

See also: Blanks, B. (2015). Amazing Assessment. In W.W. Murawski & K.L. Scott (Eds.), *What Really Works in Elementary Education* (pp.217-232). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

### **Heavy Hitters: Quick, Easy, and Meaningful Informal Assessment Strategies**

1. **Read the Room**: Quick checks for understanding during every lesson:
  - a. Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down
    - i. Correct or Incorrect
    - ii. Got It/ I Kinda Got It/I'm Lost
  - b. White Board and Markers
    - i. Multiple choice options
    - ii. SHORT answers
  - c. Clickers and Interactive White Boards
  
2. **Pile Sorting**: Strategy to promote flexible grouping. After instruction, ask students to complete a brief assignment. Read and sort into 3 groups, those of got it, those of sort of got it, those who didn't get it. This allows you to quickly focus and differentiate your next lesson based on the needs of each group.
  
3. **Purposeful Eavesdropping**: This is just old school "kidwatching" (Goodman, 1985). As students are working, walk around the room to collect and document evidence of student learning. Make notes on your clipboard about who understands what and the evidence you see of it.
  
4. **Talk Time**: Conversations are great ways to explore what kids understand and how they understand it. There are multiple ways to use informal conversations to learn more about kids' understanding of your teaching.
  - a. Walk Around and Listen: Just pay attention to how kids are talking about the content. Make a few notes about your impressions of the instructional strengths and needs.
  - b. Sit in on a Group: Don't become an active member of the group. Drop in and listen, especially on discussions that require kids to be engaged to complete the instructional tasks you've provided for them.
  - c. Informal Conversations with Students: Low-stakes, private, "impromptu" conversations can often help students reveal competency and understand of their needs more accurately than in formal conversations or other methods of assessment.
  
5. **Quick Write**: Ask kids to respond in 3 to 5 minutes to an open-ended prompt or question on a topic or big before, during, or after instruction. Responses often show what they do and don't understand about a topic and provide insights into the reasoning processes that students are using.