



Uncovering Student Ideas in Science, Volume 3: Another 25 Formative Assessment Probes

By Page Keeley, Francis Eberle, Chad Dorsey

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Since publication of Volume 1 of this series, thousands of teachers have been using these innovative classroom tools to improve student learning in science. Following in the footsteps of the first two volumes, this new book provides short, easy-to-administer probes that help teachers determine what misconceptions students bring to the classroom about the nature of science and about physical, life, Earth, and space sciences. This volume is an invaluable resource for classroom teachers, preservice teachers, professional developers, and college science and preservice faculty.

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Editorial Review

Review

This book is an great book to have in your science library. It is a necessity for any Science Teacher K-12. The probes are assessment tools that every teacher can use to ask questions varying in degree. These probes can provoke lively discussion, encourage argumentation in small groups, and also support students in thinking on their own. All 25 sections in this book are presented in a clear and concise way. It is easy to read and provides teachers with ideas of how to vary their instructional strategies. --Reviewed by: Christina Ramsey on June 23, 2009

Use in a hands-on workshop. I used the series Uncovering Student Ideas in Science in two of my workshops on lecture-free teaching. These sessions were for high school and middle school science teachers. In one instance, the teachers (with whom I had worked previously) picked one of the formative assessments, tried it in their classrooms before the scheduled workshop date, and reported to the rest of the group about how it worked. In the second instance, I brought the books to the workshop and gave the teachers about 30 minutes to find an assessment appropriate for one of their classes, make copies for the other participants, and try the assessment on the workshop participants. In both cases each presentation was followed by critique and suggestions from other workshop participants. --Reviewed by: Bonnie Wood (Presque Isle, ME) on July 24, 2008

Third Book in the Series Doesn't Disappoint. Our NSTA president, Page Keeley, and colleagues have again provided an excellent source for helping determine student conceptualizations and understanding of various science topics. This is the third book in the series, and having used the prior two I find this one of similar quality. Uncovering Student Ideas books are filled with short science scenarios that have students make an educated guess in answering a question regarding a phenomenon. Then, and this is the extremely important part, students must provide in writing their reason for choosing their answer. An example of a classic activity will help illustrate the book's structure. On page 57 is the student handout (which may also be projected to save paper) asking students to guess the fewest number of wires a person would need to make a light bulb light, given the bulb and a battery. Students can pick 1, 2, 3, or 4 pieces of wire. Then they are asked to Explain your thinking about how to light the bulb. Draw a picture to support your explanation. I use these books with my STEM graduate students who teach in elementary classrooms as visiting scientists as well as their partner teachers. It is often hard to remember what you didn't know and misconceptions you might have held as a young student. The multitude of examples in the books provide my university students with a unique look into how their elementary students might look at a concept completely differently than they would ever expect. The graduate students use the scenarios as pre- and post-assessment activities in their classrooms. While most of them don't need the follow-up science concept background information provided, their classroom teaching partners find that information valuable. Even some of the graduate student scientists have found some of the scenarios to be challenging and many workshop discussions have been generated through the use of the activities. Whether used for pre-assessment, formative assessment, or summative assessment, the information you will get from using the activities in these books will inform your teaching and enlighten you to what has been learned and what still needs further clarification. --Reviewed by: Paul Allan (Moscow, ID) on July 22, 2008

About the Author

Page Keeley is senior science program director, Francis Eberle is executive director, and Chad Dorsey is a science specialist at the Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance, where they develop, coordinate, and

implement science education initiatives at the state and national levels. Combined, they have more than 35 years of teaching experience in middle and high school science. Page Keeley is 2008-2009 President of the National Science Teachers Association.

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