

Formative Assessment: Techniques

ABCD Cards

Give each student a set of lettered cards (you might want to include Y and N, or T and F) and pose multiple-choice questions of the whole class. This is most useful when there is more than one correct answer, or when the answers depend on the assumptions the students make – this can lead to good discussions.

Basketball Discussion

Use a soft ball to throw to a student to answer a question. The student passes the ball to another student to see whether the second student agrees with the first. The second student then passes the ball to a third student who comments on why the answer is correct or not. This can continue with questions like 'How? When? How long? Who else was involved? What else could have happened?' depending on the subject.

Class vote

Ask all students to vote on a question you put to the class with two or more possible answers.

Entrance ticket

Hand out a card to each student as they walk into the room and ask them to write the answer to a question posed on the board. Glance through the students' answers to help decide questions to ask the class, discussions, tasks to set, or how to group students.

No hands up – except to ask a question

Only let students raise their hands if they have a question to ask. Do not let students call out. Use a random method of choosing which student answers a question (e.g. each student's name is on a stick, a small card, or on a randomizing program on the white board).

Mini white boards Each student has a white board and is asked to write the short answer to a question. Students hold up their white boards to show their answers so you can determine how well students understand the concept, whether to continue to teach the concept, or which students to group with others who understand the content.

Post-it notes on a continuum

Each student has a post-it note with his or her name clearly written on it. Draw a horizontal line on the board with opposing statements at each end and ask students to think about where they would place their post-it on the line to reflect their own view (e.g. caused entirely by humans versus an entirely natural phenomenon – where would you put global warming). Several students are then randomly asked to come to the board and place their post-it notes, explaining why they have placed it in that position. This can also work with a line from zero to one and probabilities of events occurring. The post-its can be used many times over and kept in a corner on the board between lessons. Using four colors of notes helps divide the class into four groups, so that 'orange' students can be asked to come to the board and place their notes.

Wait watchers

Because it is hard for teachers to wait for three seconds after asking a question to allow students to think, it is occasionally useful to have a student volunteer with a stopwatch checking the teacher's wait time for a whole lesson.

Phone-a-friend

Sometimes when students are chosen randomly to answer a question they really do not know the answer, and may feel awkward and embarrassed. It may be useful to allow them to 'phone-a-friend', another student in the class who may be able to help them answer the question.

Non-linguistic Representations: Participants should create graphic representations, models, mental pictures, drawings, pictographs, or participate in kinesthetic (hands-on) activities in order to assimilate knowledge. Representations can be created in groups on chart paper and displayed in the room to generate discussion.

Vote With Your Feet: This strategy can convert simple question-answer discussions or activities into a physical activity to get participants moving during slow-moving parts of the day. In response to a question the presenter poses, participants stand near one of three signs posted in the room: *the answer is correct*, *the answer is partially correct*, and *the answer is incorrect*. Participants stand near the sign they feel most closely reflects the accuracy of the presenter's response to the question.

Think-Pair-Share: This is a strategy that can be enacted on-the-spot during lecture. Although the activity is called, "Think-Pair-Share," it is certainly not limited to pairs of two. Groups can be arranged into groups of three or even four. Usually, this activity involves groups collaborating to decide on a final answer to a question posted by the presenter after being given an opportunity to consider the question independently. As a final step, pairs or groups "share out" their final answer with the rest of the group.

Give One, Get One: This is a review strategy that allows participants to collaborate. Participants first jot down as many notes (ideas, facts, questions) that they can in response to a given topic. They then arrange into pairs, taking turns to share one idea, fact, or question they each have regarding the topic. As the activity progresses, both participants should continue to add to their list of notes as their partner shares new information with them.

Carousel: This strategy is very effective in allowing participants to move around while reviewing multiple topics simultaneously. Participants are divided into groups, and each group is provided with a distinct color of magic marker. Around the room, charts are posted with varying topics and serve as starting points for each group. In the first round, groups respond to prompts, topics, etc. by recording their notes or ideas in their unique colored-marker and posting them on the chart. Groups continue to rotate throughout the stations, always reading what the previous groups wrote, and adding additional comments and posting questions for other groups to answer upon the conclusion of the activity. This strategy works well as a culminating review at the conclusion of a training session or as a preparatory activity prior to an exam.

Group Responses: This strategy allows all participants to attempt to answer a question rather than simply calling on one or two participants to venture a guess to a posed question. First, ask a short response question. Raise your hands in the air to signal that, “thinking time has begun.” Use wait time. Say, “Everyone...” and lower your hands to cue the group response.

Partner Teach: In partners, have participants take turns delivering a lesson on a specific topic or segment of the session to their partner. Upon completion, the presenter circulates as participants provide feedback to each other about the lesson.

Graphic Organizer Retell: Participants work in pairs or groups to retell or summarize the content of a session or designated source using a graphic organizer of their choice. Upon completion, pairs or groups share their interpretation of the content with the rest of the participants.

Act Out: Have participants act out a concept, process, or other source of content.

Echo: After providing “chunks” of critical information, have participants create a “30 sec summary.” Randomly call on groups to tell the whole group their summary, randomly call on another group to “Echo” the group’s summary, they can add their perspective or aspects of their summary in the “Echo.” Do this until each group has either project their summary or echoed the summary, this way all groups can participate.

Two Truths and a Lie as an icebreaker or reflection: Participants can play this popular icebreaker as an icebreaker or reflection tool for chunks of content. Have the teams create the two truths and one lie on chart paper. Engage the audience in sorting out the truths and the lies, by numbering each chart paper and having each group or participant make a list of those that are true and false. Celebrate the groups with the most correct.