
Using Formative Assessment in Instruction



Office of Educational Accountability

The emphasis in formative assessment is on **a process during Instruction** rather than a sit-down test administration. Formative assessment is often viewed as “good instructional practice,” or “formative instruction,” or “formative strategies.” Formative strategies are targeted to provide feedback to the teacher **and** student, not necessarily to produce a grade or a score, and therefore are sometimes called assessment *for* learning (as opposed to an assessment *of* learning).

Formative assessment is an intentional and systematic process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust on-going teaching and learning, and to improve students’ achievement of the intended instructional outcomes.

CCSSO, 2007

The hallmark of formative assessment—instant feedback—allows teachers to instantly adjust their instruction and interventions. This allows for a seamless integration of assessment and instructional strategies. While formative strategies are informal (i.e. not standardized assessments), they can be planned into teacher’s daily schedule. Many teachers already employ formative strategies – whenever they spontaneously take a poll of their students’ understanding or use anecdotal evidence to target instruction for an individual student. Other examples of formative assessment strategies are:

Teacher observations

- Teacher questioning and class discussions
- Analysis of student work (graded and non-graded)
- Brainstorming students’ prior knowledge
- Exit questions
- Voting
- Reflection
- Student self-assessment
- Peer assessment (student-to-student)

Overall, formative assessment should promote reflection for both the student and teacher.

- Student: *What do I need to learn before I understand this completely?*
- Teacher: *What learning comes next for this student? Is this student challenged enough? Is this student falling behind?*

formative/benchmark/summative—to identifying the data need—to plan/support/monitor/verify learning. Also see the *By Purpose* matrix in DPI’s *Balanced Assessment System* chart (<http://dpi.wi.gov/oea/pdf/balsystem.pdf>).