



# Are They REALLY Learning?

**Tips and Strategies to Informally Check for Student Understanding**



# Are you in the right place...

- Is it important to informally check for student understanding?
- Do you want instant feedback from your students to clarify misunderstandings?
- Would you like to walk away with a variety of strategies to check for student understanding without always using paper and pencil?





# What are some similarities and differences between informal and formal assessments?



Informal

Formal



# Send a Problem

- *Please use the index card to write an issue, problem or question you have on **informally** assessing learning. We will revisit this card during our closure.*



# Getting Started

- Today we will explore a variety of ways to informally assess student learning.





# Marking System

Read the *How Do I Know They Are REALLY Learning?* handout. As you read, use the following marking system to interact with the information:

 *Hey, I do that!*

 *Hmmm...I did not know that.*

 *WOW, I could REALLY use this!*



***Strategies are like spices, you have to know when to use them.***

- What is the worst teaching strategy?
- The one that is used all the time, whatever it is!
- **VARIETY** is the spice of the learning situation.



# Give one, Get one!

Using the graphic organizer, choose one strategy and “paraphrase”/write down in your own words what it is. Then give one pro and one con for its use.

1. **Give one, Get one**: Walk around the room to fill in an organizer. Give one idea/answer and get one in return. 😊

**pro**: reinforces/clarifies learning and provides socialization

**con**: time, organization





# Sorting

Strategies to use  
with large and small groups:

Large Groups

Small Groups

Both



- Today we have explored some strategies that can be used to informally check for student understanding.

## Send a Problem

*Please use the index card that you wrote on during the beginning of the session. Pass it to the person sitting next to you and keep passing it until the timer goes off or it comes back to you. When the card comes to you try to write a solution or if you have no solution, then write a sympathetic response. Stop when you hear the presenter's cue.*

*If your question or issue is not solved, then I will pass it to others to try to find a solution.*



# Ticket to Leave

- What one strategy will I try tomorrow?
- How will I use it?
- Questions I still have.....?





## How Do I Know They Are REALLY Learning?

Are students beginning to understand the big idea I am teaching? That understanding is more likely if we are doing constant assessments (both formal and informal), rather than assessing only through paper and pencil and final exams (McTighe & Wiggins, 1998).

It is important for teachers to help students think about what they are learning. Informal assessments can help you check understanding at a glance to identify who needs extra help or enrichment. Here are suggestions for how you can add some variety to informal assessments.

### Strategies for Checking for Student Understanding

1. Have a "*misconception check*". Present students with common or predictable misconceptions about a designated concept, principle, or process. Ask them whether they agree or disagree and explain why.
2. Have students signal with "*gestures*" (thumbs up/down, stand up/sit down) whether or not they understand.
3. Students respond on a "*comfort scale*" (#line 1-5 drawn on board, or 5 fingers). 5=I understand, 3=a little confused, 1=I don't get it!
4. Have students "*paraphrase*" or retell in your own words and share.
5. Have groups of students take a "*3 minute buzz*" to share ideas.
6. Students use "*graphic organizers*" (KWL, Anticipation Guides, outlines, concept maps) to account for learning.
7. "*Sorting*" can be used for independent, partner or whole group understanding.

8. "EPR" every pupil response cards can be made (yes/no, pinch cards...pinch or use clothespin/bingo chip to mark an answer on a card).
9. Have students write an issue or problem and "*send a problem*" to the person sitting next to you. That person writes a suggestion, solution or something sympathetic until time is up.
10. Students write down 1 piece of new information. Students then move around the room and "*give 1 idea and get 1*" to add to their list.
11. Ask students to "*compare and contrast*" concepts or vocabulary.
12. Students complete an "*exit pass*" to respond and reflect upon a question. Hand the pass to the teacher to gain feedback.

Remember:

VARIETY helps keep everyone engaged. Informal assessment strategies allow you to diagnose on the spot who understands concepts being taught (Kronowitz, 2008).

Resources:

Kronowitz, Ellen L. The Teacher's Guide to Success. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 2008.

Wiggins, Grant, and McTighe, Jay. "Understanding by Design." Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (1998).

# Get One, Give One

**Example:**

**Give one, Get one:** Walk around the room to fill in the organizer. Give one idea/answer and get one in return.☺

**Pro:** reinforces/clarifies learning and provides socialization

**Con:** time, organization

1. \_\_\_\_\_:

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Pro: \_\_\_\_\_

Con: \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_:

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Pro: \_\_\_\_\_

Con: \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_:

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Pro: \_\_\_\_\_

Con: \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_:

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Pro: \_\_\_\_\_

Con: \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_:

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Pro: \_\_\_\_\_

Con: \_\_\_\_\_

Whole Group Sort  
Copy, cut and place into an envelope.

Misconception Check	"Gestures" (thumbs up/down, stand up/sit down)	Comfort Scales	Paraphrase
"3 Minute Buzz"	graphic organizers (KWL, Anticipation Guides, Concept Maps)	Sorting	EPR Cards
Send a problem	Give 1, Get 1	Compare and Contrast	Exit Cards

## "Ticket to Leave"

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- How will I use it?
- Questions I still have:

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