
Assessment in Montessori Classrooms

Workshop for Montessori Educators & Leaders



MONTESSORI
INSTITUTE
PRAGUE



with Lucie Urbančíková

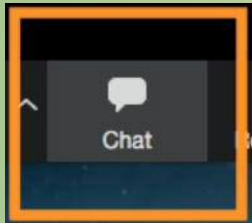
“Elephant in the Montessori classroom”



- "the elephant in the room" refers to a **significant, obvious, and uncomfortable issue** that everyone is aware of but no one is openly discussing.
- It's a metaphorical way of saying that a **crucial problem or topic is being avoided**, despite being very apparent.

What's the plan for this workshop?

1,5 hrs	Part one
15 min	Break
1,25 hrs	Part two



Write your questions
in the chat during
the workshop

What will you need?

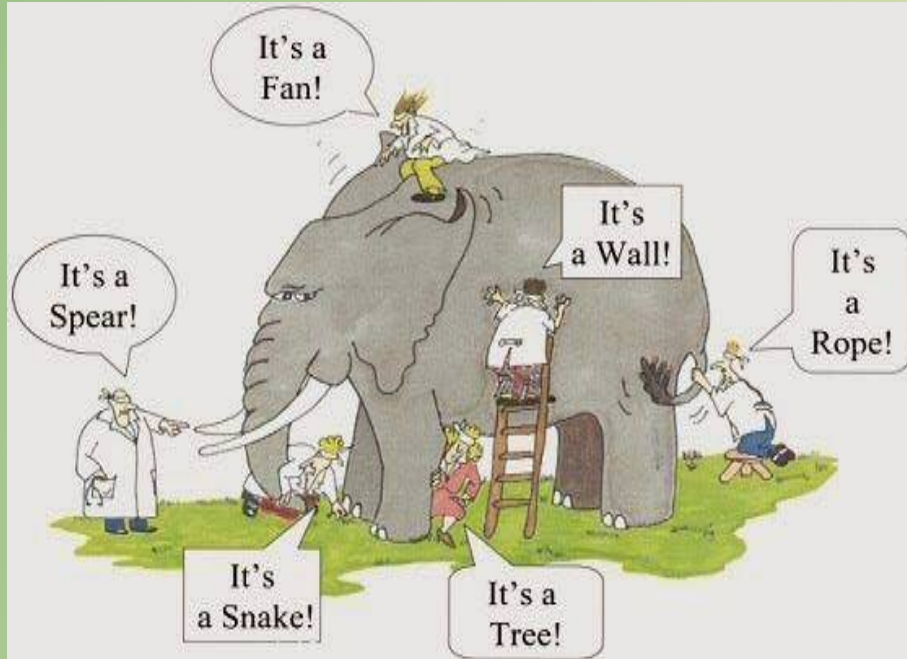


Open mindset



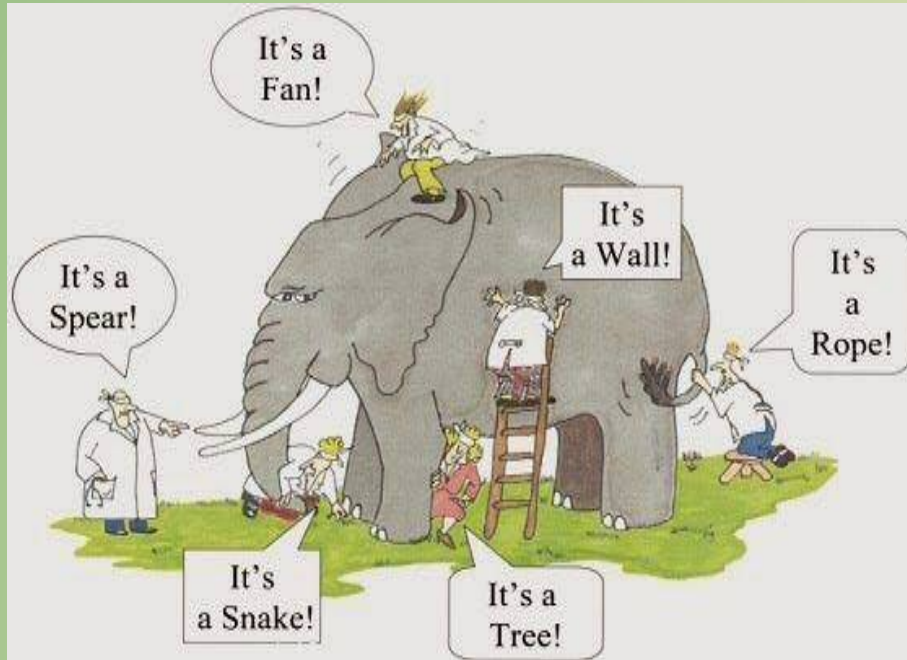
Pen and paper

Parable of the blind men and an elephant



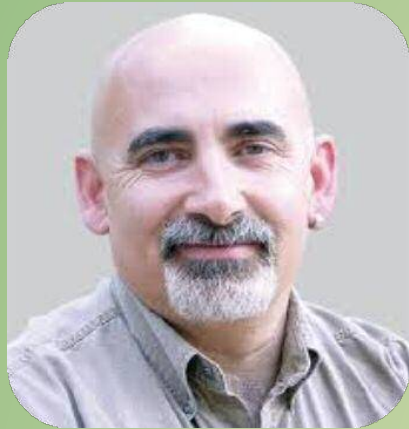
- Even when presented with a real elephant, each man could "see" only what he already believed to be true.
- The story intended to encourage learners to develop perspective awareness— that **each of us creates a unique view** of the world based on personal experience, language, and culture.

Parable of the blind men and an elephant



- Our goal today is to gather data about a assessment **from different perspectives.**
- This way we **get a better sense of the whole** and can make the best decisions **for our contexts.**

Necessary conditions for our learning today



**„Everything works somewhere,
but nothing works everywhere.“**

Dylan Wiliam (2011).
Embedded Formative Assessment



- Inspire each other
- Discuss
- Brainstorm together



- Stating why it cannot work for me
- Give advices
- Criticise

Who am I?

My background, experience and qualification for leading this workshop



Briefly about “personal me”



born and raised in
the Czech Republic



active language
learner



2010 & 2012



recharge being
active outdoors



and doing any type
of handywork

Briefly about “professional me”



M.Ed. in Experiential
education (US)

2003

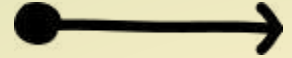


teaching English in
different settings



explore aspects
affecting L2 learning

2012



learning about
Montessori

2018



teaching Eng
(elementary)

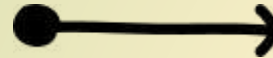
AMI AC 3-6, AC 6-12, AC 12-18

2019



teaching Eng
(adolescents)
English Coordinator
(1,5-15 yrs)

2022



member of **Bilingual
Montessori** team,
School curriculum
coordinator



developing & making
learning materials;
visible learning

Briefly about “professional me” - My 4 pillars

ESL

teaching

- EFL to children 6 - 15
- EFL/ESL methodology to teachers

methodology & materials dev't

- teaching materials
- learning materials

assessment

- formative
- summative
- long-term

mentoring

- children
- adults

Let's get started ;)

Get your pens and papers ready



Question

When you hear the word **ASSESSMENT**,
what is the first thing that comes to your mind?

- THINK and WRITE (1 min)
- SHARE in the Menti



Question

What is an example of ASSESSMENT or FEEDBACK you have received at any point in your life that really helped you?

- THINK and WRITE (1 min)

What made this assessment /feedback helpful?

- THINK and WRITE (1 min)
- SHARE in the breakout room of 2/3 (4 min)



Maria Montessori and Assessment

What do we know about her stance?



Maria Montessori & Assessment



- Maria Montessori's educational philosophy **emphasizes observing and understanding** the child's natural development, rather than relying on traditional assessment methods.
- She believed that education **should be tailored to each child's individual needs** and growth.
- In her book, *The Discovery of the Child* (1950), Montessori **discusses the importance of scientific observation** in education.

Maria Montessori & Assessment



- She **critiques the traditional approach** of merely collecting biometric data and instead advocates for a deeper understanding of the child's behavior and development.
- While Montessori did not focus extensively on formal assessment methods in her writings, **her emphasis on observation aligns with modern formative assessment practices.**
- Formative assessment involves **ongoing observation and feedback** to support and enhance student learning, which resonates with MM's approach to individualized education.

10 Myths about assessment

Keep your pens and papers handy



How to get the most out of this workshop?



- Take one blank piece of paper
- Make three columns & **WRITE your thoughts**

I think	Now I know	I want to explore more
Myth no. 1		
Myth no. 2		

The science behind THINK-PAIR-SHARE



- it is a **collaborative learning strategy** developed by Frank Lyman in 1981.
- It **encourages students to engage** in individual thinking, peer discussion, and group sharing to deepen understanding and enhance communication skills.

Educational benefits of the THINK phase:

- **promotes active involvement** from all students, including those who may be hesitant to speak in larger groups
- **makes the learning more durable** since it activates multiple brain areas
(eg. **Prefrontal Cortex**: Engaged in organizing thoughts, planning what to say or write, and self-monitoring, **Motor Cortex**: Activated when physically writing or speaking.)
- **leads to stronger and more retrievable memories - when you explain something in your own words**
(whether by speaking or writing, you are: **elaborating** on the concept (adding details, making connections) and **encoding** the information more deeply than passive listening or reading.)

Myth No. 1



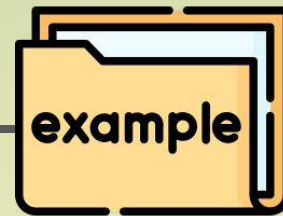
"Assessment conflicts with Montessori principles of independence and self-direction."



THINK & WRITE

- **Myth:** The process of assessment interferes with the child's independence and free choice.
- **Reality:** Assessment, when **done thoughtfully**, supports autonomy by **guiding self-reflection** and **fostering self-directed (autonomous) learning**.

Myth No. 1



“Assessment conflicts with Montessori principles of independence and self-direction.”



“If we only collect one data point, we can’t tell whether a student is improving, staying the same, or getting worse. It’s like trying to draw a line through a single point—you can’t determine the slope.”



Dylan Wiliam, *Embedded Formative Assessment*



- “As a student, I feel **much more independent when I know how I'm doing**, rather than just assuming. This way, I can monitor and adjust my work and progress over time.”
- Assessment comes in **many forms**—not just grades or percentages.

Myth No. 2



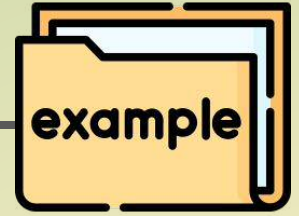
"Montessori students don't need to be assessed because they naturally develop."



THINK & WRITE

- **Myth:** Since Montessori students are self-directed, formal assessment isn't necessary.
- **Reality:** Even in Montessori environments, regular assessment is essential to monitor progress, adjust teaching, and guide learning.

Myth No. 2



"Montessori students don't need to be assessed because they naturally develop."

- Myth no. 1 argumentation



- Because many—if not most—of us have had negative personal experiences with assessment at school, **we may worry** that implementing assessment routines **could harm our students**
- When **assessment is carried out properly**, it doesn't hinder students' natural development—it **actually promotes their growth** and helps them learn how to overcome obstacles, work with their mistakes

Myth No. 3



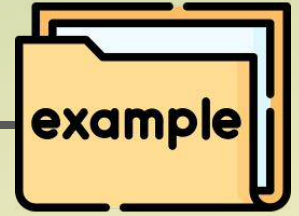
"Observation alone is enough for effective formative assessment in Montessori classrooms."



THINK & WRITE

- **Myth:** Maria Montessori used observation as a formative tool, and I use this tool as well, so that's enough for effective assessment.
- **Reality:** While observation is a key component of formative assessment, it should be supplemented with purposeful reflection, feedback, and strategies that actively involve the student in understanding their growth and next steps.

Myth No. 3



“Observation alone is enough for effective formative assessment in Montessori classrooms.”

- While Maria Montessori emphasized observation as the key tool for assessing children's progress, her approach often meant that the **assessment remained primarily with the guides**—informing their decisions, but not always explicitly communicating the observations to the child in a structured way.



- teacher observations not shared with the students may not be enough to help students **understand their own learning process and feel ownership over it**
- teacher **observations** are only **one of many tools** that provide students with a safe and growth oriented feedback

Myth No. 4



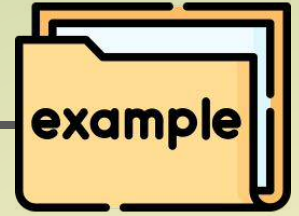
"If I assess my students, it will cause unnecessary stress or competition."



THINK & WRITE

- **Myth:** Any form of assessment will create stress or lead to unhealthy competition among students.
- **Reality:** When framed positively, assessment can be a tool for self-improvement and support, not competition.

Myth No. 4



"If I assess my students, it will cause unnecessary stress or competition."



- If we rely solely on **summative assessment**, it most likely creates stress for students.
- In contrast, using a **formative approach**—with clear outcomes that document both process and progress—reduces stress in the classroom. In fact, the opposite tends to happen: students often want *more* of this kind of feedback.
- One example for all - David & Simon
- **this approach does not create dependency on external validation, but supports ownership of learning**

Myth No. 5



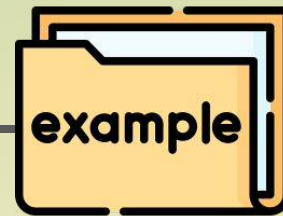
"Assessment is only necessary for grades and formal reports."



THINK & WRITE

- **Myth:** Assessment should only be used for assigning grades or writing formal reports.
- **Reality:** Formative assessment is about gathering feedback to inform teaching and help students grow, not just about grades.

Myth No. 5



“Assessment is only necessary for grades and formal reports.”

ASSESSMENT	of Learning (summative)	for Learning (formative)	as Learning (developmental)
Purpose	Measure achievement at the end	Improve learning during the process	Promote self-awareness and self-regulation in learners
Focus	What has been achieved	What needs to happen next	How the student learns and reflects
Used by	Teachers, schools, policymakers	Teachers and students	Students (guided by teachers)

Myth No. 6



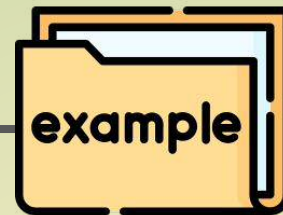
"Assessment is too time-consuming and does not yield meaningful results."



THINK & WRITE

- **Myth:** Assessment takes up too much of the teacher's time without providing useful information.
- **Reality:** Well-structured formative assessment can be efficient and provide crucial insights that improve teaching and learning.

Myth No. 6



"Assessment is too time-consuming and does not yield meaningful results."



- Yes, assessment can be time-consuming—but it doesn't have to be.
- It becomes meaningful and efficient when you're **clear about why** you're assessing and **who benefits from it**.

"Assessment is not only a tool for students to understand their own progress—it also **provides teachers with crucial evidence** about what students have learned, what they misunderstand, and what needs to happen next. Effective formative assessment helps teachers **adjust instruction** in real time and target support where it's most needed."

– Adapted from Dylan Wiliam (2011), *Embedded Formative Assessment*

Myth No. 7



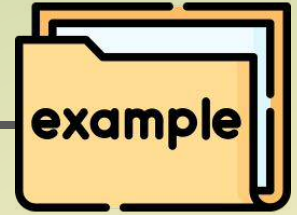
"Assessment is the teacher's responsibility,
not the students'."



THINK & WRITE

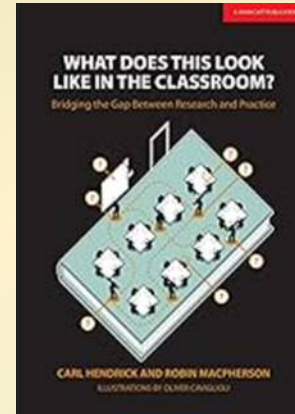
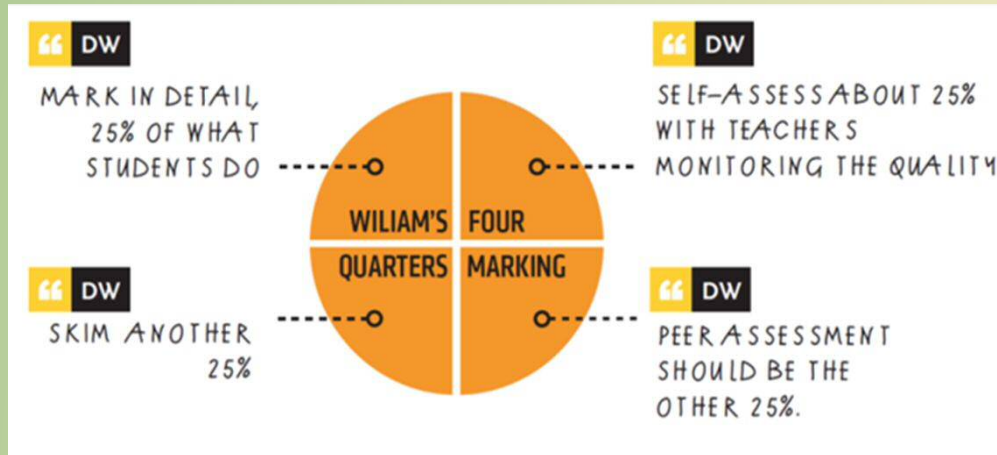
- **Myth:** Teachers are the sole assessors, and students have no role in the assessment process.
- **Reality:** Formative assessment should be a **collaborative** process, with students engaging in self-assessment, peer feedback, and goal-setting.

Myth No. 7



"Assessment is the teacher's responsibility,
not the students'."

- **Dylan Wiliam** introduced the concept of "Four Quarters Marking" in the book **What Does This Look Like in the Classroom?** by Carl Hendrick and Robin Macpherson



Myth No. 8



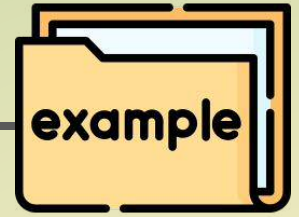
“Assessment should only happen
at the end of a unit or term.”



THINK & WRITE

- **Myth:** Assessment should only take place at the end of a lesson or unit.
- **Reality:** Formative assessment is continuous, happening throughout the learning process to inform teaching and provide ongoing feedback.

Myth No. 8



“Assessment should only happen at the end of a unit or term.”

- one time assessment has no value (as explained in more detail in Example of Myth no. 1)



- **“The art of assessment lies in skillfully combining summative assessment—what has been achieved—with formative assessment—what needs to happen next. To do this effectively, we, as teachers, must be open to experimentation and willing to learn from our mistakes. But in the end, it’s all worth it. A well-functioning assessment system is a true gem in the classroom, fostering the best possible conditions for learning.”**



Myth No. 9



"Formative assessment only involves feedback on what students get wrong."



THINK & WRITE

- **Myth:** Formative assessment is about finding mistakes and correcting them.
- **Reality:** It should also celebrate progress, reinforce strengths, and encourage students to build on what they already know.

Myth No. 10



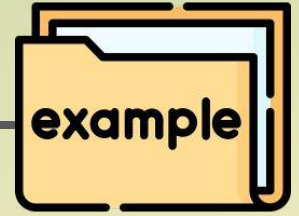
"Formative assessment isn't useful
in mixed-age classrooms."



THINK & WRITE

- **Myth:** In a mixed-age Montessori classroom, it's too difficult to assess students effectively.
- **Reality:** Formative assessment is even more valuable in such settings, as it helps track individual progress and tailor learning to each student's needs.

Myth No. 10



"Formative assessment isn't useful
in mixed-age classrooms."



- Assessment works **similarly** in same-age and mixed-age classrooms and brings significant benefits to both setups.
- What I appreciate about mixed-age and mixed-ability groups is that they **push me to think** about assessment **in a scaffolded way** - thus thinking more systematically.

Let's reflect the 10 myths

Have your notes ready



My shift in thinking about assessment

Based on your three-column notes, which myth and its explanation did you find the **most meaningful or significant to you personally?**



- THINK and WRITE (1 min)
- SHARE in the breakout room of 2/3 (4 min)
- SHARE in the chat

To conclude...

Let's tie our experience



Key terminology related to assessment

Assessment of learning		Assessment for learning	
Summative	Evaluative	Formative	Diagnostic
to sort and classify students for university and employers	to monitor national standards	to support and help students to learn by providing feedback	to support and help students to learn by diagnosing difficulties
to determine what courses students should take in school	to make teachers, administrators and politicians accountable		
to report on achievement to students themselves and parents			

What is the biggest challenge of assessment implementation?

The "Iceberg Model" developed by **K. Anders Ericsson** is typically used to illustrate the idea that human behavior is influenced by factors that are not immediately visible or apparent.

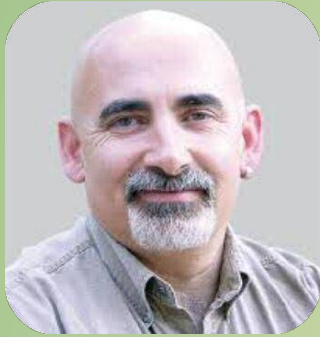


The visible part of the iceberg represents observable behaviors (what we can see on the surface)

The hidden part beneath the surface is larger and represents the deeper, underlying factors that influence those behaviors:

- **knowledge**
- **beliefs**
- **mindsets**
- **skills**
- **attitudes**
- **cultural influences**

What is the biggest challenge of assessment implementation?



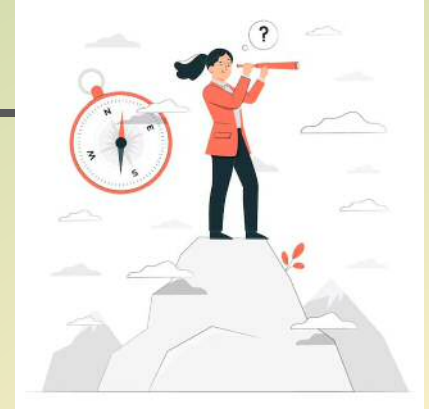
“In order to implement formative approach to assessment, a teacher must undergo **a deep inner transformation**—one that shifts their role from an "evaluator" to a "facilitator of learning."

- Dylan Wiliam

What are your possible next steps?

Start with yourself

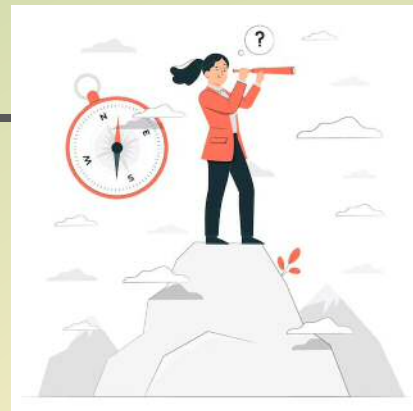
- Begin a dedicated **Assessment Reflection Notebook**.
 - Write down **everything** that comes to your mind about assessment—thoughts, doubts, experiences, frustrations, successes.
 - Be **100% honest** with yourself.
 - This is **your space** to explore your beliefs and practices openly.
- **Clarify your own stance** and answer the following questions
 - “What do I really believe about assessment?”
 - “What role does it play in my practice?”



What are your possible next steps?

Start the Conversation

- **Plan an informal get-together** with your colleagues.
- **Share** reflections, compare experiences, and explore how your school approaches assessment.
- Use **can use one of the myths** we uncovered today as a starting point for discussion.



Let's remember:

"Big change starts with small, intentional steps."

Thank you for your attention

Wishing you the best in all your assessment efforts!



