

Focus Area #3: Provide Diverse Assessment Strategies

<https://vimeo.com/442704476/680c4e9811>

I'm Sue Monthie, a senior instructional designer for Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth. In this brief video, I will introduce you to the third area of focus, where we look at providing *diverse assessment strategies* that include both formative and summative assessments.

Providing diverse assessment strategies means that the instructors provide both summative and formative assessments, and incorporate authentic assessment strategies into both. These assignments reflect real world application and offer students the ability to demonstrate their mastery of learning objectives in a variety of ways, to increase student engagement, address learner variability, and remove barriers to learning.

Formative assessment involves providing frequent low stakes opportunities for practice and checking for understanding. Instructors monitor student learning and provide students with actionable, specific, and timely feedback on learning progress. Providing frequent feedback helps to identify misconceptions, struggles and learning gaps, while assessing ways to close such gaps. Formative assessments have low or no grade value. They encourage risk taking, helping students become more comfortable with making mistakes, learning from them, and encourage them to take ownership of their own learning. Formative assessments should scaffold learning with a goal of supporting student success in demonstrating mastery of learning objectives through the summative assessments.

Summative assessments evaluate student learning, knowledge, and skills at points when the students are expected to have developed proficiency. They occur less frequently than formative assessments, often at the end of units and at the end of a course. Effective assessments require higher order thinking skills, and provide a chance to apply knowledge in authentic contexts.

It is important that both summative and formative assessments align with the learning objectives of instruction. The feedback and grades inform students on their learning progress and guide instructors on teaching methods to best meet the learning needs of all students. Incorporating authentic experiences and problems into assessments is also a key instructional strategy that increases student engagement.

Authentic assessments provide relevance by helping students to connect the learning material to real world contexts. This increases student engagement and supports comprehension, which is important in both summative and formative assessments. A diverse assessment strategy allows for flexibility and opportunity for student voice and choice in demonstrating mastery. When possible, enable students to choose the media they use to demonstrate their mastery of learning objectives. Enabling students to apply the course content to investigate issues, problems, situations that are relevant to them, supports ownership of their learning, increases engagement, and critical thinking skills. Students have diverse backgrounds, experiences, and prior knowledge, so incorporating variety puts all students on a level playing field in terms of demonstrating what they know and what they can do.

To get started, include both formative and summative assessments in your course plans, and incorporate authentic experiences into those assessments. This chart lists just a few ways to diversify your assessments. They can be used independently or combined. For example, in addition to giving a

traditional final exam, add a real-world application project that gives students choice and topic and product, such as a term paper, webpage, infographic, or a podcast. To keep the project from overloading students with additional work, you could have students build components over the course of the term, giving feedback along the way that both helps scaffold their learning and apply knowledge and skills. This process helps students deepen their understanding and supports transfer of learning beyond the final exam.

A diverse assessment strategy aligns primarily with the UDL principle to provide *multiple means of action and expression*. Diverse assessments can provide *multiple means of engagement* when students make choices about their assessments, such as the topics and the medium. These choices, optimize relevancy and challenges with a variety of demands and resources.