

Creative Assessment

Religious School teachers do not give many quizzes or tests, but as teachers we still have need for assessment. We want to know if our students have mastered a subject before we move on; we want to know if progress is being made; we want to know if our teaching is effective. So we turn to creative or informal assessments such as the ones below:

- **Thumbs Sideways** This technique is easy, quick and adaptable. Simply ask your class how they are feeling about the lesson. Are they getting it? Thumbs up, thumbs down, or thumbs sideways. Are they learning something new? Thumbs up, thumbs down or thumbs sideways. As students get used to the technique, they will become better self-assessors.
- **Portfolios** This method requires each student to start the year with a three-hole binder with which to contain their work. Often this can be provided by the parents as part of the school supplies. Throughout the year, the teacher selects items that are exemplary of students' work to keep in the portfolios. Over time, the portfolios will reveal the different ways individual students have grown and changed in their learning.
- **Ticket Out** End class by having each student tell one new thing he or she learned in the lesson. This also serves as a review for the whole class.
- **Ask Questions** Sprinkle your lessons with questions that call for students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the material.
- **Rubrics** Try giving students self-assessment rubrics, particularly for use after group work. They fill out a form judging how well they contributed to the group and how well their group worked together.
- **Real World** Ask students to perform, create, or develop something new with the information they have learned. Or ask them to perform their learning in "real world" situations such as leading t'fillah. Their work doesn't have to be scored, but the quality and content of their output will allow you to glean how well they have mastered the material.
- **Journaling** Students can reflect on their learning through independent writing in journals. Devote a few minutes to journal writing at the end of each class time and you will find your students quickly become adept at showing what they've learned through their written insights.
- **Games** Informal play is a popular way to assess student learning. Games such as "Jewpardy," Hebrew baseball, and Hebrew hangman give you a read on class learning.