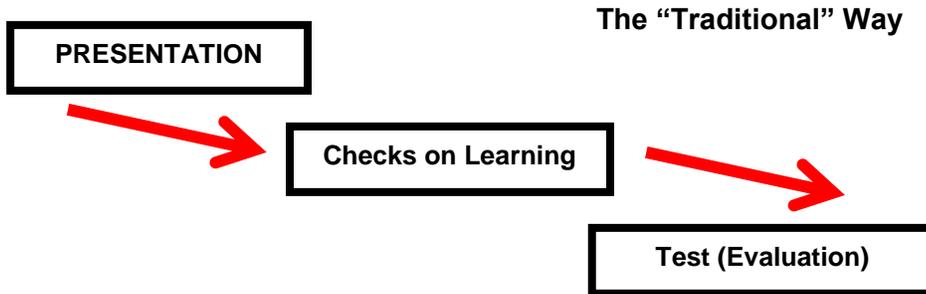


# Educational Support Cell (ESC)/TLDE Tips & Strategies

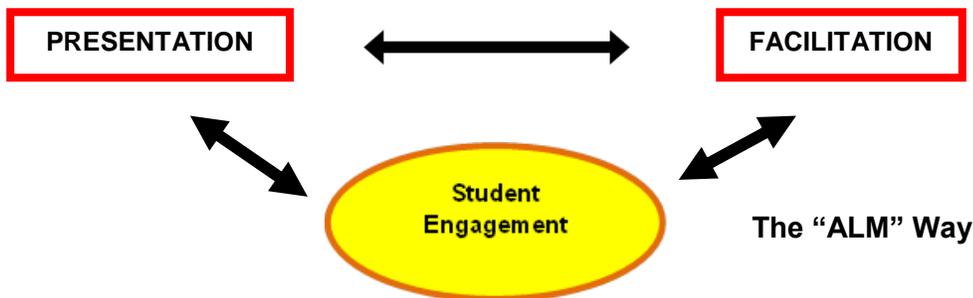
## What is Assessment, and why should I care?

Let's jump right in.....In the old (traditional) Army instructional model, the idea of assessment was pretty simple. I presented the information. I conducted some informal checks on learning, and I evaluated the students' performance. One size fits all. **Done!**



### ALM: Presentation versus Facilitation

As we moved to a more "facilitative" model, trying to do more with less, and trying to maximize learning in a time of limited resources, the instructional model changed. The old model is not "wrong," mind you, it is simply one option of many. The new model has the instructor as a key element in the process – looking to increase student participation and engagement (which helps to improve learning, understanding, and retention of knowledge) by mixing just the right amount of "presentation" with "facilitation." The former is more instructor-centric; the latter is more learner-centric.



The only way an instructor can accurately "mix" presentation with facilitation is to better "know" their audience – the learners. They must know their strengths and weakness – what they already know about the topic and what they need to know. They must be continually working to determine how much (and how well) people are learning the material so that they make the necessary adjustments in what and how they are teaching. **The only way that this can happen is through assessment.** It is simple, really –

**Do you know what they learned?**

**Do they know what they didn't learn?**

The ESC provides support for the uniform application of USAJFKSWCS educational processes across the Institution to include:

-Support to Curriculum & Instruction [Courses and Instructors];

-Support to Leadership & Professional Development Initiatives;

-Support to the development and implementation of program evaluation and assessment systems; and

-Support to the design and implementation of SOF Career Pathways.

For more information, contact Mr. Geoff Jones at

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### So ... Assessment : What it is

I once heard some army person say, “You assess people; you evaluate programs.” If only it were that easy, I would be finished here. In terms of the new USAJFKSWCS PAM 350-70-4 (currently in draft form).....well, you can read it here for yourself.

### **Appendix A, USAJFKSWCS PAM 350-70-4 (draft): Assessment Tools**

#### **A-1: Overview**

- **What is Assessment?** *Simply put, assessment is taking a measure of something. Assessment gives you data. Without assessment, it is difficult to “analyze” anything and even more difficult to “evaluate” it.*
- **What is the relationship of Assessment to Evaluation?** *When you assess something, you take the measure of it. In doing so, however, you have not yet “graded” it or “evaluated” it – not until you compare it to the standard by which you will “evaluate” it. For example, on the APFT, a time of 16:00 for the 2 mile run event is very good for a 50 year old Soldier, but is failure for an 18 year old Soldier. The “evaluation” of the “assessment” depends on the student, the course, the situation, and the standard. This does not mean that we should change standards to meet the student’s abilities, of course. The established standards should be based on the requirements and needs of the force – Soldiers must achieve those standards.*
- **Understanding the importance of feedback.** *By assessing, gathering data, breaking the data down (analysis), and evaluating the data against an established standard – the instructor or instructional leader has valuable information. However, if this information is not converted into “feedback,” then the exercise of assessment, analysis, and evaluation loses much of its “value.” The feedback may be formal or informal. The feedback may be formative or summative. The feedback may be for the benefit of the student’s (finding out what he/she knows or understands) or for the benefit of the instructor (determining if the current instructional strategies/methods are effective for this particular group of students). In any case, assessing for evaluative data, analyzing that data, and evaluating the data is of no use without having a plan for feedback.*

#### **Let’s Break it Down**

Assessment isn’t something you don’t do (yes, I used a double negative deliberately). It isn’t something that is done without a plan, and it shouldn’t be something that is accomplished and not utilized. Assessments are done---and done a bunch---but an assessment is not always an evaluation---though it can be.

#### *Sufficiently Confused?*

Evaluations can be an assessment, because you have to first assess a thing before you can pass judgement on it. But an assessment doesn’t always have to be evaluated---sometimes we do assessments to get an idea of what someone is thinking before we actually assign a grade to those thoughts. Typically, we will **evaluate** a student’s performance at some point during a course---but we should be **assessing** that performance continually, and then providing feedback.

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We need assessments to produce **data**, and assessment data is needed to truly evaluate a program or a person. We assess to gather data, we use assessment data to evaluate.

### The Assessment Matrix

To fully grasp the complexity of assessments, think of all assessments as falling within the matrix below.

	Formal	Informal
Formative	A	B
Summative	C	D

The instructional team decides to give a Module Critique at the end of the first week of instruction rather than waiting until the end of the course. *Module Critique* would most likely fall into **Box A**. It is Formative (the instructional team can adjust depending on results), and formal (given that it is typed up and handed out). If an instructor finishes up a few minutes early and says to his class, “so how do you think this course is going?” The module critique now resides in **Box B**.

An instructor asks students to give 3 main concepts they learned from the day’s event. This quick assessment falls in **Box B**. It is informal (an ask) and it is formative in nature—if the instructor feels the students missed some of the main points, he/she can follow-up the next day. If he were to give the same prompt (3 main concepts) and had students write them down and then he graded (i.e. evaluated) them that night and assigned a grade---this would fall in **Box C**.

Informal, summative (**Box D**) is more difficult, but it happens as well. It could be an instructional leader walks through the classrooms and notes that none of the computers are working. BOOM! An informal assessment that could bring a summative---end result—of said leader tracking down an IT person for some repairs.

### Why Assessments, Why Now?

As we at the SOCoE have continued to develop in our instructional prowess, we need to be more deliberate with all the assessments we choose to make in our classes and with our programs. Assessment isn’t using your “gut” to make a revision to the course—it is having a system and a process in place to collect data to inform decisions. We will be exploring the data points we should include in our daily decisions over the span of this spring and summer. **So how can an instructor use assessment informally to improve learning? Stay tuned in the next Tips.**

**Formal:** Planned and valid, formal assessments are like that test at the end of a module.

**Informal:** Planned or spontaneous, informal assessments are used to “get a feel”. Not sure learners have picked up a concept, ask them for a 1-minute quick write to define the topic and see.

**Formative:** Used “to form”; formative assessments are used to adjust teaching and flex to the needs of your learners.

**Summative:** Used “to sum up”; an end result.

**May:** Assessing Student Performance (Informal/Formative)  
**June:** Assessing Student Performance (Formal/Summative)  
**July:** Assessing Instructor Performance  
**August:** Assessing Program Performance