

Formative Assessment Writing Activities and Research Activities

Formative Assessment Activities	Definition	Classroom Options
Writing Break	Stop in the middle of class and give students two minutes to write about the lesson or topic.	Students can discuss in pairs, share and write comments, and/or read a few aloud. Consider writing a about a picture, diagram, movie segment, or a math process.
Exit Slips	At the end of class, students write a response about the lesson.	Offer students a choice of questions or prompts. Summarize lesson in 25 words. "If you were to teach this lesson, what would be in your notes?" "What was confusing for you?" Use the cards to begin class the next day.
Admit Slips	Students bring a short piece of writing to class. Teacher uses the writing to begin class.	Math - How could this formula be applied in a real-life situation? Social Studies - How would the United States have been different if FDR lost the election in 1932? Science - Some of the chemical reactions we have been studying also happen in your home every day. Name two and explain.
Brainstorming	Students create lists in a short amount of time.	Use to determine prior knowledge, review material, or create class master lists.
Drawing and Illustrating	Students create drawings or diagrams that illustrate concepts.	Science concepts Historical cause and effects Literature summaries
Dry Erase Boards	Students write/draw responses and then hold their boards up; Immediate assessment for the teacher.	Use in any subject area and with any grade level as a warm up, review, guided practice, or reflection.
Clustering	Students create webs or circles to illustrate ideas.	Use to organize writing topics. Students organize thoughts before answering questions. Review for tests Demonstrate deep thinking about a topic
Mapping	Students create various graphic organizers (Venn diagrams, flowcharts, concept wheels).	http://www.englishcompanion.com/pdfDocs/BurkeHOutsFullWorkshop.pdf This link has many graphic organizers for upper grades.

		http://173.66.104.20/burke/graphic_org_menu.htm - This link also has graphic organizers.
Written Conversation	Students write letters back and forth to each other.	Complete during class or students finish notes or responses as homework.
Write Around	A group of 3 to 5 students write notes about a topic and then pass their papers to each other. Students read and write responses.	Students can respond to historical events. Students can respond to a character's point of view. Students can respond to a science article. Students write two thick questions and then other students answer the questions.
Carousel Brainstorming	Teacher creates several stations that contain chart paper with writing prompts. Groups of students visit each station and add their own information about each prompt.	Take topics from text headings, problem solving topics, or higher order thinking questions.
Journals	Use pictures, words, numbers and diagrams to make lists, organize thoughts, ask questions, explain thinking, and/or summarize.	*Use in any subject area and with any grade level. *Teachers can write responses back to the students. *Primary teachers can note students' abilities to accurately print letters, to demonstrate letter-sound correlations, and to use appropriate capital letters and punctuation.
Double-Entry Journal	The students take notes on the left hand column and write responses or reflections on the right hand column.	Literature – Students write about events and then explain the values of the characters. Math- Students complete math problem and then explain the process.
Nonstop Writing	Students write about a topic for three to five minutes.	Students can explore new ideas, respond to content, or explain a topic.
Reflective Write	Students reflect on their learning in the middle or at the end of a task or project.	Use the activity after a discussion, a field trip, an experiment, an algebra operation, or after a long project.
Teacher-Student Correspondence	Students write to teacher and teacher writes back.	Teachers can give writing prompts to help guide topics. Helps build student/teacher relationships.

SOS	<p>S - Teacher reads a statement.</p> <p>O- Students give their opinion.</p> <p>S - Students support their opinion with evidence.</p>	<p>Religions - social justice topics</p> <p>Science - making predictions</p> <p>Social Studies - an event in history</p> <p>Literature - author's point of view</p> <p>Math - You don't need to know math to live comfortably in the world.</p>
3 - 2 - 1 Summarizer	<p>This is a great closure strategy for the end of a lesson. The numbers refer to how many of each summary statements students are asked to provide.</p>	<p>*Example: A teacher might ask students to record 3 facts they've learned; 2 questions they have or wonder about; and 1 personal connection they have made to the content.</p> <p>*Primary students can fill in the blanks with their own ideas: Polar bears eat _____. Polar bears have _____. Polar bears are _____.</p>
Write About	<p>Students use key content area vocabulary terms to synthesize key ideas in a paragraph as well as represent key ideas graphically.</p>	<p>*Graphic Organizer in <i>25 Quick Formative Assessments for a Differentiated Classroom</i></p> <p>*Primary students can brainstorm a list of key vocabulary terms as a whole class and then each pick one word to draw a picture and write a sentence about.</p>
Factstorming	<p>A brainstorming activity that can be used individually, in pairs, or groups. Students generate and record a list of facts, events, concepts, characteristics, documents, etc. about the topic being studied. The teacher then offers a choice of high level writing activities that provide students different ways to organize the information and think about it critically.</p>	<p>Examples of choices:(different content areas)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose at least three events, circumstances, factors, beliefs, or ideas whose effects can still be felt today. • Choose at least three terms that are related. Describe the relationship clearly using scientific terminology. Do this for a second group of at least three terms. • Sequence at least five events from the story and discuss how they affected the main character. <p>Taken from <i>25 Quick Formative Assessments</i>.</p>

Noting What I Have Learned	An adaptation of two column notes where a page is divided and main ideas go on one side with details on another; this activity has students draw a nonlinguistic representation of the main idea, question or key word on one side and then write what he/she has learned about on the other side of the page.	Taken from <i>25 Quick Formative Assessments</i> .
Research Projects	Definition	Classroom Options
People Research: Surveys and Interviews	Students develop questions and interview others.	Math – Students interview adults about using math in their jobs. Science – Students interview others about recycling, conservation, etc.
Faction	Students research a topic and then develop a fictional story around the researched facts.	Use as an alternative assessment or as an extension project.
RAFT	Students determine a Role, Audience, Format, and Topic . (Explained more in “Writing Across the Curriculum” article)	A student chooses a person in history and writes a letter to another famous person concerning a particular event in history. A student is a nucleus writing a letter of appreciation to a cell membrane about the cell membrane’s contribution to the nucleus and other organelles.
Brochure	Students summarize details about a subject in an interesting way to inform others about a specific topic.	Students determine categories and graphics that explain the topic. Teachers can offer a template to guide the research.
Newspaper Front Page	Students create news stories, editorials, feature articles, etc. to demonstrate learning.	Literature – Students create a newspaper about a book the class read. Social Studies – Students write about an event in history.
Web Page	Students can dive deep into their topics and develop links, subpages, pictures, drawings, sounds, etc.	
Multigenre Project	Students create a collection of five or more short pieces	Various genres of writing could include expository essays, diary entries, poems, letters,

	that center around one topic.	interviews, time lines, etc.
Social Action Paper	Students address issues in their community, homes, schools, etc.	Science – environmental issues Religion -- social teachings, faith based choices.
I-Search Paper	Students research a topic of their choosing. The writer writes in first person explaining how he/she researched a topic. Students practice narrowing topics, creating questions, using several sources, etc.	What kind of dog should my family get? Which is the best car to buy? What should my family see on vacation?
My Opinions Journal	Teachers provide students with a small booklet that serves as a journal for a unit of study. Students record opinions and elaborate about content by making connections with the material in the unit.	Examples of opinion stems: In my opinion, ____ leads to ____. I think ____ is important because _____. I used to think/feel/believe _____. but now I think/feel/believe _____ because _____. From <i>25 Quick Formative Assessments</i>

Resources

Slide show from Smokey Daniels: http://www.slideshare.net/smokeylit/written-conversations-the-best-kept-teaching-secret-by-harvey-daniels?qid=7df1a1fd-0c01-47e8-aae0-96ae713ab95b&v=default&b=&from_search=1

“Writing Across the Curriculum”

Works Cited

Daniels, Harvey, Steven Zemelman, and Nancy Steineke, *Content-Area Writing Every Teacher’s Guide*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2007.

Dodge, Judith, *25 Quick Formative Assessments for a Differentiated Classroom*. Scholastic. New York, NY. 2009.