

My understanding of assessing student learning is relatively limited. However, in my experience there are two major forms of assessment when it comes to student learning. The first is formative, where an instructor evaluates a student's learning on a particular subject and their general understanding of a lesson. The second is summative where at the end of a unit or topic, students overall learning of the concept is evaluated.

Formative assessments are a great way to measure what was taught well and what needs to be revisited. They also contribute towards effective differentiated instruction. An instructor is able to gauge where students stand in terms of understanding various learning objectives. Then, the instructor can tailor future instruction to that particular area. As a whole, formative assessments can inform how the instructor teaches throughout a course, and how lessons are developed. The important part of formative assessments is that they be used to inform the instruction. They can sometimes be so small and seem relatively insignificant that a teacher may not find them valuable. But when the data is compiled and evaluated, some real patterns can begin to emerge that might be able to shed some interesting light on the students and the instruction.

Summative assessments are the more standard quizzes or tests that students may take at the end of a unit or once a certain topic has been taught. The summative assessments should incorporate the learning objectives for the unit or topic, and after reviewing the summative assessments, an instructor should be able to understand where students stand in terms of achieving the objectives of the unit or topic. Summative assessments should also be well-informed by the formative assessments. If the formative assessments have been doing well, then it is likely that the summative assessments will go well.

In terms of taking advantage of school and community resources I think it is important for this kind of assessment data to be shared amongst instructors. Instructors of similar courses should share their assessment data so that they can benchmark their progress, and compare results with other instructors. If teachers are teaching classes with the same learning objectives and finding that assessing the students in different classes is producing vastly different results, and students are not reaching the various learning objectives in one class, but exceeding them in others, then the instructors should collaborate to make improvements in the failing class.