

## *Assessment Literacy: From Theory to Practice*



Alaska Staff Development Network

### Implementing Classroom Formative Assessment Strategies

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*"...the primary purpose of  
assessment is to inform teaching  
and improve learning, not to sort  
and select students or to justify a  
grade."*

McTighe and Ferrara

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### How do you know what they know?

What data do you collect to:

- verify student understanding?
- monitor progress?
- inform instruction,  
curriculum or program  
needs?



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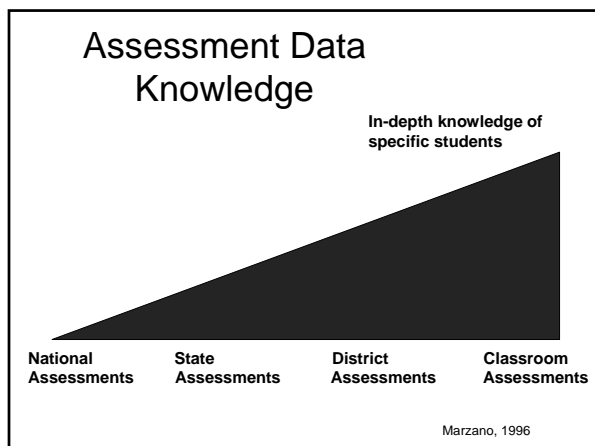
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### Balanced Assessment System

“To maximize student success, assessment must be seen as an **instructional tool** for use while learning is occurring, and as an **accountability tool** to determine if learning has occurred. Because both purposes are important, they must be in balance.”

*From **Balanced Assessment: The Key to Accountability and Improved Student Learning**, NEA (2003)*

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### Comprehensive Assessment System

	Summative ←	→ Formative		
TYPE	State/National Summative Assessment	District Level Summative Assessment	Interim Common Assessment	Classroom Formative Assessment
WHEN	Annually	Annually, Bi-annually semester	Semester, Monthly, Unit	Daily
PURPOSE	Accountability, Ranks, School Improvement	Identify groups of at-risk students, Entrance and Exit Criteria, PD needs, Curricular and Programmatic Changes	Collaboratively developed and Curriculum embedded, track proficiency towards standards	Provides on-going student and teacher feedback of current levels of understanding and learning needs
WHAT	SBA, NWEA, ACT, SAT, MAP, CAT, Terra Nova, NAEP, TIMSS	Benchmarks, Pre/post tests	End of unit tests, projects, Performance tasks, Aims Web	Effective questioning, descriptive feedback, self assessment, reflection

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## Assessment in Support of Learning

Assessments must:

- go beyond merely providing judgments about student performance to providing **rich descriptions of student performance**,
- evolve from being isolated events to becoming events that happen in **ongoing** series to reveal patterns,
- go beyond merely informing instructional decisions of teachers to **informing decisions also made by students**.

Rick Stiggins, 2006

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## Using Data to Identify Learning Gaps

Formative assessment can identify specific students' learning gaps at a time when the learning is still taking place and timely interventions can be made.



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## Using Unpacked Standards and Learning Targets

- ❑ A *Learning Target* is any achievement expectation we have for students *on the path* toward meeting a standard.
- ❑ It specifically states what we want the students to learn and be able to do.
- ❑ *Learning Targets* should be formatively assessed to monitor progress toward meeting a standard.

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## Formative Assessment

(Assessment FOR Learning)



- Includes instructionally embedded activities
- Usually teacher/locally developed
- Yields rich diagnostic information
- Happens while material is being taught
- Informs and focuses instructional decisions
- Isn't used for grades

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## Formative Assessment

CCSSO FAST SCASS

*Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended outcomes.*

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## Crucial Distinction

**Assessment for Learning:**  
**How can we use assessment to help students learn more?**  
**(formative)**

**Assessment of Learning:**  
**How much have students learned at a particular point in time?**  
**(summative)**

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## Formative Assessment

It is widely and empirically argued that formative assessment has the *greatest impact* on learning and achievement.

Ministry of Education, Wellington, New Zealand

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## Formative Assessment

- Involving Students in Criteria Setting
- Descriptive Feedback
- Engineering Effective Questioning
- Student Self Reflection
- Peers Activated as Resources

These are the strategies that the research is talking about in terms of the gains that students make.

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## Clarifying and Sharing Learning Intentions and Criteria for Success

- Do my students know and can they articulate what they are learning?
- Do my students know what quality work looks like and what my expectations are?
- Do my students know what they need to do to be successful?

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## Assessment as Feedback

Using Descriptive Feedback  
to Move Students Forward  
in their Learning

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## What Is Feedback?

Feedback is information about how we did  
in light of a goal.

"Information about what was and was not  
accomplished, given a specific goal."

Gilbert, Thomas F. / Human Competence

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## Kinds of Feedback Students Receive

Praise - "good work"



Grades - A, 100%, B+, 6/10, √-

Encouragement - "Keep up the good work"

Criticism -- "unacceptable"  
"poorly written"

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## Forms of Feedback

Depending upon the intended goal, feedback may take different forms.

There is both evaluative feedback and descriptive feedback.

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## Evaluative and Descriptive Feedback

Evaluative Feedback:

Tells learners how they compare to others or provides a judgment summarizing the quality of the learning

Descriptive Feedback:

Specific information in the form of written comments or conversations that helps the learner understand what he or she needs to do to improve

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## Effective feedback is...

- ✓ specific
- ✓ descriptive
- ✓ understandable
- ✓ timely

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## Evaluative Feedback

Tells learners how they compare to others or provides a judgment summarizing the quality of the learning

*"That's a great essay!" "Well done!"*

*Score: 7/10      A-*

*"More effort needed"*

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## Descriptive Feedback

Specific information in the form of written comments or conversations that helps the learner understand what he or she needs to do to improve.

- *"The beginning of your essay has good supporting details. Your final paragraph needs more details and description."*

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## Evaluative or Descriptive?

Educators must realize that both forms of feedback must be used, but that they are used for different purposes.

- ☐ Evaluative feedback is a direct result of summative assessment.
- ☐ Descriptive feedback is a crucial part of formative assessment.

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## What the experts say about Descriptive Feedback...

- ❑ "Descriptive feedback—specific comments about the quality or characteristics of the work itself—has a positive impact on motivation and learning." Black and William, 1998
- ❑ "It is neither the presence nor the amount of feedback that increases learning; it is the direct connection to the achievement targets that makes the difference." Alkin, Black, and Coffey, 2001
- ❑ "Formative assessment includes both feedback and self-monitoring. The goal of many instructional systems is to facilitate the transition from feedback to self-monitoring." Sadler, 1989

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## Key Implication—It's All about the Students

"Students must be given the opportunity to  
apply the feedback by trying again."



Black and William, 1998

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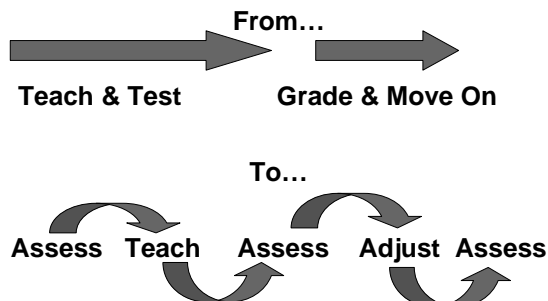
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## Assessment as Feedback




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## Questioning As Formative Assessment



*"More effort needs to be spent in framing questions that are worth asking; that is, questions that are critical to the development of student understanding."*

Black et. Al., (2003)

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## Questioning

Teachers spend up to 60% of instructional time engaged in classroom discussions.



Discussion sessions tend to rehearse existing knowledge rather than create new knowledge.

Educators listen for the "correct answer" rather than listening for what they can learn about student thinking.

The same 4 or 5 students tend to raise their hands to get called on to answer questions.

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"A teacher's interpretation of a student response, question, and action will be related to the teacher's understanding of the concept or skill that is at issue. Thus a solid understanding of the subject matter being taught is essential."

National Research Council, 2001, p.87

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## Formative Questioning- Big Ideas

- Questioning and responding informs the teacher of student learning and therefore inform next steps in instruction.
- Also provides students with the scaffolding they need to learn more as they answer, and listen to peers answer during discussions
- The questioning becomes part of the learning, and this is quite different than summative assessment

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## Range Finding Questions



Often used in order to get a sense of the range of knowledge in a group of students at the beginning of instruction.

What prior knowledge has been retained? There may be occasions where a range finding question is needed after a portion of material has been covered to see if the learning gap is beginning to close.

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## Hinge Point Questions

Generally thought of as "the fork in the road," question.



Define which direction a teacher will go next with instruction.

*Are we ready to move on?*

*Should the group be split into smaller groups to address individual needs?*

*Would the class as a whole benefit from more practice?*

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## Exit/End Questions

Students have the opportunity to give an indication of their learning before transitioning to the next class or subject. The responses are used to adjust the lesson planned for the next day.



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## Rich Questioning in Practice

- ☐ Hands down - teachers selects student (s) to answer
- ☐ ABCD cards with multiple choice questions
- ☐ Spiraling- based on structured discovery
- ☐ Inquiry- expanding on students' answers.  
"How do you know?"
- ☐ Add on- students build on other student responses
- ☐ Wait time - all students have an opportunity to think before
- ☐ White board responses
- ☐ DOK – level designed questioning
- ☐ Consult- peer partners or student groups review response together before providing an answer or generate questions for class

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## What Constitutes Effective Formative Assessment?

Assessment that:

- ☐ provides evidence of student performance relative to learning targets and content standards
- ☐ provides teachers and students with insight into student understanding and misunderstanding
- ☐ helps lead the teacher directly to instructional action

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### The difference...

When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative;  
when the guests taste the soup, that's  
summative.



Stake, R. cited in Earl, L. 2004. *Assessment As Learning: Using classroom achievement to Maximize Student Learning*. Experts in Assessment. Corwin Press Inc. Thousand Oaks, California

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### Changing Practice...

"Regardless of what a state policy requires or  
what a district curriculum spells out, the  
classroom teacher ultimately decides what to  
teach."

Andrew C. Porter of Vanderbilt University  
Education Week, October 8, 2003

*...and the student ultimately decides if they will  
learn.*

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### Assessment can help us move towards...

Learning	<i>...instead of just teaching</i>
Quality	<i>...instead of quantity</i>
Improvement	<i>...instead of one-shot deals</i>
Depth	<i>...instead of coverage</i>
Confidence	<i>...instead of anxiety</i>

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