Assessment for Learning:

Classroom Practices That Maximize Student Success

Presented by

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### Indicators of Sound Classroom Assessment Practice

#### Keys to Assessment Quality and Teacher Competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keys to Quality</th>
<th>Teacher Competencies</th>
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</table>
| **1. Clear Purposes**<br>Assessment processes and results serve clear and appropriate purposes | a. Teachers understand who the users and uses of classroom assessment information are and know their information needs.  
b. Teachers understand the relationship between assessment and student motivation and craft assessment experiences to maximize motivation.  
c. Teachers use classroom assessment processes and results formatively (assessment for learning).  
d. Teachers use classroom assessment results summatively (assessment of learning) to inform someone beyond the classroom about students' achievement as of a particular point in time.  
e. Teachers have a comprehensive plan over time for integrating assessment for and of learning in the classroom. |
| **2. Clear Targets**<br>Assessments reflect clear and valued student learning targets | a. Teachers have clear learning targets for students; they know how to turn broad statements of content standards into classroom-level targets.  
b. Teachers understand the various types of learning targets they hold for students.  
c. Teachers select learning targets focused on the most important things students need to know and be able to do.  
d. Teachers have a comprehensive plan over time for assessing learning targets. |
| **3. Sound Design**<br>Learning targets are translated into assessments that yield accurate results | a. Teachers understand what the various assessment methods are.  
b. Teachers choose assessment methods that match intended learning targets.  
c. Teachers design assessments that serve intended purposes.  
d. Teachers sample learning appropriately in their assessments.  
e. Teachers write assessment questions of all types well.  
f. Teachers avoid sources of mismeasurement that bias results. |
| **4. Effective Communication**<br>Assessment results are managed well and communicated effectively | a. Teachers record assessment information accurately, keep it confidential, and appropriately combine and summarize it for reporting (including grades). Such summary accurately reflects current level of student learning.  
b. Teachers select the best reporting option (grades, narratives, portfolios, conferences) for each context (learning targets and users).  
c. Teachers interpret and use standardized test results correctly.  
d. Teachers effectively communicate assessment results to students.  
e. Teachers effectively communicate assessment results to a variety of audiences outside the classroom, including parents, colleagues, and other stakeholders. |
| **5. Student Involvement**<br>Students are involved in their own assessment | a. Teachers make learning targets clear to students.  
b. Teachers involve students in assessing, tracking, and setting goals for their own learning.  
c. Teachers involve students in communicating about their own learning. |

Table 1.2, “Indicators of Sound Classroom Assessment Practice,” comes from *Classroom Assessment for Student Learning: Doing It Right—Using It Well*, page 27.
Assessment for Learning: Practices That Maximize Student Success

Goals of the Session
• Create a common understanding of formative assessment
• Understand key findings on formative assessment’s power to impact achievement
• Know what assessment for learning practices are, how they connect to research findings, and how they connect to current practices

Discussion Questions
1. How would you define the term formative assessment?

2. What forms does assessment information take in your classroom? (Grade, symbol, number, percent, raw score, comment, other?)

The content of this presentation is based on the book, Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning, © 2009 ETS Assessment Training Institute.
Review of Research on Effects of Formative Assessment

“Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment”
Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam
An excerpt from Phi Delta Kappan, 80(2), 139 – 148

Does Improving Formative Assessment Raise Standards?

A research review published in 1986, concentrating primarily on classroom assessment work for children with mild handicaps, surveyed a large number of innovations, from which 23 were selected. Those chosen satisfied the condition that quantitative evidence of learning gains was obtained, both for those involved in the innovation and for a similar group not so involved. Since then, many more papers have been published describing similarly careful quantitative experiments. Our own review has selected at least 20 studies. (The number depends on how rigorous a set of selection criteria are applied.) All these studies show that innovations that include strengthening the practice of formative assessment produce significant and often substantial learning gains. These studies range over age groups from 5-year-olds to university undergraduates, across several school subjects, and over several countries.

For research purposes, learning gains of this type are measured by comparing the average improvements in the test scores of pupils involved in an innovation with the range of scores that are found for typical groups of pupils on these same tests. The ratio of the former divided by the latter is known as the effect size. Typical effect sizes of the formative assessment experiments were between 0.4 and 0.7. These effect sizes are larger than most of those found for educational interventions. The following examples illustrate some practical consequences of such large gains.

- An effect size of 0.4 would mean that the average pupil involved in an innovation would record the same achievement as a pupil in the top 35% of those not so involved.
- An effect size gain of 0.7 in the recent international comparative studies in mathematics would have raised the score of a nation in the middle of the pack of 41 countries (e.g., the U.S.) to one of the top five.

Many of these studies arrive at another important conclusion: that improved formative assessment helps low achievers more than other students and so reduces the range of achievement while raising achievement overall. A notable recent example is a study devoted entirely to low-achieving students and students with learning disabilities, which shows that frequent assessment feedback helps both groups enhance their learning. Any gains for such pupils could be particularly important. Furthermore, pupils who come to see themselves as unable to learn usually cease to take school seriously. Many become disruptive; others resort to truancy. Such young people are likely to be alienated from society and to become the sources and the victims of serious social problems.

How Can We Improve Formative Assessment?

The self-esteem of pupils. A report of schools in Switzerland states that “a number of pupils . . . are content to ‘get by.’ . . . Every teacher who wants to practice formative assessment must reconstruct the teaching contracts so as to counteract the habits acquired by his pupils.”

The ultimate user of assessment information that is elicited in order to improve learning is the pupil. There are negative and positive aspects of this fact. The negative aspect is illustrated by the preceding quotation. When the classroom culture focuses on rewards, “gold stars,” grades, or class ranking, then pupils look for ways to obtain the best marks rather than to improve their learning. . . . The positive aspect of students’ being the primary users of the information gleaned from formative assessments is that negative outcomes—such as
an obsessive focus on competition and the attendant fear of failure on the part of low achievers—are not inevitable. What is needed is a culture of success, backed by a belief that all pupils can achieve. In this regard, formative assessment can be a powerful weapon if it is communicated in the right way. While formative assessment can help all pupils, it yields particularly good results with low achievers by concentrating on specific problems with their work and giving them a clear understanding of what is wrong and how to put it right. . . . In summary, the message can be stated as follows: feedback to any pupil should be about the particular qualities of his or her work, with advice on what he or she can do to improve, and should avoid comparisons with other pupils.

Self-assessment by pupils. Many successful innovations have developed self- and peer-assessment by pupils as ways of enhancing formative assessment, and such work has achieved some success with pupils from age 5 upward. This link of formative assessment to self-assessment is not an accident; indeed it is inevitable. . . .

Thus, self-assessment by pupils, far from being a luxury, is in fact an essential component of formative assessment. When anyone is trying to learn, feedback about the effort has three elements: recognition of the desired goal, evidence about present position, and some understanding of a way to close the gap between the two. All three must be understood to some degree by anyone before he or she can take action to improve learning. . . .

Thus we conclude: if formative assessment is to be productive, pupils should be trained in self-assessment so that they can understand the main purposes of their learning and thereby grasp what they need to do to achieve.

The evolution of effective teaching. The research studies referred to above show very clearly that effective programs of formative assessment involve far more than the addition of a few observations and tests to an existing program. They require careful scrutiny of all the main components of a teaching plan. Indeed, it is clear that instruction and formative assessment are indivisible.

. . . Tasks (for classroom work and homework) have to be justified in terms of the learning aims that they serve, and they can work well only if opportunities for students to communicate their evolving understanding are built into the planning. Discussion, observation of activities, and marking of written work can all be used to provide those opportunities, but it is important to look at or listen carefully to the talk, the writing, and the actions through which pupils develop and display the state of their understanding. Thus we maintain that opportunities for pupils to express their understanding should be designed into any piece of teaching, for this will initiate the interaction through which formative assessment aids learning.

Reported gains in student achievement attributable to formative assessment practices:

Important points about effective formative assessment practices:
What Gives Formative Assessment Its Power?

What practices do Black & Wiliam recommend as necessary to attain the achievement gains they noted?

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•

What other researchers have to say about formative assessment:

“Formative assessment, therefore, is essentially feedback (Ramaprasad, 1983) both to the teachers and to the pupil about present understanding and skill development in order to determine the way forward” (Harlen & James, 1997, p. 369).

“[Formative assessment] refers to assessment that is specifically intended to provide feedback on performance to improve and accelerate learning” (Sadler, 1998, p. 77).

“An assessment is formative to the extent that the information from the assessment is fed back within the system and actually used to improve the performance of the system in some way” (Wiliam & Leahy, 2007, p. 31).

“Formative assessment is defined as assessment that is carried out during the instructional process for the purpose of improving teaching or learning. ...What makes formative assessment formative is that it is immediately used to make adjustments so as to form new learning” (Shepard, 2008, p. 281).

After reviewing these definitions and reading the excerpt from “Inside the Black Box,” are there any modifications you might make to your definition of formative assessment? If so, write your revised definition here:

Definitions from *Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning*, page 5:

**Formative assessment**
Formal and informal process teachers and students use to gather evidence for the purpose of improving learning

**Summative assessment**
Assessments that provide evidence of student achievement for the purpose of making a judgment about student competence or program effectiveness
### Formative or Summative?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of assessment</th>
<th>What is the purpose?</th>
<th>Who will use the information?</th>
<th>How will it be used?</th>
<th>Is the use formative or summative?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State/provincial test</td>
<td>Measure level of achievement on state/provincial content standards</td>
<td>State (US)</td>
<td>Determine AYP</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>District, Teacher Teams</td>
<td>Determine program effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify percentage of students meeting performance standards on state/provincial</td>
<td>State/Province</td>
<td>Comparison of schools/districts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>content standards</td>
<td>District, Teacher Teams</td>
<td>Develop programs/interventions for groups or individuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District benchmark, interim, or common</td>
<td>Measure level of achievement toward state/provincial content standards</td>
<td>District, Teacher Teams</td>
<td>Determine program effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>common assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td>District, Teacher Teams</td>
<td>Identify program needs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify students needing additional help</td>
<td>District, Teacher Teams, Teachers</td>
<td>Plan interventions for groups or individuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom assessment</td>
<td>Measure level of achievement on learning targets taught</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Determine report card grade</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diagnose student strengths and areas needing reteaching</td>
<td>Teacher Teams, Teachers</td>
<td>Revise teaching plans for next year/semester</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Plan further instruction/differentiate instruction for these students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understand strengths and areas needing work</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Provide feedback to students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self-assess, set goals for further study/work</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Program = curriculum, texts/resources, and pedagogy

Program analysis:
- Are we teaching to the right content standards/learning targets?
- Do we have sufficient texts and other resources?
- Are our teaching strategies effective?
Balancing Formative and Summative Uses

1. Referring to the chart “Formative or Summative?” on page 5, identify which assessment uses are present in your school and district.

2. Discuss: Are formative and summative uses in balance? If not, what modifications might you recommend? With whom might you share your recommendations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended Modification</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
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</table>
Who Uses Classroom Assessment Information, and How?

Directions:
1. Beginning with the person whose birthday is closest to today and moving clockwise around the table, assign the following roles: student, parent, teacher, principal, athletic coach, academic counselor.

2. Spend three to five minutes listing the decisions your “role” might make on the basis of classroom assessment information.
   My role is a ________________. The decisions I might make on the basis of classroom assessment information include:

3. Beginning with the student, share your list at your table. While listening to the decisions listed by all members of your group, please pay attention to thoughts you have.

4. When all roles have shared, please identify the conclusions you are drawing while participating in this discussion.
Identifying Teachers’ and Students’ Information Needs

Formative Assessment in Teachers’ Hands

What are teachers’ information needs?

What formative assessment practices address these needs?

Formative Assessment in Students’ Hands

What are students’ information needs?

What formative assessment practices address those needs?

Assessment for Learning

Formative assessment practices that include the student as crucial decision-maker.
Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning

The seven strategies answer three questions phrased from the student’s point of view: Where am I going? Where am I now?; and How can I close the gap? As you read through these strategies, note that many are not new—they reflect practices that have been around for years. What may be new is their intentional use, focusing on the student as the most influential decision maker in your classroom.

Where Am I Going?

Strategy 1: Provide students with a clear and understandable vision of the learning target. Motivation and achievement both increase when instruction is guided by clearly defined targets. Activities that help students answer the question, “What’s the learning?” set the stage for all further formative assessment actions.

Strategy 2: Use examples and models of strong and weak work. Carefully chosen examples of the range of quality can create and refine students’ understanding of the learning goal by helping students answer the questions, “What defines quality work?” and “What are some problems to avoid?”

Where Am I Now?

Strategy 3: Offer regular descriptive feedback. Effective feedback shows students where they are on their path to attaining the intended learning. It answers for students the questions, “What are my strengths?”; “What do I need to work on?” and “Where did I go wrong and what can I do about it?”

Strategy 4: Teach students to self-assess and set goals. The information provided in effective feedback models the kind of evaluative thinking we want students to be able to do themselves. Strategy 4 teaches students to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to set goals for further learning. It helps them answer the questions, “What am I good at?”; “What do I need to work on?” and “What should I do next?”

How Can I Close the Gap?

Strategy 5: Design lessons to focus on one learning target or aspect of quality at a time. When assessment information identifies a need, we can adjust instruction to target that need. In this strategy, we scaffold learning by narrowing the focus of a lesson to help students master a specific learning goal or to address specific misconceptions or problems.

Strategy 6: Teach students focused revision. This is a companion to Strategy 5—when a concept, skill, or competence proves difficult for students, we can let them practice it in smaller segments, and give them feedback on just the aspects they are practicing. This strategy allows students to revise their initial work with a focus on a manageable number of learning targets or aspects of quality.

Strategy 7: Engage students in self-reflection, and let them keep track of and share their learning. Long-term retention and motivation increase when students track, reflect on, and communicate about their learning. In this strategy, students look back on their journey, reflecting on their learning and sharing their achievement with others.

“Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning,” is reprinted with permission from J. Chappuis, Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning (Portland, OR: ETS Assessment Training Institute, 2009), pp. 11 – 13.
What Do You Already Do?

1. After reading through the Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning, make an inventory of practices and activities you currently use that match up with one or more of the strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>My Practice/Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Provide students with a clear and understandable vision of the learning target.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7: Engage students in self-reflection, and let them keep track of and share their learning.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. Discuss with a partner or team: Which strategies do you currently use most often? Least often?

3. What connections do you see between the strategies and the high-impact formative assessment practices described by researchers?
References


