

ADVANCING
**FORMATIVE
ASSESSMENT**
IN EVERY CLASSROOM

a GUIDE FOR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS

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INTRODUCTION

Formative assessment, when used effectively, can significantly improve student achievement and raise teacher quality. Yet high-quality formative assessment is rarely a consistent part of the classroom culture. Teachers are neither sufficiently familiar with it nor equipped with the knowledge or the skill to put formative assessment to work for themselves and their students.

This book is intended as a resource for school leaders as they work with teachers to make the formative assessment process an integral part of their classrooms. We focus on classroom-level practices that affect student learning and achievement, build capacity, and foster schoolwide outcomes that can meet the demands for high-stakes accountability facing today's education professionals. And amid calls for data-driven decision making, we intentionally focus the book on practices that put information about learning into the hands of the most important decision makers of all—the students.

We have organized this book so that school leaders, school teams, and collaborative groups can use it as a guide to engage in highly effective formative assessment practices that promote school improvement and increase student achievement. We place particular emphasis on the ways that the formative assessment process enables students to harness the workings of their own minds to become intentional and skilled learners.



1

THE LAY OF THE LAND: Essential Elements of the Formative Assessment Process

When teachers join forces with their students in the formative assessment process, their partnership generates powerful learning outcomes. Teachers become more effective, students become actively engaged, and they both become intentional learners.

We can use the metaphor of a windmill to visualize the formative assessment process and its effects. Just as a windmill intentionally harnesses the power of moving air to generate energy, the formative assessment process helps students intentionally harness the workings of their own minds to generate motivation to learn. Propelled by the formative assessment process, students understand and use learning targets, set their own learning goals, select effective learning strategies, and assess their own learning progress. And as students develop into more confident and competent learners, they become motivated (energized) to learn, increasingly able to persist during demanding tasks and to regulate their own effort and actions when they tackle new learning challenges.

When a windmill whirls into action, its individual blades seem to disappear. The same thing happens to the six elements of the formative assessment process. These interrelated elements are the following:

- Shared learning targets and criteria for success
- Feedback that feeds forward




FIGURE 1.3
Links Between Formative Assessment and Intrinsic Motivation

Formative Assessment Elements Help Students Harness the Workings of Their Own Minds in the Following Ways to Generate Components of Motivation to Learn
Shared Learning Targets and Criteria for Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directs students and teachers toward specific goals. • Increases initiation for the learning task. • Helps students and teachers monitor learning progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-efficacy • Self-assessment • Self-regulation • Self-attribution
Feedback That Feeds Forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhances cognitive processing. • Fosters resiliency and persistence in the face of challenge. • Provides students with specific next-step strategies. 	
Student Goal Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases active student engagement. • Shifts student focus from performance-directed to goal-directed behavior. • Induces effort, increases persistence, and promotes development of new strategies. 	
Student Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shifts power from the teacher to the student. • Engages students in actively collecting and interpreting assessment information. • Helps students set more realistic and active goals for continuously raising achievement. 	
Strategic Teacher Questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directs students and teachers toward salient elements of the content, process, or performance. • Scaffolds learners as they move beyond partial, thin, or passive understandings. • Promotes conceptual change. 	
Engagement of Students in Asking Effective Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases intentional and active student engagement. • Promotes autonomy and independence. • Develops students' perceptions of themselves as producers of knowledge and generators of important lines of inquiry. • Gives students confidence to work through difficulties themselves. 	

3

SHIFTING FROM CORRECTING TO INFORMING: Feedback That Feeds Forward



Educators have been studying feedback for almost 100 years. The first studies and theories about feedback grew out of the psychological perspective called behaviorism. Positive feedback was “reinforcement,” and negative feedback was “punishment.” As the heyday of behaviorism waned, researchers tried to understand more about why feedback worked. Several reviewers found little support for the behaviorist notion that feedback was simple reinforcement but definite support for the idea that correcting errors was an important way in which feedback worked (Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, Kulik, & Morgan, 1991; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Kulhavy, 1977).

We now know that error correction is an important feedback function but not the only one. More recently, studies and theories about feedback have found a place in cognitive psychology, especially in the notion that feedback helps students with self-regulation of learning (Butler & Winne, 1995) by helping them understand the learning goal, how close their current work comes to it, and what should be done next (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Of course, you recognize these as the three components of the formative assessment cycle.

What Is Feedback?

Feedback, in the sense we are using it here, is a teacher’s response to student work with the intention of furthering learning. Feedback can be written or oral, or it