Formative Assessment Best Practices
Part I

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Overview

• Definitions
• Balanced Assessment Systems
• Formative Assessment Best Practices

Definitions

• Assessment: a sampling of student behavior for the purpose of making an inference
• Formative Assessment: an ongoing assessment process that provides students and teachers with feedback on progress toward instructional goals
• Interim Assessment: a periodic assessment that provides students, parents and educators with information on unit attainment or progress across units.
• Summative Assessment: an occasional (often annual) assessment that provides parents, educators, and policymakers with information on course/standard attainment or progress
“To many of today’s teachers, assessment is synonymous with high-stakes standardized tests. But there is an entirely different kind of assessment that can actually transform teaching and learning.”

Margaret Heritage

Types of Formative Assessments

- **Spontaneous (impromptu)**
  - **Immediate.** While teaching, a teacher sees a misunderstanding or misconception and immediately addresses it.
  - **Not a planned activity.** While not planned, a variety of tools are at the teacher’s disposal to formatively assess students, e.g., re-teaching, change in instructional venue, asking another student to provide an example.

- **Planned**
  - **Developed before a lesson.** The teacher has a learning target or learning outcome in mind and prepares an assessment to examine it.
  - **Planned feedback mechanism.** The outcome for this assessment in planned ahead of time.
Formative Assessment Cycle

Examples

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<th>Planned</th>
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<td>Short Tests and quizzes</td>
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<td>Observing students during an activity</td>
<td>Homework exercises</td>
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<td>Responding in to students' impromptu conversations</td>
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<td>Short Tests and quizzes</td>
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Formative Assessment Best Practices
Technically Sound

- Valid: formative assessments measure important concepts, skills, and ideas
  - Aligned to instructional goals
  - Connected to meaningful learning targets & standards
  - Focused on student learning needs
  - Are appropriate measures
- Reliable: formative assessments provide consistent information
  - Means the same thing when used over again
  - Provides actionable results for both teachers AND students

Embedded, Ongoing

- Connected with Curriculum
  - Part of the instructional process, not distinct from it
  - Not “add-ons” to instruction
  - Connected with lesson plans, learning goals, and meaningful standards
- Not “one-time-wonders”
  - Designed to be ongoing, iterative, “organic”
  - A process, not an event

Learning Goals

- Connected to language learning goals and targets
  - Aligned to standards & curriculum
  - Focused on student learning
  - Clear and explicit in what students are supposed to learn
  - Support instructional goals
- Organized to appropriate learning progressions
  - Appropriately sequenced language functions, vocabulary and grammar
  - Appropriate measures for students’ current language proficiency
Examples

- For teachers
  - Rubrics, checklists, and rating scales have examples of each type of performance.
  - Teachers have a concept of what performance will look like, and if possible.
  - When possible, teachers collect examples of “good” student work.
- For students
  - Students should have access to the rubrics, checklists, or rating scales used to evaluate their work AND training on how to interpret them for themselves.
  - Student should have examples of what “good work” looks like.

Current Skills

- Identify, with sufficient clarity, students’ current language abilities and skills:
  - Vocabulary knowledge
  - Grammatical control
  - Comprehension skills
  - Communication skills
  - Discourse capabilities (e.g., functional language abilities)
- Highlight current skills to students

Highlight Future Goals

- Point, with sufficient clarity, to students’ future language goals
- Identify the “next step” in students’ language learning progression
  - Vocabulary knowledge
  - Grammatical control
  - Comprehension skills
  - Communication skills
  - Discourse capabilities (e.g., functional language abilities)
- Highlight next steps to students
Integrated

- Formative assessments are associated with other assessments used at the school, district and state level.

Dynamic

- Formative assessments must fit into classroom realities and be easy to administer and score.

Rigorous PD

- Good formative assessment programs are associated with rigorous professional development opportunities.
- A variety of PD approaches are also use, e.g., workshops, mentoring.
Worksheet

Good References

- Assessment Training Institute. www.assessmentinst.com/