

Assessment *for* Learning

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What is Assessment *for* Learning?

Assessment *for* Learning (AFL) is a process by which teachers gather information which they will use to make instructional decisions. In this regard, Assessment *for* Learning is a modality of constant assessment that enables teachers to adjust their practice so that **every** student succeeds. Simply put, AFL allows teachers to find out, quickly which students are and are not making progress, and to devise ways to help those in need so they become successful learners.

How is AFL Different from Traditional Assessment?

Traditionally, assessment is the last stage of a process. After exposure to and/or study of the target lessons, students are tested to verify the degree to which they have mastered the material. Students receive a grade and are promoted or demoted according to their test performance. This is Assessment ***of*** Learning.

Acquire Knowledge ► Take Test ► Receive Grade

This sequence inevitably produces groups of overachieving, achieving, and underachieving students. As instructors, we know how difficult it is to break free from the underachieving group. You, the reader of this article, are very likely to have been in one of the first two groups ever since your kindergarten years. You “did fine” throughout the various stages of education, all the way through university. But many of your classmates did not make it past a certain stage; they gave up at some point.

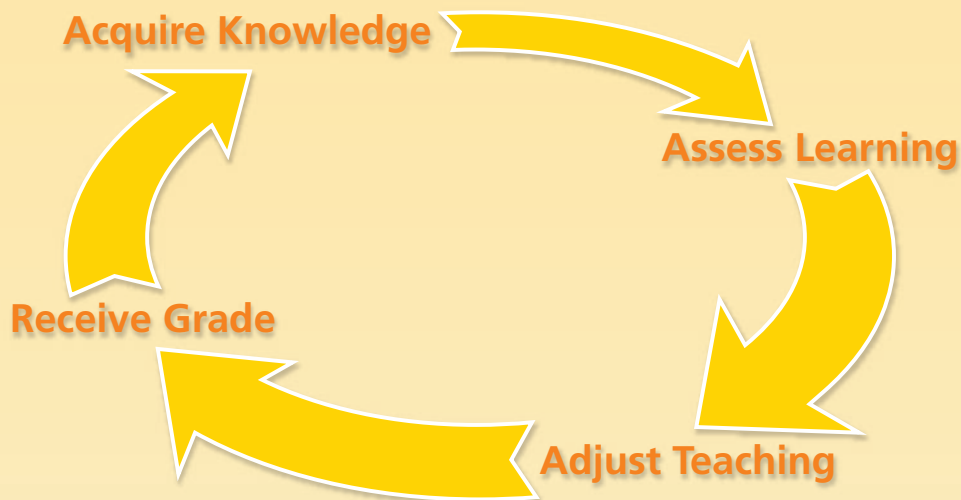
Assessment *for* Learning

Why does this happen? Why are we so likely to remain in the group in which tests placed us from the very beginning?

Success sets the stage for more success (Stiggins 2006). A student who receives good grades and is advanced develops a “can do” attitude that leads to success in future tests. The opposite also holds true: Failure leads students to stop trying.

Assessment *for* Learning is different from Assessment *of* Learning in the sense that we do not assess at the end of the process. Instead, we propose a circular set of stages, with each having an effect on the others:

Assessment of Learning is a unidirectional process with little room for retrofitting.



Assessment for Learning is an instrument that helps teachers keep students away from the failing spiral.

The outcome of this process is that teachers will be able to use the information from assessment to help every student succeed. Assessment *for* Learning will allow us to diagnose problems early in the process and, most importantly, it will allow us to do something about the students who are falling behind.

Assessment for Learning

Assessment for Learning in *Big English*

Big English author Mario Herrera has built a career as a teacher and student advocate. Mario's number one goal when authoring instructional material is to put something in teachers' hands that will enable every student to shine, to succeed, to achieve.

In *Big English*, Mario implements the principles of Assessment for Learning in the Student Book, the Teacher's Edition, the Workbook, and the digital components.

Assessment for Learning in *Big English* Student Book

There is a Checkpoint lesson after every three units in *Big English*. Unlike the traditional Review Units so common in English Learning textbooks, the Checkpoints present an innovative progression, implemented over four pages.

Notice that this sequence follows the reverse order seen in most review units. In *Big English*, reflection and self-assessment precedes practice.

	PAGES			
Daily activities: eat breakfast, brush my teeth, practice the piano . . .	3, 27	😊	😐	😞
Telling time: one o'clock, two thirty, 5:15 . . .	3	😊	😐	😞
Occupations: cashier, firefighter, chef . . .	15	😊	😐	😞
Workplaces: police station, restaurant, store . . .	15	😊	😐	😞

Self-Assessment

- Students are asked to rate how well they have learned each language component.
- Teacher guides students in discussions that enable students to put vocabulary and structures into practice.
- Students assess themselves.
- There are clear references if students need further review.

Get ready.

A. Complete the interview. Write the questions. Then listen and check.

What do you do before work?
Where do you work?
Do you eat dinner at home?
What time do you go to work?
What do you do?

Kate: _____ ?
Mike: I'm a chef.
Kate: Oh, really? _____ ?
Mike: I work at a restaurant, the Pizza Palace.
Kate: I see. _____ ?
Mike: I usually go to work at 2:00. I come home at 11:00 at night.
Kate: OK. _____ ?
Mike: I take a shower, eat breakfast, and get dressed. Then I

I Can Do It!

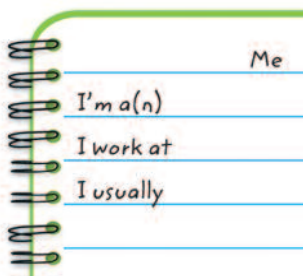
- Three steps involved in this section: Get Ready, Get Set, Go!
- Helps teachers evaluate whether there are areas that need review before proceeding to consolidation.

Assessment for Learning

Checkpoint | Units 1-3

3 Get set.

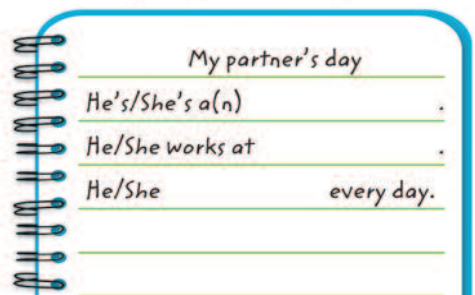
- STEP 1** Choose an occupation.
- STEP 2** Write notes about your daily routine.
- STEP 3** Cut out the cards on page 123. Now you're ready to **GO!**



- Sequence of steps to prepare students for consolidation (Go!) section.

4 Go!

A. Interview your partner. Use the questions on the cards. Write about your partner's daily routine. Then switch roles.



- Students actually do the activity.
- There is an outcome that can be acted out, presented or read.

5 Write about yourself. What do you do every day?

- What time do you wake up? • What do you do after school?
- What do you do before school? • What time do you go to bed?

All About Me Date: _____



All About Me

- Portfolio-type activities
- Additional review of target language
- Snapshot of each student at this point

Assessment for Learning

How Well Do I Know It Now?

6 Read and Circle.

A. Go to page 38. read and circle again. Use a different color.

B. Check (✓).

I can start the next unit.

I can ask my teacher for help and then start the next unit.

I can practice on the CD-ROM or website and then start the next unit.

7 Rate this Checkpoint? Check the stars.

very easy easy hard very hard fun not fun

Checkpoint Units 1-3 41

How Well Do I Know It Now?

- Students look back at language exponents and decide if they want to change their rating.
- Students rate the Checkpoint itself (Boring? Too easy or difficult?)
- Gives teachers insights into students' motivation.

Assessment for Learning in *Big English Teacher's Edition*

According to Stiggins (2006) and Stiggins et al (2012), AFL requires an element of **learner awareness** of the process. Students may be made aware and active parts of the assessment process through an explicit reflection on learning goals.

These are the steps:

- 1) State and share learning goals: *What do we need to learn?*
- 2) Verify progress: *Do I know the material? Can I show it?*
- 3) Adjust practice: *What can be done to get everyone on board?*

The instructional design in the *Big English Teacher's Edition* encompasses the four steps in the chart on page 6. For each step, *Big English* makes specific recommendations on how to achieve the Involve, Assess, Assist, Challenge goals outlined on page 6. He does so for every activity in every unit in every level. The result? The circular sequence illustrated on page 2 is implemented by default.

The Big English Teacher's Edition includes detailed information on both the theoretical underpinnings of AFL and specific suggestions on how to implement it in class.

Assessment for Learning

Involve	Set clear learning goals. Make sure students are engaged in what they will be expected to learn.
Assess	Provide instruction that elicits feedback, so the teacher can determine how well students are learning. This is the point in the process where teachers ascertain specific student needs.
Assist	Adjust instruction based on feedback to help students attain the learning goal.
Challenge	Provide students with more opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do.

Assessment for Learning in *Big English Workbook*

The *Big English Workbook* is strictly aligned with the Student Book so students always know what's expected of them. The Workbook is also designed as a self-paced environment that allows students to take ownership of their learning process.

Just like the Student Book, at the end of each section students are given an opportunity for self-reflection—the awareness requirement in AFL. Students themselves must decide whether they “know this,” “need more practice,” or “don't know this.”

Big English was conceived with the idea that every student is an individual with an individual learning style who learns at an individual pace, and therefore must be given individual attention at every step of his or her learning process.

References

- Stiggins, R. (2006). "Assessment for Learning – A Key to Motivation and Achievement." Edge 2, no. 2.
- Stiggins, R., Chappus, J. (2012). *An Introduction to Student Involved Assessment for Learning*. Boston, MA: Pearson.