

e-asTTle and assessment for learning

The asTTle assessment tool was designed to provide reliable and valid assessment information for teachers and students to enhance teaching and learning. This supports the shift in understanding of best educational practice from an emphasis on assessment of learning to assessment for learning.

See [Assessment Online](#) for more information on assessment for learning.

The development of e-asTTle continues, from asTTle V4, the emphasis on assessment for learning and enhances the manner in which assessment information can be collected and used to help students learn. It is important, with the use of any assessment tool, that there is a clear understanding and explanation of the philosophy which underpins it. If a tool is not used as it was intended, the information it provides risks being unreliable and invalid. It is essential that the users of e-asTTle (both teachers and students) understand the purpose and principles which underpin its development and use.

The purpose of every e-asTTle assessment should be to determine what the student now knows and what they might learn next. The assessment should provide this information to both the students and to the teacher. A valid e-asTTle assessment will also produce reports that will provide valuable information for parents, school managers and trustees to inform their own decisions about how they can best support further learning. The assessment should not be about only obtaining a score, although it may well be about wanting to monitor and celebrate progress. The key is the interpretation of any score or information from an assessment and a major function of e-asTTle is to assist in providing these interpretations.

Assessment is a collaborative endeavour between the teacher and the student where both want to determine what the student knows and what might be learnt next. Therefore, a major role that the teacher has is to manage the learning culture of the classroom to maximise students' motivation to engage keenly with assessment. If any student is less than fully engaged in the test, the results for that student may be less reliable.

“Helping students see why something is important is more likely to trigger their personal desire to learn and this desire is an incredibly powerful force that can carry learners through repeated disappointments and difficulties.” (Crooks, 2002).

It is not possible, of course, to suddenly convert long-term, determinedly disengaged students into engaged students just for an assessment. It is necessary to persistently use pedagogical approaches that are consistent with the principles of assessment for learning to maximise the chances that the students will be engaged with their learning and that they will therefore look forward to the assessment. However, there are some guidelines for teachers to follow that will help develop students' understanding of why and how to use assessment well. They demonstrate, in practical terms, how the tool can best be used to provide reliable information that enhances student learning.

For the teacher

- Before any new e-asTTle assessment is administered (irrespective of whether it is individual, class or whole school), students should have the opportunity to reflect on the assessment information from their last assessment, if this is available. You should enable them to discuss, with you or with a peer, how they have felt their learning since that assessment has gone - what they are confident they now know and what they still find difficult - and what they think this new assessment might show. If the students see personal value can accrue from an assessment they are more likely to engage and perform optimally. The student and find a way of enabling every student to feel comfortable with this discussion.
- Wherever possible, you should design the assessment with the students. This is sometimes not possible for whole-school or department or cohort assessment where there is staff agreement about the test parameters, but frequently this can be done. This enables students to discuss the criteria for test creation with you so that they are confident the test will provide the best information about what they have been trying to learn. Even when the test is predetermined, it is still extremely important to tell the students why they are being tested, how it will still help them with their learning, and why it is important that they engage fully with it.
- You need to ensure that the students are thinking about how to complete the assessment properly.
 - For younger students and poorer readers, you do need to ensure that they understand the instructions for completing the test. Check that they complete the attitude questions and the practice questions correctly. Help those that have difficulty until you are certain they know what to do.
 - Make sure that all students know not to guess the answers. Guessing correctly will give them a better score but will not necessarily let them or you know what they should learn next. If they are confident they do not know the answer, they should leave the item unanswered. If they think they might have the answer, they should answer it. This advice goes against the traditional test instruction where emphasis is on getting as many answers correct as possible. Assessment for learning changes this emphasis to maximising information about what the student does and does not know and understand.
- Always refresh your memory of the administration guidelines and instructions found at the beginning of the test and follow them! If you vary these instructions, then you need to make an adjustment to some of your interpretations when using the norming information - use your wise judgement here.
- At the completion of each assessment, check that the assessment tasks were not too hard or too easy for the students. As a rule of thumb, any students who get fewer than 10% of the questions correct should be given an easier assessment. Similarly, any student who gets fewer than 10% of questions wrong should be given a harder assessment. The new assessment should be given within the next three days. An assessment that is too hard will not tell you what the student can do. An assessment that is too easy will not tell you what should be learnt next.

- When the assessments have been marked, both you and the students should review the results and determine whether you feel they do give an accurate picture of what they know and can do. In particular, checks need to be made with any earlier tests to see if the pattern of progress shown makes sense. If there are any really discrepant results, the reasons should be determined as best you can (normally the student will know what went wrong) and remedial action taken as appropriate. Sometimes discrepant results can prompt checks on your own understanding of learning. Sometimes these checks can surprise. This is all good learning.