



# Setting the Stage for Formative Assessment

# The Teacher's Role

Webinar user's guide

Julie Park Haubner, PhD, NBCT

Sandy Chang, PhD, NBCT

September 2018

# Table of contents

This user's guide is intended to supplement the webinar, "Setting the Stage for Formative Assessment: The Teacher's Role." The guide includes tools to use with your professional learning group as you develop an implementation plan for formative assessment in your classroom.

## 3 Preview

*Decide which of this webinar's learning goals are relevant to you.*

## 4 Clarify

*Assess and refine your own understanding of formative assessment.*

## 9 Evaluate

*Learn how to identify evidence of formative assessment practice in your classroom.*

## 11 Act

*Consider some concrete steps you can take to begin or refine your implementation of formative assessment.*

## 13 Reflect and self-assess

*Did you make progress toward your learning goals in a way that was helpful? What will you do next?*

## 14 References



The work reported herein was supported by grant number #S283B050022A between the U.S. Department of Education and WestEd with a subcontract to the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST). The findings and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of CRESST, WestEd, or the U.S. Department of Education.

The Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) is a nationally renowned research center at the University of California, Los Angeles. CRESST has almost five decades of unsurpassed experience in helping states, school districts, and schools develop and align their assessment to measure increasingly rigorous standards. For more information about CREST, visit [cresst.org](http://cresst.org).

# Preview

The learning goals below are addressed in the webinar. We encourage you to focus only on those concepts that are relevant to you. Indicate below which goals are of most interest. Following the webinar (and, if applicable, discussion with your colleagues), indicate the goals toward which you made some progress or gained more knowledge than you had before.

## #1 ►► Understand what formative assessment is.

	BEFORE THE WEBINAR		AFTER THE WEBINAR
	Of great interest	Of some interest	Did you make progress?
Definition of formative assessment			
Elements of the formative assessment process			
Novice and advanced frameworks of formative assessment			

## #2 ►► Learn how teachers can begin to implement formative assessment practices.

	BEFORE THE WEBINAR		AFTER THE WEBINAR
	Of great interest	Of some interest	Did you make progress?
Self-assessment of current formative assessment practices			
Formative assessment resources			
Teacher roles			

# Clarify

## *What is formative assessment?*

Which of these **best** describes your understanding of formative assessment?

- A. Formative assessments are strategies that teachers use to obtain information about students' learning. Some examples are learning logs, exit tickets, questioning and discussion, conferencing, and rubrics.
- B. Formative assessment provides teachers with early warning signals about students who are falling behind and who may benefit from additional help prior to end-of-year testing. Formative assessment informs decisions about curricular adjustments and professional learning needs.
- C. Formative assessment is a process used by students and teachers during instruction to elicit and use evidence to improve understanding of intended learning outcomes and support students to become more self-directed learners.
- D. Formative assessments are assignments, projects, or tests that provide feedback to students about their achievement on a unit of study.

## Clarify continued

### *What is formative assessment?*

The formative assessment process includes establishing learning goals, articulating success criteria, collecting and analyzing evidence of learning, and adjusting instruction both during and immediately after the lesson.

Sometimes the term “formative assessment” is inaccurately used to describe the activities or assessment tasks that elicit evidence of student learning. These might look like quizzes or check-ins. They can range in complexity from a “thumbs up/thumbs down” to an exit slip to a rough draft of an essay. It is common to find lists of “effective formative assessments” that describe a variety of such tasks. These tasks by themselves do not constitute the formative assessment process.

Choice (A) is a partial definition of formative assessment. It describes tasks and tools that teachers can use to gather evidence about students. But without relevant, thoughtful learning goals and clear, well-communicated success criteria, pedagogically responsive changes to instruction, and active student engagement, these tasks and tools can result in irrelevant and disconnected data about student learning. ✘ **This is the most common misconception about formative assessment.**

Choice (B) defines interim assessments, which are given a few times a year and may result in school program decisions that typically do not have immediate effect on daily instruction. Formative assessment is immediate, continuous, classroom-based, and daily.

Choice (C) is a simplified restatement of the FAST SCASS\* definition of formative assessment. For many educators, the concept of formative assessment as an in-depth, all-inclusive instructional practice that extends well beyond strategies and tools requires a significant shift in thinking. ✔ **This is the correct answer.**

Choice (D) describes classroom summative assessments. This one is a bit tricky in that these assessments *can* be formative if they are used to change instruction immediately after they are administered and if students receive feedback they can use to influence their learning of that content (e.g., if students rewrite or revise their project after receiving feedback). However, if they are only receiving comments about their achievement on that unit, and the class moves on to a different set of learning goals, the assessment was not formative in function.

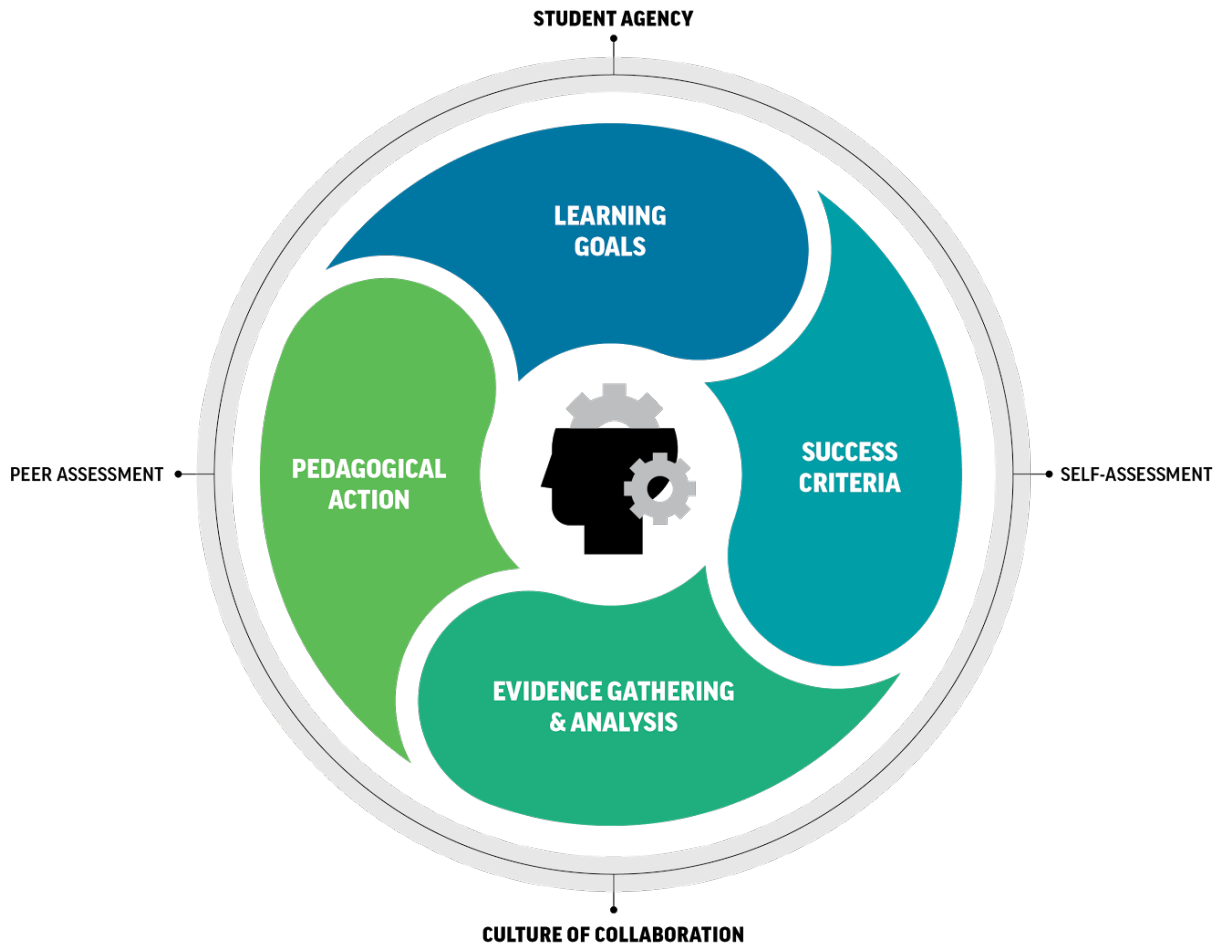
---

\* The Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers (FAST)  
State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS)

# Clarify KEY TERMS

**Formative assessment** is a planned, ongoing process used by all students and teachers during learning and teaching to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of intended disciplinary learning outcomes and support students to become more self-directed learners.

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)  
 Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers (FAST)  
 State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS)



Copyright © 2017 The Regents of the University of California

**Learning goals** describe what students will learn in a lesson, stating clearly what learning the student will understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson. Learning goals are written in language that students can understand so that they can monitor, assess, and reflect on their own learning.

**Success criteria** describe what students will say, make, do, or write to indicate achievement of the learning goals. Success criteria are derived from – and aligned to – learning goals, but they are more specific. With success criteria, teachers should be able to complete this following statement: If students have learned *x* [learning goal], then they will be able to do *a, b, c* [success criteria]. Success criteria are written in language students can understand.

# Clarify

## KEY TERMS

**Evidence gathering & analysis** refer to teachers' intentional planning of opportunities to elicit evidence of student learning and using that evidence to adjust instruction during or shortly after the lesson. **Evidence-gathering opportunities** are aligned to the learning goals and success criteria. Evidence-gathering opportunities include examining student work, listening to and participating in classroom discussions, observing student peer and self-assessment, and questioning students.

**Pedagogical action** is the teacher's response to evidence of student learning; they are intended to nudge student learning closer to the learning goals and success criteria. Pedagogical action is based on teachers' interpretation of real-time (or as close to real-time) evidence collected during the lesson, and respond to students' immediate learning needs. Pedagogical action can include reviewing, modeling, providing examples, prompting, giving feedback, telling, explaining, directing, or continuing, stopping, or adjusting the planned lesson. To be effective, these moves must be related to the learning goals and success criteria; be specific and clear; provide suggestions, hints, or cues rather than correct answers; and engage students in the task.

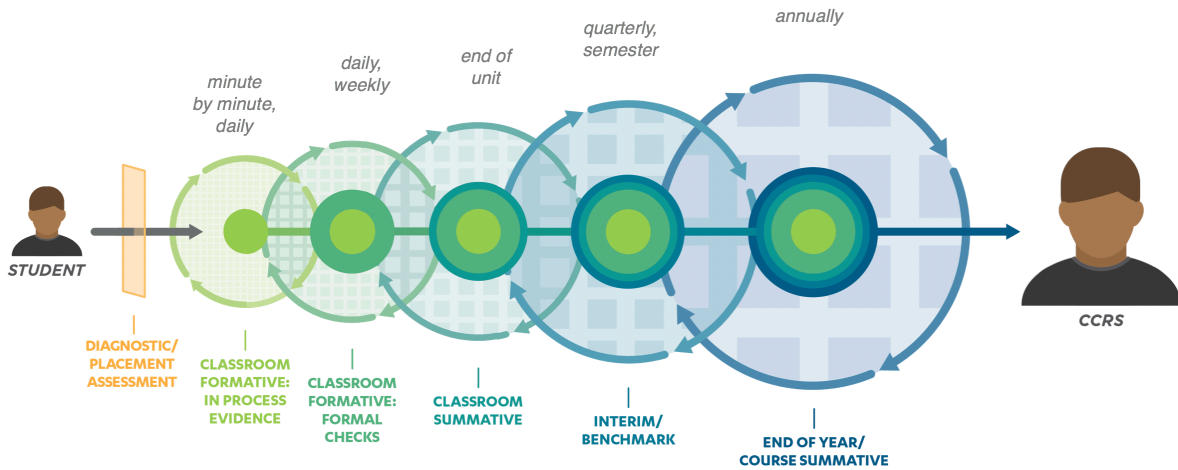
**Peer & self-assessment** are specific types of evidence-gathering opportunity that engage students in the learning and are a crucial element of the formative assessment process. Students share responsibility for monitoring their progress toward the lesson's learning goals. Students understand and use learning goals and success criteria to evaluate their own learning and achievement. Teachers support and guide students in peer and self-assessment. For peer assessment, students need to be taught to evaluate the work of others and offer constructive advice to their peers. Teachers plan opportunities for peer and self-assessment to regularly occur during lessons.

**Student agency** is the ultimate goal of formative assessment, in which students become active agents in the learning process, rather than passive recipients of information. It is promoted in the classroom by providing learning tasks that stimulate opportunities for students to proactively evaluate their own progress toward a clear learning target and its observable criteria. Students generate feedback for themselves and others and make decisions about their own learning.

**Culture of collaboration** describes an environment in which students and teachers share responsibility for learning, students choose to learn together, student participation is spontaneous and respectful, student contributions inspire deeper engagement, multiple perspectives are actively sought, and all learners demonstrate a willingness to take risks, learn from mistakes, and support each other.

# Clarify KEY TERMS

**Comprehensive assessment system** presents a framework for a balanced assessment system, as described in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The comprehensive assessment system outlines how states, districts, and schools can align different types of assessments to propel students toward college and career readiness. The framework incorporates different types of assessment to serve the distinct information needs of different stakeholders, from the very detailed evidence that teachers and students need for on-going instruction, to the gross indicators that stakeholders outside the classroom need to support accountability and improvement.



ASSESSMENT TYPE	GRAIN SIZE	TIMING	USES	USERS
Diagnostic/ Placement	small	as needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diagnose strengths and weakness in students' existing knowledge and skills</li> <li>Eligibility and placement for special programs</li> </ul>	students · teachers · parents · specialists · school leaders
Classroom formative: In process evidence	small	minute by minute daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect ongoing evidence of students' progress to inform immediate instruction</li> <li>Feedback to students to move them toward achieving lesson learning goals</li> </ul>	students · teachers
Classroom formative: Formal checks	small	daily weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate what students have learned</li> <li>Information on students' strengths and gaps in knowledge and skills</li> <li>Inform parents of student progress</li> </ul>	students · teachers · parents
Classroom summative	medium	end of unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chart student progress on classroom and unit goals</li> <li>Identify gaps in student learning</li> <li>Grading</li> <li>Grade-level or school-level progress checks</li> <li>Inform parents of student progress</li> </ul>	students · teachers · parents · school leaders
Interim/ Benchmark	medium	quarterly semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor student status and progress on intermediate and/or long-term learning goals</li> <li>Predict whether students are likely to test proficient on end-of-year tests</li> <li>Evaluate relative performance of classrooms, schools, programs</li> <li>Support school and district data-based decision making</li> </ul>	students · teachers · parents · school & district leaders
End of year/ course summative	large	annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broad view of students' achievement on major grade-level or course expectations</li> <li>General view on student proficiency relative to grade-level college and career ready standards</li> <li>Evaluate school curricula, program effectiveness; inform improvement planning</li> </ul>	students · teachers · parents · school & district leaders · state

(Herman, 2016)



# Evaluate

Identify elements of formative practice that you already do well and those you would like to improve.

Self-assess your current instructional practice for its existing formative assessment qualities. The 20 elements listed below are adapted from the FAST SCASS definition of formative assessment. For each element, ask: *How well do I already do this?* If you can, jot down a specific example or two for each element you do well. For elements that you are not familiar with or can be improved, write a suggestion for where you can go for support.

## Instructional practice

0 = not at all or not applicable 3 = extremely well

1. You systematically plan instruction.	0	1	2	3
2. Your professional learning supports classroom instruction that is ongoing (rather than a single or limited number of events).	0	1	2	3
3. Your professional learning focuses primarily on classroom instruction and interactions.	0	1	2	3
4. You regularly collect evidence of student learning.	0	1	2	3
5. You regularly analyze evidence of student learning.	0	1	2	3
6. You always use evidence of student learning to adjust instruction.	0	1	2	3
7. You regularly respond effectively to individual students.	0	1	2	3

## Learning goals

0 = not at all or not applicable 3 = extremely well

8. College and career-ready standards and/or other content standards determine learning goals.	0	1	2	3
9. Learning goals are situated within a progression of learning.	0	1	2	3
10. Learning goals can be reasonably accomplished in a lesson.	0	1	2	3

# Evaluate continued

*Identify elements of formative practice that you already do well and those you would like to improve.*

## Student involvement

0 = not at all or not applicable 3 = extremely well

11. Students direct their own learning.	0	1	2	3
12. Students engage in self-assessment and peer feedback.	0	1	2	3
13. Students know how to achieve their learning goals.	0	1	2	3
14. Students can identify any gaps between their understanding and the learning goals.	0	1	2	3
15. Students regularly receive actionable feedback from you and peers.	0	1	2	3

## Equity and classroom culture

0 = not at all or not applicable 3 = extremely well

16. Classroom culture benefits all students.	0	1	2	3
17. Classroom culture benefits the teacher.	0	1	2	3
18. Classroom culture is respectful and collaborative.	0	1	2	3
19. Students are actively encouraged to take risks and learn from mistakes.	0	1	2	3
20. Students have multiple modes and opportunities to demonstrate their learning.	0	1	2	3

*Look at your self-assessment ratings across the four categories. What can you conclude about your current strengths and weaknesses? How will you use this information to develop a vision and implementation plan?*

# Act

## What are the roles of teachers?

Teachers decide whether and how formative assessment is implemented in their classrooms. Below are some of the steps that teachers can consider when enacting formative assessment.

Vision & planning	What do you already have in place?	What could you do next?
<p>1. <b>Long-term commitment</b> <i>What is your timeline?</i></p>		
<p>2. <b>Definitional clarity</b> <i>Will you commit to formative assessment as an instructional process that shapes daily classroom learning and teaching?</i></p>		
<p>3. <b>Alignment to existing initiatives and priorities</b> <i>Can you find meaningful connections between your current programs and formative assessment?</i></p>		
<p>4. <b>Partnerships</b> <i>How can your peers and school and district leaders provide additional resources and assistance?</i></p>		
Leadership	What do you already have in place?	What could you do next?
<p>5. <b>Lead learner</b> <i>Are you willing to be an active learner alongside your students?</i></p>		
<p>6. <b>Team builder</b> <i>Have you identified individuals who can provide support and collaborate with you?</i></p>		
<p>7. <b>Communicator</b> <i>How will you regularly inspire and remind your community of progress toward the vision and long-term plan?</i></p>		

# Act continued

What are the roles of teachers?

## Resources for professional learning

What do you already have in place?

What could you do next?

8. **Standards, assessment, and curriculum**

*Do you have a yearlong scope and sequence of instruction, a clear understanding of your content area's learning progressions, and the necessary instructional resources to implement formative assessment?*

9. **Time**

*When will you develop your formative assessment capacity? How can you work with your colleagues and school leadership team to make formative assessment professional learning a priority?*

10. **Allocation of funding and other resources**

*What content and services are necessary to do this work well, and how will you communicate that to school and district administrators?*

11. **Structures**

*What kind of collaboration, communication, feedback, and reflection tools and structures (e.g., regular meetings, technology) will you use to keep the work moving forward?*

# Reflect and self-assess

*Did you accomplish your learning goals?*

Look back at the Preview on page 3. Have you made some progress on any of your learning goals?

Write your own learning goals to continue this work. Some suggestions:

- Learn about a specific formative assessment topic in more depth. This might include a deeper dive into the nuts and bolts of formative assessment.
- Find out more about your school's context: contact people who know about prior instructional initiatives at your school and district, talk to teachers and other stakeholders about how formative assessment can lead to improved instructional practice.
- Explore your state and district resources for formative assessment.
- Look for internal and external partners who can provide assistance.
- Be able to explain the role of formative assessment in your instructional practice to district leaders, school leaders, colleagues, parents, and students.
- Evaluate your current programs for their formative assessment qualities. Analyze how gaps can be addressed, and how formative assessment practices can be integrated with your existing initiatives.

## Learning goals

What knowledge or skill will you seek next?

## Success criteria

What observable actions will lead to accomplishing this goal?

---

---

---

---

---

# References

- Education First. (2016). Formative assessment in the classroom: Findings from three districts. Retrieved from <https://education-first.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/MSDF-Formative-Assessment-Study-Final-Report.pdf>
- Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers (FAST) State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) of Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). (2017). *Revising the definition of formative assessment*. Unpublished manuscript. Retrieved from [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/New\\_FAST\\_SCASS\\_definition\\_paper\\_June\\_27\\_2017\\_601106\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/New_FAST_SCASS_definition_paper_June_27_2017_601106_7.pdf)
- Heritage, M., Gerzon, N., & Mancuso, M. (n.d.). *Necessary conditions for successful implementation of formative assessment*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Retrieved from <http://www.gettingsmart.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Necessary-Conditions-for-successful-implementation-of-Formative-Assessment-June-18-DRAFT.pdf>
- Herman, J. (2016). *Comprehensive standards-based assessment systems supporting learning*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California, Los Angeles, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST). Retrieved from <https://www.csai-online.org/resources/comprehensive-standards-based-assessment-systems-supporting-learning>
- How I Know, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, & Getting Smart. (2018, February 7). [Formative assessment keys to success: Practitioner guide] [Infographic]. Retrieved from <http://www.gettingsmart.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/MSDF-StudentRoles-FINAL-26Jan2018v1.pdf>
- Moss, C. M., Brookhart, S. M., & Long, B. A. (2013). Administrators' roles in helping teachers use formative assessment information. *Applied Measurement in Education*, 26(3), 205-218.
- National Research Council. (2012). *Education for life and work: Developing transferable knowledge and skills in the 21st century*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/13398>.
- Wylie, C., & Lyon, C. (2016). *Using the formative assessment rubrics, reflection and observation tools to support professional reflection on practice* (Revised). Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers (FAST) State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) of Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).