

THE A-Z OF ASSESSMENT

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Assessment defined broadly by Ofsted is a way for teachers to “make consistent judgements about pupils’ progress and attainment, within a subject, across year groups and between year groups” (2016). Without assessment teachers have no way of knowing whether student learning occurred (Lund and Tannehill, 2005). There are two types of assessment (Capel et al., 2015): assessment for learning – which is a formative process – and assessment of learning – which is a summative process. Formative assessments are those that are ongoing and occur daily. Summative assessments are generally at the end of a unit and, more often than not, the student is given a grade as a concluding evaluation. Both should be used throughout content units in physical education.

Assessment should be used to ensure that the level of challenge is appropriate for students. Ofsted (2016) overviews assessment as “how well teachers’ feedback, written and oral, is used by pupils to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills”. Ofsted does not state any requirements on how this process should be undertaken. There are many traditional types of assessment, such as skills tests, written tests, fitness tests, portfolios, projects, game play, interviews, role plays, essays, journals and student logs (Lund and Tannehill, 2005). However, the modern student is evolving, surrounded by a world of technology and gadgets. As educators, we know that we need to keep up with our diverse students’ needs, social realities and school practices. The purpose of this article is to provide an alphabetical list of innovative assessment practices, tips, terminology and related resources for physical educators who would like to learn more about assessment. Using an alphabetical framework allows novice to veteran teachers to read briefly about using alternative assessments. This was inspired by the Stühr et al. (2016) article on the ABCs of adventure learning, an

excellent *Strategies* paper for physical educators. It should be noted that not all strategies will work for every class or every student but professional judgment should be applied to each teacher’s unique learning environment.

A – ACTIVITY RANGE

The requirement for a broad and balanced curriculum is not only the right step towards providing a holistic education, but is also vital to help teachers take into account ‘the whole picture’ on an assessment of learning basis. You would never assess how well a fish could climb a tree, so why limit the activities on offer to learners?

B – ‘BACK TO THE BOARD’

There is no rule that states a whiteboard must be used in lessons. But it is a simple tool to assess progress clearly and it seems silly to ignore it. It only takes two clear questions to assess learning. Firstly, ‘What do we already know?’ This is addressed at the beginning of the lesson, whereby students are to list as many points as they can about the learning focus. The second question can be visited throughout the lesson or at the end: ‘What do we know now?’ By students showing their ability to add to their original list of information, teachers are enabled not only to monitor progress but to track understanding of individual students and inform future planning.

C – CURRICULUM MODEL SPECIFIC

As curriculum models are designed in line with a particular topic or style of teaching, it is extremely beneficial to run our types of assessment in line with these. Ideas that could be used are topic-specific resource cards with red, amber and green ratings displayed for each level within that curriculum focus. Alternatively, posters and videos can be used in a similar way – as long as the assessment steps outlined are specific to the lesson or unit focus.

D – DISCUSSION

Discussion enables us to delve into the minds of our learners. Allowing students to step back and monitor their lesson success aids a deeper understanding of the activities that we teach. Students can be split into assessment groups of two-four people. Each group is given a focus to discuss and evaluate, specifically differentiated for group ability. This could range from ‘How effective were the tactics that we applied to the game?’ to simply ‘What technique have we learnt today and why is it beneficial?’. Each group would have an allocated spokesperson to share the group thoughts with the class. Ultimately, this allows us to assess progress, check understanding and dig deeper with the use of *questioning* (see Q).

E – ENTRY AND EXIT TICKETS

Entry and exit tickets are a fantastic way to track progress and assess what has been learnt and understood within a lesson. These types of resources resemble very effective and engaging starters and plenaries. It is important to recognise that such resources should be created with an enjoyable theme to engage and retain student attention.

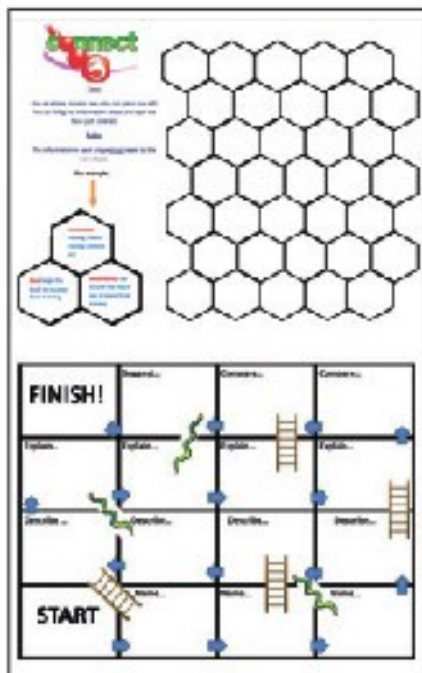
F – FUN FEEDBACK

To ensure assessment is a positive and engaging process, student interests should be listened to so that feedback can be given in a way that is current and meaningful. Paying attention to popular trends is the key to this feedback strategy. With the use of emojis to reflect student moods about a topic or simply asking students to give their feedback in 140 characters Twitter-style, interest is engaged immediately and feedback is given with a valuable purpose.



G – GAMES-BASED TASKS

When initially reading this heading, most teachers would apply this in a practical sense for physical education. However, games can be used in a theory environment too. Relating assessment to games such as Monopoly, Snakes and Ladders, Scrabble or Connect Five are all great ways to monitor ability levels and understanding of a topic.



H – HIGHLIGHTING

Simple use of a highlighter can be so useful for assessment! When using a table of criteria students can highlight in one colour what they can already do/understand; it is then clear to see where their knowledge gaps are. At a later stage, whether this is at the end of a lesson or the unit, students should use a different colour to highlight what they can now do or understand, clearly showing progress made.



I – INDIVIDUAL WHITEBOARDS

Whether a lesson is practical or theory-based, using individual mini whiteboards is an outstanding method to quickly assess knowledge during or at the end of a lesson. If questions are fired at the class, this quick and time-saving technique allows all students to hold up their answers and for the teacher to grasp the whole class's understanding from what is written on the whiteboards. Assessment can be extended here by probing further in discussion about what has been held up. If resources are stretched, use laminated white paper.

J – JIGSAW LEARNING

Jigsaw learning is a straightforward and valuable strategy where students are given a meaningful purpose in lessons. This concept incorporates every student taking responsibility for delivering a piece of content to the rest of the group. Each student then becomes an 'expert' in their area. Assessment is embedded in this process through the means of differentiation and also being able to evaluate the value of what students have created and delivered in their expert role. For a more detailed description of jigsaw learning, see <https://www.jigsaw.org/>

K – KEY WORDS

Having a bank of key words for students to reflect upon is a great way to help students during questioning episodes of the lesson. It positively ensures student conversations are tailored to the lesson content. In addition, the more key words that are used, the more they are embedded in the long-term memory and students start to use them without realising. Ideas to display key words are on the board, around the learning area or even as a bookmark that students can use daily.

L – LEVELS ON DISPLAY (SCHOOL-SPECIFIC)¹

Simplistic resources displaying a maximum of three bullet points for each level are ideal to further understanding about assessment. If descriptors are displayed, students can then familiarise themselves with criteria and self-assess on a regular basis. Each level can be generic or topic specific. For physical education specifically, it works particularly well if each level is defined with a theoretical and practical explanation.

¹ The Association for Physical Education (AFPE) reminds teachers that schools should no longer be using levels to assess students. See Frapwell, A. (2015) A Practical Guide to Assessing Without Levels. AFPE. This tip could be used by sharing success criteria rather than levels.

M – MINI-PLENARIES

Mini-plenaries are the ideal tool to assess learning consistently and constantly throughout a lesson. This includes a set of quick-fire questions to the whole class, personalised one-to-one reflection or even a mini whiteboard questioning and answering task. To challenge learners, ask higher-ability students to lead the mini-plenary sessions; this is an ideal technique to help assess their understanding as well as their peers they are questioning.

N – NAME CARDS

Using name cards is an inventive way of getting students to set their own personalised goals and targets in a lesson. The idea of this technique is to write a topic-specific goal to achieve within the lesson and place it on your desk. Throughout the lesson, progress towards achieving this can be assessed and it enables students to identify and constantly re-evaluate the steps they need to take to achieve their desired goal.



O – OBJECTIVES

There are so many different ways teachers can display objectives. Keeping it straightforward, simple and visual, with either two or three 'know, understand and be able to' statements enables students to see their goal and measure their pathway of success throughout the lesson.

P – PEER- AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

These strategies should be used consistently throughout lessons, either through conversation or through a structured lesson episode dedicated to peer- or self-assessment. Providing students with criteria to assess against is essential for a peer- or self-assessment task. This will allow them to identify strengths and weaknesses and determine the clear differences between each stage of progress. Ultimately, students can apply this knowledge, learn from others' mistakes and develop their own performances further.

Q – QUESTIONING

Questioning effectively creates a domino effect whereby assessment can take place. Whether used in an individual or group situation, questioning should be scaffolded to develop a conversation. As a continuous process, this strategy is differentiated in the way we ask our questions. For this to be successful, it is vital for us to know our learners so we can direct our questions to the right students. For example, asking a lower-ability student: 'Can you state one type of dodge?' then building on this for higher-ability students with questions such as: 'Can you describe the teaching points of this dodge?' and 'Can you now analyse how this type of dodge could be used tactically in a game?'. Within one conversation, you have built upon the simplistic question that was originally put to the lower-ability student and have assessed how much knowledge each learner has regarding the topic being taught. On the other hand, individual questioning should be done throughout the entire lesson, constantly assessing the rate of learning and if the tasks are appropriate for individual learners.

R – RUBRICS

Assessment rubrics are so useful to help understanding. Ideally, rubrics should be split into grids. This will allow a sport or topic to be dissected for assessment purposes. For example, if assessment is being carried out in dance, the rubric may be split into creativity, movement patterns, space, technicality and expression. With the use of rubrics, both students and teachers can gain a thorough and holistic understanding of current learning.

S – SOCIAL MEDIA

What better way to retain engagement of students? This works for both practical and theoretical lessons. Providing students with a social media focus is a fantastic attention grabber! This can be done through using Instagram, Twitter or Facebook-style tasks or resources. Students can even be given scenarios/ tasks/ fitness plans based on high profile media stars. Alternatively, if a Sport Education approach is being applied to the lesson, then a media manager is a great way to encourage the use of social media to promote team cohesion. For example, students can create their own Twitter page for teams. Ultimately teachers can even use non-participants to act as journalists or news pundits during lessons. Assessments and evaluations can be drawn upon at the end of the lesson based on the specific tasks carried out.

T – TECHNOLOGY

We live in a world where children, teenagers and adults are obsessed with technology. As such a prominent part of our day-to-day lives, it is crucial that we include technology within our assessment strategies. The use of QR codes and video analysis are ideal for getting students to engage with peer- or self-assessment against set criteria. By using video, students can benefit from analysing performance against a perfect example and understand why they have achieved a certain competence and what they should alter to progress from this.

U – UNDERSTANDING CRITERIA

Ideally, one-to-one conversations are best to check understanding. If students are learning through a strategy such as Teaching Games for Understanding, teachers can pull students out of games one by one to challenge their knowledge. From doing this type of peer-assessment through observation of others, teachers can grasp the level of understanding in line with the criteria being used. Any gaps in knowledge can then be bridged. It is important to remember, even if students haven't reached a certain competence yet, they should still know what it is and how to get there.

V – VALUABLE VISUALS

It is vital for us to give visual guidance in physical education. Giving students photo cards of skills they are learning can help to achieve a more accurate representation of what they are working towards. Next to the photo, on the resource, should be a checklist of points to rehearse. This will enable students to assess how many of the key points they are meeting and what parts of the skill they need to rehearse. Ideally, with the use of technology in lessons, peers will then take photos of their partners' skills to compare their demonstration with the perfect model shown on the photo card.

W – WALL OF PROGRESS

Fancy being creative? Having a timeline of competences spread across the classroom or sports hall is a great way of tracking progress. With the use of printed student photos, learners can place themselves along the timeline as part of self-assessment. They move their photo along the timeline as they progress. Students should justify their progress to class members – using evidence – and be proud of this. This is a motivating and engaging strategy to enhance knowledge of assessment; it also contributes to personal development.

X – 'X'TRA TASKS

Differentiation is vital to ensure higher-ability learners are being challenged. Potentially, if students are extremely able, they can take the role on of 'assessment manager' and impart their own knowledge while assessing and developing peers. On the other hand, if extension tasks for assessment are used, they should encourage higher-ability students to analyse themselves in more detail, setting themselves challenging but achievable targets.

Y – YOU AT THE HEART OF ASSESSMENT

Every student should feel as though assessment is personalised and achievable, regardless of their ability. It is extremely effective to personalise handouts or posters with names, making students feel valued and recognised. In turn progress can become quicker as motivation levels are increased.

Z – ZAP OUT THE NEGATIVE

Why should assessment have a negative connotation? Evaluation should be enjoyed! Especially so we can encourage students to have a growth mind-set to their work. Students need to realise assessment is not just a timed written task or paper. It is our job to raise students' awareness that they are involved in assessment constantly in every physical education lesson! Ultimately, to 'zap out the negative' we should focus our assessment on fun, positive and engaging individual or group tasks as mentioned throughout this article. This will help to secure understanding and guarantee the progress of all our learners. For any clarification of the assessment methods mentioned in this article or for more information, please email the authors: slynch@crimson.ua.edu MonkH@bchs.essex.sch.uk ■

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