**Chris Watkins**

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

Over recent decades, the term 'assessment' has been hi-jacked in our schools and colleges. The term derivates from the Latin word *assessere* which means 'to sit next to'. So, educational assessment is *to sit next to* someone to draw out their learning.

In our schools and colleges however, most people think 'testing' when someone says 'assessment'. Our pupils are the most tested in the world, and schools spend a massive £230 million a year on SATs and exams.

At worst, emphasis on tests can lead people to feel pressurised and to adopt strategic responses to what they do in school. This was expressed by one American commentator in the title of his book *'Learning to succeed in school – without really learning'*.

We want all our pupils to achieve well, so how can we avoid this worst-case scenario, without becoming an apologist for over-testing? The answer is that a focus on learning enhances performance (as elaborated i evplnv .

So we need to reclaim the term 'assessment', and the headline phrase 'Assessment for learning' is sometimes used to indicate this. The core idea reflects the distinction in the diagram:
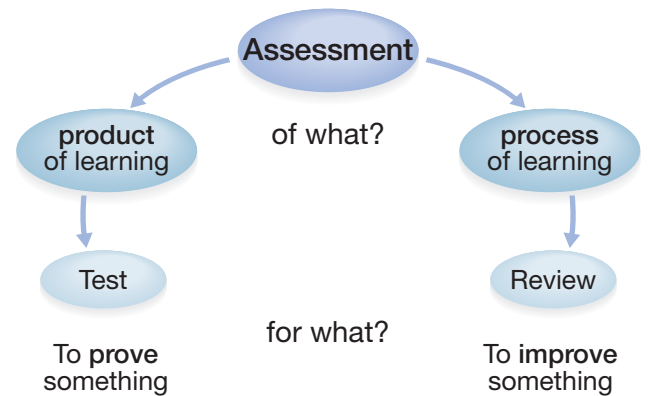
In current times, there are however some differences in how the term 'assessment for learning' is being used. Much depends on the meaning given to that key term – 'learning'. As earlier sections explained, three main views of learning can be identified, and each would lead to different processes of assessment.

View of learning	Observers take learning to be shown in:	Assessment in the form of:	Review in the form of:
1 Learning is being taught (LBT)	Responses to instruction: a 'show me' emphasis on visible and tangible 'knowledge' product	Timed, written tasks, with 'right answers' which reflect the instruction given	Practice tests and mock exams
2 Learning is individual sense-making (LIS)	Performances of understanding – 'explain to me', with more emphasis on spoken	Evidence of sense-making and meaning, as shown through dialogue	Individual reflection on the process of learning
3 Learning is building knowledge as part of doing things with others (LBKO)	Collaborative display resulting from authentic activities and acts of participation	Products such as a web of developing ideas and knowledge, a story or other form of collaborative account which shows the increasing complexity	Group reflection on the processes of action, collaboration, and dialogue

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