

The Qualitative Formative Assessment Toolkit

I have recently been refining an idea called the qualitative formative assessment toolkit (QFAT for short) which has come about following my research on and practice with mobile technologies, multimedia authoring, and formative assessment. The QFAT is made up of four approaches available on most smartphones, tablets, and laptops: making photos, taking screenshots, filming videos, and screencasting.

I believe that assessing learning is about understanding the where the learner is in a given moment and time and then providing the guidance and structure to develop that learning further. Each of these approaches allow teachers and learner to capture and create moments of learning, excerpts of understanding, and reflections of experience. These can be used to document the learning process while also creating artifacts for reflection and demonstrating growth over time.

Making Photos:

The camera is an extremely powerful tool that can capture all sorts of interesting moments and aspects of a learning experience. The room you are in, the activity being worked on, the people who are present, the weather outside, a calendar showing the date. While these things may not be the exact content or learning objective of a lesson, they are factors that were present at the time that may have contributed to the experience.

Taking Screenshots:

A screenshot captures whatever is happening on the device screen in a moment in time. Not all applications or built-in system tools have an 'export image' function. The screenshot creates the opportunity to quickly save things like web pages, dynamic activity in an app (like a simulation or game), or a design in progress in a content creation app.

Filming Videos:

A short video can quickly capture a lot about an activity and environment. Even if it is only 10-15 seconds long, that is the equivalent of about 120 - 180 photographs with audio!

Screencasting:

The nice thing about photos, screenshots, and videos, is that all of those media types usually end up in a single place on a device - the photo roll or gallery. Using an app like Explain Everything, iMovie, Windows Movie Maker, and so on, it is possible to arrange the previously collected artifacts on a single

timeline and create an annotated and narrated artifact of learning.

Just like the videos, a screencast does not need to be long. It does not need to be perfect or pretty either. It is just an authentic and representative artifact of learning whose contents can be captured easily and stitched together meaningfully by any learner with access to mobile technology.

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