

Douglas
FISHER

Nancy
FREY

Name: Yvonne Date: Oct. 21
Project: Historical Diorama
Members of my group:
Juan Inju
Lisa Reed

Please rank yourself based on your contributions to the group.
Circle the number that best describes your work.

5 = always 4 = almost always 3 = sometimes
2 = once or twice 1 = never

I completed my tasks on time.	5	4	3	2	1
I contributed ideas to the group.	5	4	3	2	1
I listened respectfully to the ideas of others.	5	4	3	2	1
I used other's ideas in my work for the project.	5	4	3	2	1
When I was stuck, I sought help from my group.	5	4	3	2	1

CHECKING for Understanding

Formative Assessment Techniques for Your Classroom

CHECKING for Understanding



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CHECKING for **Understanding**

Formative Assessment Techniques for Your Classroom



Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Alexandria, Virginia USA



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Foreword

By Jay McTighe

Educational Author and Consultant

Anyone who has ever played or coached a team sport already understands the basic idea of this book—ongoing assessment and adjustment are the *key* to improved performance. Ironically, this principle, well established in athletics and the arts, is frequently overlooked in the academic classroom. Indeed, too many teachers consider assessment as a means of obtaining grist for the grade book, instead of the process underlying progress. Of course, evaluation and grading have their place, but let's not forget the wisdom in the old farmer's quip, "You don't fatten the cattle by weighing 'em." As every effective coach understands, success in the "game," in this case, the summative assessment, begins in practice. In fact, coaching involves repeated cycles of ongoing assessment, feedback, and instruction as the primary means for improving individual and team performance. The same logic applies in the classroom.

Checking for Understanding embodies this wisdom, contending that assessment can (and should) serve academic learning, not simply as a means for measurement and evaluation. To that end, the book highlights the importance of formative, or ongoing, assessment and its role in the teaching and learning process. The research and rationale for formative assessment are clearly presented in each chapter.

Additionally, the authors offer a rich array of practical and proven methods for diagnosing students' prior knowledge and preconceptions before instruction commences and for regularly monitoring their learning along the way. A wide variety of specific examples and classroom vignettes bring the various concepts and techniques to life.

Recently, at the conclusion of an all-day workshop on the topic of assessment for learning, I asked the participants to identify one idea that they would take away from the day. One young teacher made it a point to tell me his idea: "I want to be more of a teacher on the field and more of a coach in the classroom." *Checking for Understanding* will help you do that.

P.S. Just as the book encourages teachers to regularly assess the effects of their teaching, I encourage you to actively reflect on your own assessment practices as you traverse its pages. To what extent do you use the ideas suggested? Which suggested formative assessment methods best apply to your specific teaching situation? How will you apply these ideas to enhance the learning of your students?

Introduction

We're guilty. We admit it. But we're pretty sure we're not alone.

Writing about educational practice requires that one be willing to examine one's own practice, especially the less than exemplary moments. This means admitting that we have sometimes entered into a tacit agreement with our students. We have allowed the voice of one to speak for all.

We ask, "Does everyone understand?"

We await the answer we know will come.

A lone voice says, "Yes," and we accept that as evidence that learning has occurred.

We move on to the next topic or concept, deluding ourselves that all is right with the world.

Later, much later, we review the results of the latest quiz, test, or essay, and shake our heads in wonder. "I taught all this," we say. "Didn't they get it?"

We're pretty sure we're not alone.

Breaking Our Tacit Agreements

It is said that admitting there is a problem is the first step toward change, so we hope that you've admitted—at least to yourself—that you have done the same

thing. However, it's not enough to simply point out the error of your ways. We need to offer you a way to think about the situation in a new light. That means showing you how to check for understanding with your students.

This book is a tool kit. It contains a number of effective apparatuses for creating formative assessments—assessments that can be used to guide instruction and teacher decision making. Taken together and used regularly, these tools provide teachers with a system of checking for understanding. The key is to use these tools not in isolation, but as part of a system for determining what students know, what they need to know, and what types of instructional interventions are effective.

We have organized the book so that it radiates from the student's point of view. In the first chapter, we will define what checking for understanding is and is not. In addition, we will discuss some of the research on the importance of checking for understanding in promoting learning. We then invite you to take a seat at a student's desk to view learning from the user's perspective. Chapter 2 offers a discussion of checking for understanding through oral language, the most basic building block of communication in the classroom. In Chapter 3, we expand our focus on oral language to include effective questioning techniques employed by teachers who check for understanding. Chapter 4 follows with an examination of writing as another way students demonstrate what they know.

In Chapter 5, we examine how students collaborate with others on projects and performances, and how these can be used as something more than culminating activities. Chapter 6 is a detailed account of test development and analysis to check for understanding. We end with the work of teachers who collaborate to use consensus scoring to make teaching more precise.

Checking for understanding provides teachers with a set of tools necessary for the assembly of evidence that students are developing sophisticated understanding of the curriculum over time. We hope this book will serve as a tool for understanding. We have included a strategy analysis grid in the Afterword for monitoring your own learning. We have provided space for you to transfer learning to your own practice by making note of ideas for customizing the techniques in this book to your classroom, school, or district. We hope that you will discover that checking for understanding is an enduring understanding itself and that you will create new understandings between your learners and yourself.