

Formative Assessment Aspects Summary

The implementation of formative assessment involves the strategic use of six aspects of instruction. The first four listed below are “critical aspects” of formative assessment that are necessary for effective implementation. The final two are “supporting aspects” of formative assessment; while not specific to formative assessment in particular, they are necessary to support its effective implementation.

Critical Aspects

Learning Targets

A way to articulate, and share with students, the learning that a teacher intends to happen and the indicators that help both the teacher and student assess whether that learning is taking place.

A learning target has two components: a the statement of the mathematical idea and success criteria. The statement of the mathematical idea, or more simply “the math idea,” describes the conceptual learning that will result from the lesson, and the success criteria describe the indicators that both teachers and students will use to gauge how well students understand the mathematical idea.

Evidence

A process of gathering evidence of student thinking and student skill and interpreting it against the success criteria to determine next instructional steps.

Responsive Actions

A process of determining the appropriate next instructional steps to help students move their learning forward. These actions might include:

- gathering more evidence of students’ thinking to gain more clarity about appropriate next steps;
- providing “formative feedback” that is aligned to the learning target;
- providing further instruction if feedback will be insufficient to help a student move forward;
- determining that the student has met the learning target, and moving on to a new target.

Student Ownership and Involvement

A set of strategies to provide students with the skills they need to become self-regulating learners and to use each other as peer resources.

Supporting Aspects

Learning Progressions

An articulation of the pathways through which understanding of content evolves, from basic to more sophisticated understanding.

Classroom Environment

Establishing a social, instructional, and physical environment that supports you and your students as you implement formative assessment practices.

Characteristics of Learning Targets

1. The learning target focuses the lesson on the highest-priority learning for that lesson and includes two components: 1) the mathematics idea and 2) a set of “look-for’s” that both teachers and students can use to determine the extent to which the students are learning the mathematics idea. * These “look-for’s” are referred to as “success criteria.”
2. The mathematics idea articulates the key understanding that a student will gain in a lesson, rather than the particular activity to be completed.
3. The success criteria describe examples of something a student will be able to say, do, or produce if the student’s learning of the mathematical idea is on track. The success criteria are tangible and/or observable.
4. The success criteria can be either procedurally-focused or analytically-focused, and a learning target includes one of more of each type. However, a single learning target will rarely include more than two or three success criteria.
5. Procedurally-focused criteria describe skills or procedures that students can complete successfully. Analytically-focused success criteria describe evidence of conceptual understanding by asking students to generalize, justify, relate, or compare concepts through an explanation or model.
6. The mathematics idea and the success criteria are aligned to each other. The success criteria, collectively, provide enough evidence to make both the teacher and students reasonably confident that students understand the targeted mathematics idea.
7. Both the mathematics idea and the success criteria are written to be understandable by students and to be used by both teachers and students throughout a lesson.

** For any set of “look for’s” (success criteria), students can:*

- “meet” a learning target by showing evidence that they have fully met all the success criteria that accompany the mathematics idea;
- “partially meet” a learning target by showing evidence that they have not met all the success criteria (met some and not others, or still be “in progress” on most of the success criteria);
- “not yet meet” a learning target by showing evidence that they are not yet meeting the success criteria, and therefore don’t yet have understanding of the mathematics idea.