Getting Started

EEF resources, including the Toolkit, the growing number of project evaluations and Guidance Reports, put a heavy emphasis on the value of identifying pupils in need of additional support. This requires good diagnostic assessment, and the effective monitoring of pupil progress. The AMPP Guide outlines the principles of good assessment to ensure that the evidence put to use in schools has the best possible chance of targeting the right pupils at the right time.

What is our starting point for thinking about assessment?

Classroom assessment often emphasises recall or recognition of pieces of information to which pupils have been exposed; for example, a way of doing a calculation, or the recall of key pieces of knowledge in geography. This form of assessment focuses on immediate knowledge recall, an important part of learning, but to think of assessment only for this purpose misses a huge opportunity.[1] In this guide, we focus on how assessment can help create the circumstances to promote a deeper understanding of concepts, and the transfer of learning to novel or unfamiliar situations or challenges.

In light of this, the guide suggests that schools focus on the following as touchstones for the development of high-quality assessment practices:

- Above all else, decide the functions school assessments should perform, then select or create the assessments to perform those functions;
- Assessment for diagnostic purposes should be a priority for all classroom teachers;
- Assessment should be viewed as a potentially ‘powerful learning event’[2]
- Assessment before learning can be used as a prompt for learning and as a way to identify current knowledge or skill, as well as gaps in learning; [3]
- Assessment does not always lead to marking.

1. Coe, Aloisi, Higgins, and Elliot Major, (2014) in their report, What Makes Great Teaching? they make the useful point that "testing can support self-monitoring and focus subsequent study more effectively"[1] The suggestion that testing itself can have an impact learning is an interesting one, but one underpinned very simply by the notion that learning occurs when a student has to think hard about something.
3. In his review of assessment, Crooks (1988) talks about how assessment can guide students' judgement of what is important to learn, and how it affects students' motivation and their self-perception of competence: assessment before learning can create the conditions for learning.
4. By using self-testing or practice assessments on material students are to learn, Dunlosky, Rawson, Marsh, Nathan and Willingham (2013) suggest that assessment itself can have a positive impact on learning.