiving the previous “chain of responses,” a student adds a new thought or builds on a prior statement. Chain Notes are best used to check for understanding after students have had sufficient opportunities to explore and learn about the concept addressed by the question on each chain note. This assessment tool can be easily adapted for use with iPads.
14. **Paint the Picture.** *Paint the Picture* visually depicts students’ thinking about an idea without using any annotations. This involves giving students a question and asking them to design a visual representation that reveals their thinking and answer to the question. The picture needs to stand alone without labels and can be used to explain their thinking.
15. **Two-Minute Paper.** The *Two-Minute Paper* is a quick and simple way to collect feedback from students about their learning at the end of an activity, field trip, lecture, video, or other type of learning experience. Students are given two minutes to respond to a predetermined prompt in writing.



# Assessing For Learning

Snow, Vance and Associates

www.snowvance.com

16. **Value Line-Up.** *Value Line-Ups* are one way to form heterogeneous groups where *experts* and *novices* have an opportunity to exchange ideas. An issue or topic is presented to the group and each member is asked to list what she or he knows. Students then form a rank-ordered line from least number of items generated to the most. The line is then folded in half to form pairs. Students are then partnered with other students who generated fewer ideas than they did which facilitates conversations between *experts* and *novices*. The *expert* has two minutes to share with their partner. The *novice* then has a minute to share three things s/he values and wants to remember. The *novice* then shares for two minutes and the *expert* has one minute to state three things s/he heard, valued or learned.
17. **Whip Around.** *Whip Around* is often used as a closure activity. Students are asked to make a list of three items related to the lesson, unit or study. Students individually respond on a piece of paper. After they have listed at least three items, they stand up. The teacher randomly calls on a student to share an item. Students check off any items shared by another student and sit down when all of their ideas have been shared with the group, whether or not they were the one to share them.
18. **North - South - East – West.** *North-South-East-West* provides students the opportunity to reflect on their learning, self-assess and provide immediate feedback at any time. Students respond to four questions. What do you **N**eed to move forward? What is your next **S**tep? What do you find **W**orrisome? What **E**xcites you about the topic or concept?
19. **Road Signs.** *Road Signs* asks students to indicate their understanding of a topic or procedure by selecting a road sign that indicates where they are in learning an objective/topic.
20. **Talk a Mile a Minute.** *Talk a Mile a Minute* is a game played like Password. Students pair up and face their partner. Words are projected on a screen so that only one partner can view the vocabulary words. The partner facing the words provides clues to enable his partner to identify the word(s). This process continues until all words have been identified. Partners switch places when time is called. New words are projected and the process continues. *Talk a Mile a Minute* is a Marzano tool which assesses students' understanding of vocabulary and concepts.
21. **Give One to Get One.** *Give One to Get One* works well when students are using their interactive notebooks or class notes. Each student is asked to find a partner with whom he will compare notes. The students take a moment to identify the information they have in common. Each student identifies something he did not record but his partner did. This new information is then recorded in each student's notebook. In effect, each student gives one and gets one. Pairs can report to the whole class sharing what they learned.
22. **3-2-1.** *3-2-1* is a summarization technique. List 3-2-1 vertically on a sheet of paper with stems. The stems are flexible and can be tailored to any content.
  - 3 big ideas you have learned
  - 2 words to sum up your learning
  - 1 question you have
23. **Find Someone Who.** *Find Someone Who* is a movement activity that focuses on content while inviting student interaction that is purposeful. Students reinforce their learning by explaining what they know to others who listen actively and agree or disagree. Moving throughout the classroom for about ten minutes, students ask and answer questions and record the responses on their own paper.

# Assessing For Learning

Snow, Vance and Associates

www.snowvance.com

24. **Shift Statement.** A *Shift Statement* provides the learner with a way to express how his/her thinking has changed as a result of new learning. A sentence stem can help to provide a framework from which the student works.
25. **Clothespin.** The *Clothespin* assessment tool can be used before, during and after a lesson for students to self-assess content mastery or engagement. A clothesline is placed on the wall in a part of the room that can be easily seen by the teacher. Signs are placed at different points above and along the clothesline. Each sign contains a word indicating a level of mastery or engagement. Each student has a unique clothespin that they have created. Students place their clothespin on the clothesline to represent their current place on the "scale". Students move their clothespin as they progress through the stages of mastery. This is a great visual to show that students they are making progress. Teachers can very easily see if a student is at a standstill.
26. **QIC.** *QIC* is an acronym that stands for Questions, Insights/Ideas, and Connections that can be used as an assessment following instruction. Students take time to summarize in writing what they have learned using the acronym.
27. **ABC – 123.** *ABC – 123* is an interactive formative assessment tool to assess what students know about a learning target. Charts with the letters of the alphabet are posted and groups of students associate a letter of the alphabet with a vocabulary word or key idea that indicates their understanding. Groups rotate after 30 seconds to the next chart, filling in the open spaces on the ABC chart. ABC is complete when the group arrives at their home chart. Arriving at their home chart, groups circle three big ideas they want to remember and prepare to share them with the whole class. *ABC – 123* can be combined with *Whip Around* to share big ideas.
28. **Whiteboards.** *Whiteboards* are a powerful formative assessment tool in that teachers can quickly frame a question and get an answer from the entire class at once. Teachers pose a question, students write their response on the whiteboards and place their boards close to their chest when finished. When the teacher says, "Show," students show the teacher what they have written on their whiteboards so that the teacher can check for individual student understanding. A low-cost alternative to whiteboards is to place letter-sized white card stock inside page protectors. Graph paper can be inserted into the page protectors for math lessons or even maps if teaching geography.
29. **Text-Tagging.** This technique invites students to interact with text by using symbols to indicate their reaction or understating of the content. For example, students may use these symbols:
  - ⊙ Links to something else I know.
  - “ ” Quotes I want to remember
  - ? I wonder
  - ✓ I understand this information.
  - × I don't understand. I'm lost.
30. **Stand and Share.** *Stand and Share* is a tool that encourages student conversation about what they are learning. After a learning segment, students respond to 1-2 questions that the teacher has posed. The questions can be written or oral. At the signal, students stand, find a partner, and take turns sharing their responses to the questions. This can be repeated several times during the learning. During the last few minutes of the class, the teacher brings all of the students back together. Students summarize key understandings, and the teacher sorts out misconceptions.



# Assessing For Learning

Snow, Vance and Associates

www.snowvance.com

31. **Socrative.com.** *Socrative* is a smart student response system where student responses are visually represented for multiple choice, true/false and short answer questions. The website is free and runs on any internet-connected device. Teachers login through their device and select an activity which controls the flow of questions. Students login with their device and interact real time with the content.
32. **Quiz-Quiz-Trade.** For *Quiz-Quiz-Trade*, questions and answers about the content are written on individual cards. Students quiz a partner, get quizzed by a partner, and then trade cards to repeat the process with a new partner. The intent of QQT is for students to check their understanding of the content with a peer. The questions can be teacher- or student- generated.
33. **SOS.** *SOS* is an example of how a formative assessment tool can be built from an acrostic. In this case, *SOS* is a written response from the participants where the S stands for *Success* - What have you learned that supports student success? The O stands for, *On Target* - What have you learned that is on target with your beliefs? The S stands for, *Synopsis* - In three words or less, sum up today's learning. The questions for each letter in *SOS* may be changed to meet the audience. For example, with students, the question for S (*Success*) could stand for – Briefly explain an idea from the lesson that you feel you've successfully grasped?
34. **PVF (Paired Verbal Fluency).** *PVF* is a technique used for partner discussion or reflection. Partners take turns in timed rounds, nonstop talking "off the top of their heads" about an assigned topic or prompt. While one person talks, the other listens until time lapses and partners switch roles.
35. **Fist to Five.** *Fist to Five* asks students to indicate the extent of their understanding of a concept or procedure by holding up a closed fist (no understanding), one finger (very little understanding), and a range up to five fingers (I understand it completely and can easily explain it to someone else). For example, after giving instructions for a lab activity, teachers might ask for a fist to five to do a quick check on whether students understand the directions before proceeding with the lab.
36. **Chart Paper Splash.** *Chart Paper Splash* allows all students in the class to see the collective thinking of their peers. Students are given a question, such as "What is the most important thing you learned today?" After independent think time, students are asked to "splash" (write or post) their responses on chart paper, butcher paper, a whiteboard or other surface. Following the splashing of ideas, students review all the ideas and identify similarities, differences and surprises. *Splash* can be used before, during and after a new concept is introduced.
37. **Pluses – Minuses – Insights (PMI).** *PMI* can be used after a new concept is introduced and students have had the opportunity to make meaning from the new learning. As a reflection on the learning experience, students have the opportunity to respond with pluses, minuses and insights. For pluses, students may be given a stem such as "I agree with...." Minuses may include statements that begin with "I disagree with..." Insights may begin with the stem, "I want to know more about...."