

Kinds of Assessments

II. Learning Logs/Journals

A learning log is a journal designed to develop reflection and self-monitoring skills. It can be used with students to give them some personal control over their own learning. In learning logs, students communicate how and what they have understood about a concept or a unit of study. They record data and reflect on what they have learned, what they still have questions about, whether they found the material easy or hard, what part they enjoyed the most, what frustrated them, how the information connects to other areas, and what questions they still have.

Students learn by describing their own learning processes. For example, in a foreign language class, students could conclude the lesson by entering the following in their learning log:

- o Listing the key ideas and/or main points of the lesson
- o Addressing what was easy or difficult and why
- o Explaining how they will use that information

Other options involve the completion of statements such as those suggested by Fogarty and Bellanca (1987).

- o One thing I'm excited about is...because...
- o I hate it when... and when...
- o This is like a movie I saw...because...

In their book Evaluating Literacy, Anthony, Johnson, Mickelson, and Preece recommend carefully suggesting prompts to help students become analytical about their "...own learning styles, approaches, strengths, preferences, and shortcomings." For example:

Preferences

The most interesting thing about... was...
My favorite part of the school day is when...
My favorite kind of question is the type
that...
I prefer to work by myself on activities
that...

Learning Styles and Strategies

When I have to do a project, the first thing I
do is...
If I can, I try to avoid activities that...
I work best when...
When I don't understand something, I...

Strengths

I'm getting much better at...
One good question I asked (or thought of) today
was...
One of the things I do best is...
I can help people in my class with...
I'm proud of the way I...

Areas in Need of Improvement

I need to work harder on...
I'm still not sure how to...
I need to get help with...
I wish I were better at...
The part I found the most difficult was...

Additionally, the authors recommend inviting the students to add prompts of their own.

The preceding section is an excerpt from Learning to Write - Writing to Learn, 1998, p. 101-102.

Learning logs and journals present many benefits to students and teachers alike. Some of the most obvious are:

- ◆ Students understand and remember key ideas and concepts.
- ◆ Students have more time to process information when they use the logs (this is

especially beneficial for students who have special needs).

- ◆ Teachers are able to determine if there is some confusion about information.

Figure 102 - Why Use Learning Logs

Why Should We Use Learning Logs and Journals?

Research by Brownlie, Close, and Wingren (1988), Jeroski, Brownlie, and Kaser (1990), Barell (1992) Costa, Bellanca, and Fogarty (1992) and others recommends using logs and journals on a regular basis in the following ways:

1. To record key ideas from a lecture, movie, presentation, field trip, or reading assignments.
2. To make predictions about what will happen next in a story, movie, experiment, the weather, or in school, national or world events.
3. To record questions.
4. To summarize the main ideas of a book, movie, lecture, or reading.
5. To reflect on the information presented.
6. To connect the ideas presented to other subject areas or to the students' personal life.
7. To monitor change in an experiment or event over time.
8. To respond to questions posed by the teacher or other students.
9. To brainstorm ideas about potential projects, papers, or presentations.
10. To help identify problems.
11. To record problem-solving techniques.
12. To keep track of the number of problems solved, books read, or homework assignments completed.

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