

Active Assessment for Active Learning

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What does it mean for assessment to be aligned with the values of *active learning*? What are the potential benefits and challenges of identifying and defining approaches to assessment consonant with active learning (i.e., *active assessment*)? In the last several years, there has been a surge in interest in developing more flexible assessment structures, with a great deal of momentum for this movement coming from COVID-19 pandemic equity considerations (Kadakia & Bradshaw, 2020; Kim, 2020). Conversations about equity and active learning (Theobald et. al, 2020) and about equity and formative assessment (Kalinec-Craig, 2017) have opened the door to the consolidation of ideas into a framing of “active assessment”. This poster focuses on perceived challenges and benefits for defining and designing active assessment. For example, how active assessments may be more or less equitable than timed, independent, written exams. This work takes place at an institution with a variety of supports available, and individual instructors’ consideration and implementation of *active assessment* occurs within the ongoing process of professional and pedagogical growth.

This poster presents preliminary results from a qualitative study of exploration of this question in a professional learning community (the Assessment Community of Practice, or ACoP). Pulling ideas from discussions of active learning, formative assessment, and alternative assessment, and from reflections on our own practice, members of the ACoP collaboratively produced two drafts of a definition of *active assessment* in Summer 2023. Both drafts of the definition will be included in the poster. Our goal in developing a shared definition of *active assessment* is to support our implementation of assessment strategies that align with the values and practices of active learning. Throughout the academic year 2023-2024, ACoP members are implementing a variety of active assessment strategies, including variations on standards-based grading, group projects and portfolios, in a broad range of courses, from first-year general education courses through upper division electives for mathematics majors. We continue to engage in discussion about how the strategies do or don’t align with our current, working definition. The poster presents preliminary themes that have appeared in these discussions.

Active learning has been defined broadly as instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Our consideration of active learning includes Laursen and Rasmussen’s four pillars of inquiry-based mathematics education (2019). The ACoP development of a working definition for active assessment also included ideas from Black and Wiliam’s (2009) five key aspects of formative assessment and themes presented in the PRIMUS Curated Collection on Assessment (Katz, 2022).

This poster aims to share the motivation, and initial thoughts on the implementation of *active assessment* and present some challenges and questions that have arisen. The conversations generated through the poster session will inform the ongoing research into the development of the definition and practice of active assessment.

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Institutional Context

Regional, public 4-year university,
primarily undergraduate-serving

- Faculty invested in active learning
- STEM Pathway Community of Practice
- Coordination of materials and topics for multi-section courses

Motivation

Create Assessment Community of Practice for connecting across context, focused on **active assessment**.

Evolving Definition of Active Assessment

Draft #1 (5/19/2023)

A type of assessment that is rooted in

- *engaging student understanding equitably,*
- *reinforcing communication, reflection, collaboration, and mathematically rich tasks,*
- *valuing diversity in expression while being asset-minded,*
- *and transferring power to students and community*

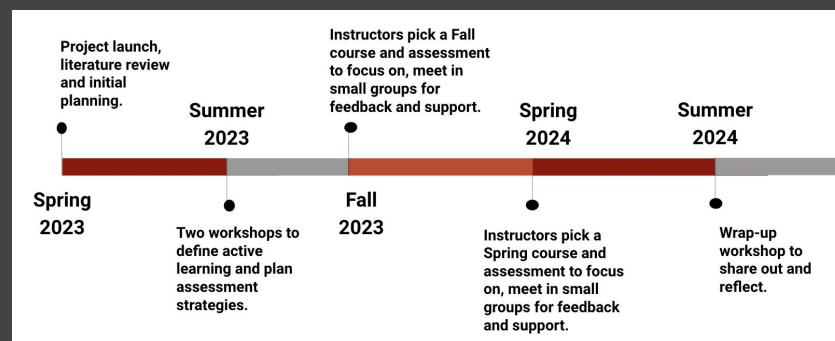
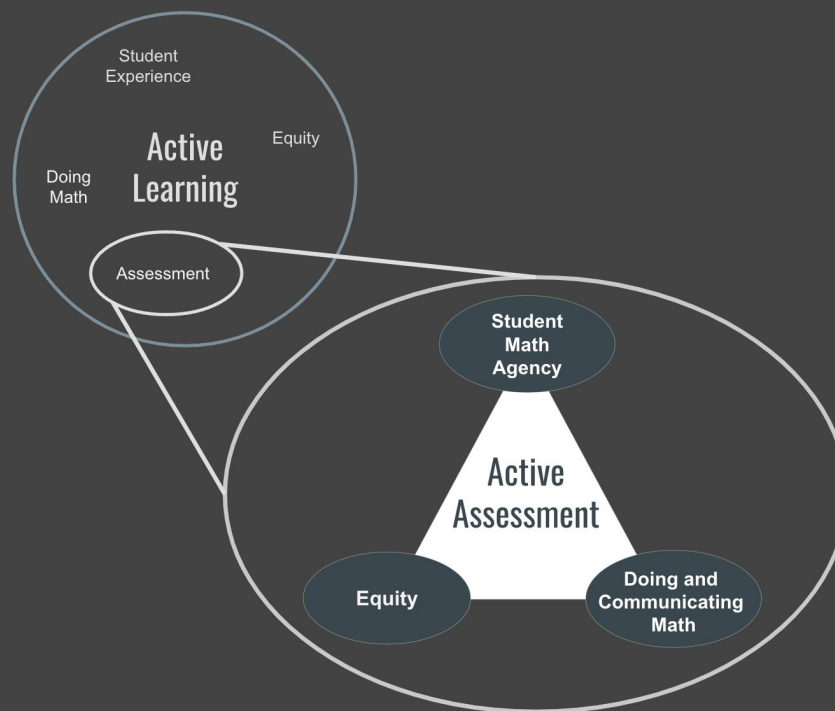
And captures student progress and facilitates growth in the journey through mathematics.

Draft #2 (7/14/2023)

Active assessment captures student progress and facilitates growth in the journey through mathematics. Active assessment is rooted in

- *engaging student understanding equitably,*
- *reinforcing communication, reflection, collaboration, through mathematically rich tasks,*
- *valuing diversity in expression while being asset-minded, and*
- *giving students the opportunity to share, learn, and expand on ideas as a community.*

Yes, we're starting to understand *active learning*, so what does *active assessment* look like?



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2023-2024 Assessment Community of Practice

- Includes lecturer, pre-tenure faculty, and tenured faculty
- Wide range of courses and assessment strategies represented, including:
 - Group Projects and Presentations in upper division Diff. Eq.
 - Final Portfolios in Math for the Arts & Humanities
 - Standards-Based Grading in Precalculus with Algebra

CHALLENGES & NEXT STEPS

- How are current practices opportunities for active assessment development?
 - Standards-based grading.
 - Multiple drafts with collaboration.
 - Summative assessment for the course as formative assessment for students
- How do we operationalize the definition?
 - What does the instructor do?
 - What do the students do?



Related resources at the QR code



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