

Instant Assessment by Del Suggs

What Is Assessment? It's essentially a measurement process of the learning that has either taken place or can take place. Assessment is all activities that teachers and students undertake to get information that can be used diagnostically to alter teaching and learning. (Black and Wiliam, 1998)

Why Do Assessment? First of all, because Assessment determines the effectiveness of learning. Second, it's a diagnostic tool that can be used to improve learning. And third, because your Boss expects It! Assessment has become an important tool in evaluating the teaching/learning process on campus-- both in academic affairs and in student affairs.

What Is Instant Assessment?

With the development and acceptance of technology among college students, some basic and general assessment can be done electronically. This idea of instant assessment embraces technology and allows students to complete your assessment tool in a very simple and immediate manner.

Here's how it works: first you develop some simple, assessable learning outcomes. Then you'll create a simple online survey to assess those outcomes. Next, you will create QR codes to allow students to easily complete your survey.

Then— when the program or event is over-- you'll return to your office, log on to your Google account, and take a look at all the data you've collected... or rather, that your students have assembled for you!

Understand that this will not be reasearch caliber data. You haven't done a pre-test, and you can't track

the learning as a result of the program or event directly. But this does give you some useful data.

Assessment Begins with Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes define what is to be learned. They establish conditions for success, the means of determining that learning has occurred. Learning Outcomes define the specific goals of learning experiences. They state what a student should be able to know, do, or value as a result of engaging in that learning experience.

Here is a very simple technique for developing learning outcomes.

The ABC's of Learning Outcomes

Audience: the students

Behavior: what they should learn

Condition: the teaching event

Degree of Achievement: the amount of learning that is expected.

(R. Heinich, M. Molenda, J. Russell, S. Smaldino, 2002).

Developing Learning Outcomes

Follow this formula:

Condition Audience Behavior (and sometimes) Degree

Here is an example without Degree

(Condition)

"After attending the leadership conference"

(Audience)

"Students"

(Behavior)

"Will demonstrate servant leadership behaviors"

Here is an example *with* Degree

(Condition)

"After viewing the film 'Snow White'"

(Audience)

"the audience"

(Behavior)

"Will be able to name"

(Degree)

"At least five of the seven dwarfs."

This ABC and sometimes D method will enable you to create straight-forward and easily assessable learning outcomes.

Just remember to keep your outcomes simple and assessable. With instant assessment, students can't write an essay or explain a complex concept. They can, however, perform actions like "list" or "identify" or answer true/false questions. That should allow you some basic assessment about the effectiveness of your programs.

As a starting point, create three to five learning outcomes for the program or event your wish to assess.

Creating your Assessment Tool

While **Survey Monkey**, **Survey Console**, and **Zoomerang** may be the most familiar names in online surveys, there is another source you should consider: **Google**. You can create your own survey in Google Drive (formerly called Google Docs), with beautiful graphics and all the form elements you will need, while at the same time be able to export all answers into Excel or get great graphs of the responses, all for free.

Here is the step-by-step process:

Create a Google account. I'd suggest you create a gmail account-- you'll find it useful for your personal email. You can use that to access all the different services that Google offers.

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Log into Google. When you go to the Google homepage, the log-in is at the top right side.

Click on “Drive” on the top menu bar. Look on the left side, there is a red box that reads “create.” When you click on that, it opens a drop-down menu. Click on “Form.”

At this point you can begin to create your survey. At the top, enter the name of the survey and any instructions or clarifications. Don't worry, you can always edit or enter this later if you want.

Two sample questions are automatically created for your form, which you can edit as desired. You can change the **question type** to be text, paragraph text, multiple choice, checkboxes, choose from a list, scale, or grid.

Click “Add Item” in the upper left corner to add more questions. Click “SAVE” periodically in the upper right corner to save your work.

Notice you can make questions “required” by clicking the checkbox at the bottom of the question editing area. After you have finished editing a question, you click “done.” You can edit it again by clicking the pencil icon on the right side of it. The second icon will duplicate the question, and the trash can will delete it.

You can also click and drag to reorder your questions as desired. Create questions that will assess the learning outcomes you've created for your event. Remember that you need clear and straightforward responses to your questions. Don't try to make this instant assessment tool too complex.

Customize with a theme

This step is optional, but Google Forms allows you to select different themes to make your surveys look more visually interesting and polished. There are many different designs, and you can change them at any time. Just click the “Theme” button on the top menu bar.

After choosing a desired theme, click “Apply” in the upper left corner to return to the form editor.

Personalize your form

After respondents submit your survey they will be shown a webpage which reads, “Thanks! Your response will now appear in my spreadsheet.” You can customize this message if desired. You also can also choose to publish a response summary for respondents to see after they submit their own answers.

Share your Survey

At the bottom of your Google Form editing window, a link is shown to your “live” public form. This is the link you want to click and copy, so you can share it with the students who will respond to your survey. This is the link to your assessment.

Using QR Codes

The next step is to create QR codes so your students can complete the assessment tool on their smart phones. QR stands for Quick Response, just what you want for instant assessment.

QR codes were originally created by Toyota to keep track of parts. They are a very simple two dimensional bar code. What makes them so useful is they can still be read if much of the code is unreadable. Some QR codes can be understood by bar code readers with as little as 60% of the code intact.

The most popular use of QR codes is to direct the user to a website. That's what we'll do here-- direct your students to your online survey. But you should know that QR codes can perform lots of actions, from sending a text message to downloading an address card to calling a phone number and more.

You can start by shortening the huge URL you will get for your survey. There are lots of URL shorteners--TinyURL, bit.ly or goo.gl and more.

I recommend using goo.gl. If you hadn't guessed, it's the URL shortener from Google. Go ahead, especially since you already have an account with them to create your survey. If you shorten the link with goo.gl, then also click on the “details” by the shortened link. It will present you with a QR code that you can also use to share the survey! Just copy it and paste it wherever you need. Goo.gl will also show you statistics on how many people have accessed your survey via the shortened link. That's handy to see how people are accessing your survey.

Other QR Code Generators

Check out some of the other free QR code generator sites. You can go to:

qrstuff.com

goqr.me

scan.me

There are lots more.

Test your QR Code

This is very important. Take your own smart phone, run your bar code reader, and scan your new QR code. Did it take you to your survey? If not, you need to double check your shortened URL and make sure that the link to your survey is correct.

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Driving Students to your Survey

You'll know the next step. You've got to print and post your QR code at your event. If you have a program or flier, make sure the code is there. Print poster-sized codes and place them around the event. You can even create a powerpoint slide, and project it on the wall or a screen.

Motivation 101

Add incentives to encourage your students to scan your code and complete your assessment. Students don't generally have a reason to help you assess their learning. But-- have you ever called or gone online to complete a survey from a purchase receipt? Businesses as different as Home Depot and fast food restaurants all use this technique to get their customer to respond.

What would get your students to respond? Would it be at promised a gift card for one lucky respondent chosen at random? You know your students better than anyone else. Maybe you could offer a free package of Ramen noodles to everyone who completes the survey.

You could also provide other types of prizes, such as free or early admission to an upcoming special event or program. Or how about giving away some of those CDs you brought back from the programming conference?

You will have to find a way to track your students, since Google Drive doesn't do that automatically. You could always request their email address in order to be eligible for the prize or drawing.

Check out your results

After your students have completed your assessment tool, then it's time

to review your data. Your survey results can be viewed several ways. Data from your form goes directly into a Google Spreadsheet, which can be viewed online or downloaded as an Excel or other file type.

On the top right menu bar, you can "See Responses". Clicking on this opens a drop-down menu. If you select "Spreadsheet" you will see a downloadable spreadsheet that you can save and analyze. You love doing your own statistical analysis, right? If not, then try this.

Select "Summary" and you will see charts and percentages of the responses. Google will do the statistical analysis for you, and generate charts and graphs for you.

You can change your survey and questions at any time, but you shouldn't move the questions around after people have started submitting answers or the order of your spreadsheet columns can get confusing.

Unlike many commercial form and survey options, Google does not have a maximum number of respondents. The price is right, it's Free. Give Google Drive a try this year, and challenge your staff and students to use surveys to collect and analyze data about your programs.

Best Practices

There are a few things you need to keep in mind when you create your own survey. We've all answered a lousy survey before, and you know how unprofessional it appears. Here are a few quick tips to point you in the right direction for your survey.

Make your questions as simple as possible. Use plain, conversational

English, without jargon or slang. If you use an abbreviation, make sure you clarify it once. For example, the Association for the Promotion of Campus Activities (APCA)-- once you've named it, you can use just the abbreviation "APCA" afterward.

Use neutral wording on your questions. Be very careful not to imply the answer you might prefer.

Demographic questions should be last. You have a certain amount of goodwill among your respondents-- don't waste it on the boring stuff.

Have an open-ended question at the end, in case they want to tell you something you didn't think to ask!

Be careful with assumptions in your questions. For example, don't ask "did this program meet your expectations?" UNLESS you have asked what those expectations were.

Proofread and pilot your survey before you go live online and have several different selected people take the survey before you post it officially.

Try Instant Assessment. You may find this to be a powerful tool to measure the effectiveness of your programs and events!

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