Assessment in Blended and Online Environments

Teachers often use various methods to assess students' performance. Formative assessments, which are often informal in nature, help teachers to recognize the progress of their students and adjust instruction. Summative assessments, often formal in nature, help teachers determine whether learning objectives have been achieved and whether the learner is ready to move on. Conducting assessments in online environments presents unique challenges, but teachers can leverage available technologies and strategies to conduct various forms and types of assessments that are effective in online environments.

1. How have I assessed students in blended and online learning?
2. How do the methods for supporting the purposes of assessment differ in blended and online learning?
3. What strategies and tools support assessment in online environments?

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KEY Elements

Assessment refers to a variety of methods educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, and skill acquisition of students. Assessment comes in many forms and types, but two main types of assessment are formative and summative. Formative assessments are ongoing and incorporated into lessons through impromptu quizzes, classroom polls, portfolios, and teacher observations of students. On the other hand, summative assessments are fixed and incorporated at the end of the lesson or unit through a formal, structured process such as an end of year test given to students or a standardized math test.

Assessments in online environments can be more challenging compared to those in face-to-face environments. In face-to-face environments, teachers can informally assess student facial expressions or observe students as they complete work, but in online environments students and teachers do not share the same physical space, changing the way assessment is implemented. Face-to-face and online learning environments share common assessment purposes such as guiding instruction by evaluating the knowledge and skill levels of students, determining a baseline for where instruction should begin, and identifying or diagnosing learning difficulties. However, the methods for assessing students often vary in face-to-face and online learning.

Teacher can utilize a range of strategies and tools, both for formal and informal assessments, in blended and online teaching. Informal assessments might include using entrance and exit tickets or questionnaires, real-time assessments that are conducted live, and peer review and teaching. For instance, teachers can use the tool Kahoot! for game-based entrance and exit tickets activities. Online tools like Mentimeter and Quizizz can provide real-time assessments through interactive questions or polls with the option for teachers to provide live feedback. The tool Flipgrid can be utilized for peer review and teaching, as it promotes video responses and discussions between students.

Formal assessments might include measuring students' progress and mastery through using various tools and apps, and using district, state or national benchmarking tools. Google or Microsoft forms can be used to collect students' responses to questions to facilitate mastery-based assessments. District-determined assessment platforms like Edulastic and iXL assist in evaluating students' progress and provide a wide range of assessment tools and samples to help teachers prepare their assessment items. Additionally, WIDA, SAT, and NWEA are assessment tools that are used for national benchmark assessments. Utilizing these assessment strategies and tools will make both formative and summative assessment processes more effective for teachers in online or blended learning environments.

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