



Introduction to Formative Assessment

Overview

This guide aims to provide school professionals with steps and strategies for developing formative assessments. These assessments help educators make informed instructional decisions and provide feedback to learners in real time. Creating practical formative assessments involves thoughtful planning, alignment with learning objectives, and consideration of the needs of your students.

Formative assessments provide ongoing feedback during the learning process. Their primary purposes are to inform instruction and help teachers and students understand how well they are progressing toward the learning goals. Formative assessments are *low stakes*, meaning they do not have significant consequences for students' grades or progression. **Summative assessments**, on the other hand, occur at the end of a specific instructional period (e.g., a unit, course, or academic year). These assessments measure the overall learning outcomes and the extent to which students have achieved the learning objectives. The primary purpose of summative assessments is evaluation, which provides a summary of learning.

Formative assessments are not typically graded and are used by teachers to adjust instruction in real time. Formative assessments identify areas of strength and weakness, helping students understand where they need improvement and guiding teachers in adjusting their instructional strategies. They should create a safe space for students to make and learn from mistakes. Formative assessments include quizzes, class discussions, peer reviews, homework assignments, teacher observations, and in-class activities that gauge student understanding and help teachers address misconceptions as the learning process unfolds.

Types of Formative Assessments

When selecting an appropriate assessment type, consider the learning objectives, the level of complexity you want to assess, and the resources available. Different types of assessments can provide insights into various aspects of students' abilities, such as procedural knowledge, critical thinking, and communication. Here are a few examples of formative assessments, including exit tickets, performance-based assessments, and peer-to-peer teaching.

Exit Tickets

This formative assessment strategy is often used by educators to gauge students' understanding of a lesson or concept at the end of a class or learning activity. It is a brief, focused assessment tool that allows teachers to quickly gather information about what students have learned or retained from the lesson. Exit tickets serve as a "checkpoint" and can take various forms, all of which tend to be brief. Common formats include these:

- Short-answer questions
- Multiple-choice questions
- True/false statements



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- Brief reflections
- Drawing a concept related to the lesson

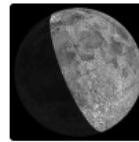
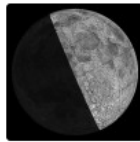
Align exit ticket questions or prompts with lesson objectives and focus them on key takeaways, essential concepts, or skills covered during that lesson. Typically, students complete an exit ticket independently, so teachers can assess individual students' understanding rather than relying on group responses. After collecting the exit tickets, teachers can review the responses promptly, often on the same day. Quick assessments with prompt reviews enable teachers to identify areas where students have misconceptions and adjust their teaching immediately rather than waiting for summative assessment data.

Native Language Arts Exit Ticket Question Examples

- Write four sentences using the new vocabulary words correctly.
- Using the sentence structure we learned today, create three new sentences.

Science Exit Ticket Question Examples

- Provide the correct rain names for your location.
- Correctly name the following moon phases.



Math Exit Ticket Question Example

- If you have 12 salmon and you share them equally with three families, how many salmon does each family get?
- The bark of a native plant makes 6 feet of cordage. If your rope to tie your canoe to the shore needs 30 feet of cordage, how many plants do you need to harvest bark from?

Performance-Based Assessment

Instead of asking learners to recall facts or concepts, performance-based assessments require a demonstration of skills or competencies. These assessments focus on how well a student can apply what learning to real-world tasks, challenges, or situations rather than relying on traditional formats like multiple-choice questions or essays. Performance-based assessments often use rubrics with multiple measures or criteria to evaluate various aspects of the task, such as accuracy, creativity, problem-solving, and communication skills with fairness and consistency. Rubrics help assessors score tasks objectively and provide constructive feedback. Here's an example.

Multiple Content Performance-Based Assessment (Science, Math, Native Language Arts)

Students must use their Native language to present data from environmental observations to a panel of cultural and scientific experts. A rubric to measure student performance assesses key assignment aspects and provides performance criteria to help students understand strengths and areas for improvement.



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Language Arts Rubric: Environmental Observation Narrative in Hawaiian Language

| Criteria | Excellent (4) | Proficient (3) | Basic (2) | Limited (1) |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Language Proficiency | Narrative demonstrates exceptional command of grade-level appropriate Hawaiian vocabulary and sentence structures, enhancing the narrative's depth and clarity. | Narrative displays proficient use of grade-level appropriate Hawaiian vocabulary and sentence structures, effectively conveying the observations. | Narrative includes basic use of Hawaiian vocabulary and sentence structures, with occasional errors that may impact understanding. | Limited use of Hawaiian vocabulary and sentence structures, hindering comprehension of the narrative. |
| Observation Detail and Descriptions | Exceptionally vivid and detailed descriptions of the natural area's features, flora, fauna, and environmental elements that thoroughly engage the reader. | Proficient descriptions of the natural area's features, flora, fauna, and environmental elements that effectively capture the reader's attention. | Basic descriptions of the natural area's features, flora, fauna, and environmental elements that provide limited engagement. | Limited or vague descriptions that lack depth and fail to effectively convey the environment's characteristics. |
| Organization and Narrative Structure | Narrative is exceptionally well-structured with clear introduction, body, and conclusion paragraphs that flow coherently. Each paragraph supports the main theme and transitions smoothly. | Narrative is well-structured with distinct introduction, body, and conclusion paragraphs that maintain coherence. Paragraphs are mostly clear and linked coherently. | Narrative follows a basic structure with introduction, body, and conclusion paragraphs. Transitions between paragraphs are somewhat choppy. | Narrative lacks clear structure, with minimal introduction, body, and conclusion. Transitions between paragraphs are unclear or absent. |
| Reflection and Interpretation | Reflection on observations demonstrates | Reflection on observations displays proficient | Basic reflection on observations with some | Limited reflection on observations and |



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| | exceptional depth, critical thinking, and insight into the environmental significance. Relationships between findings and unit themes are exceptionally well-explored. | depth and critical thinking, offering insight into the environmental significance. Connections between findings and unit themes are effectively addressed. | critical thinking evident, but limited depth in exploring environmental significance. Connections to unit themes are somewhat addressed. | minimal critical thinking. Environmental significance and connections to unit themes are underdeveloped or absent. |
| Presentation and Speaking Skills | Exceptional oral presentation with clear articulation, enthusiasm, and confident delivery. Effectively engages the audience with gestures and eye contact. | Proficient oral presentation with clear articulation and confident delivery. Engages the audience with suitable gestures and some eye contact. | Basic oral presentation has occasional clarity issues, minor hesitations. Attempts to engage audience but lacks consistent gestures and eye contact. | Limited oral presentation with frequent clarity issues, hesitations, and lack of audience engagement. Delivery impacts understanding. |
| Peer Feedback and Collaboration (if applicable) | Exceptional participation in peer feedback session, offering insightful and constructive comments that contribute positively to peers' narratives. | Proficient participation in peer feedback session, providing constructive comments that aid peers in improving their narratives. | Basic participation in peer feedback session, offering limited suggestions that may not significantly contribute to peers' narratives. | Limited or minimal participation in peer feedback session, with comments lacking constructive insights. |

Rubric Scoring

- *Excellent (16-20 points):* The narrative demonstrates outstanding language proficiency, observation skills, critical thinking, and presentation.
- *Proficient (11-15 points):* The narrative displays strong language proficiency, effective observation and reflection, and a well-structured presentation.
- *Basic (6-10 points):* The narrative shows a basic level of language proficiency, observation, and reflection, with room for improvement in presentation.
- *Limited (1-5 points):* The narrative indicates limited language proficiency, observation, reflection, and presentation skills.



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Peer Teaching

This formative assessment format gauges understanding by having students teach a concept or skill to their peers, an approach that also reinforces their learning. Students are divided into two groups — teachers and students. While the "teacher" group presents, the "student" group assesses the teaching using a rubric or specific criteria to evaluate aspects like clarity, engagement, and effectiveness. The teacher assesses the "teacher" group for teaching quality and the "student" group for learning they demonstrate.

Peer Teaching Example: Native Language Arts

- A small group of students will teach their peers the necessary vocabulary of different cloud structures, colors, and formations, including seasonal differences.

Peer Teaching Example: Science

- Students will teach the different growth stages of seaweed found in local rivers.

Here is a rubric for assessing the "teaching" group.

| Criteria | Excellent (4) | Proficient (3) | Basic (2) | Limited (1) | Not Present (0) |
|------------------------|--|--|--|---|---|
| Content Knowledge | Demonstrates a deep understanding of the topic, providing accurate and relevant information, examples, and explanations. | Shows a good understanding of the topic, presenting mostly accurate and relevant information. | Presents some accurate information but lacks depth or relevance in places. | Demonstrates a limited understanding of the topic, with significant inaccuracies or irrelevant information. | No content is presented, or the content is entirely inaccurate. |
| Clarity of Explanation | Clearly and effectively communicates the concepts using appropriate terminology. Transitions between ideas are smooth and logical. | Explains concepts clearly but may occasionally use language or terms that are not well-understood by the audience. Transitions are generally smooth. | Explanation is somewhat unclear, making it difficult for the audience to follow. Transitions are occasionally abrupt or confusing. | Explanation is unclear, and the audience struggles to understand the concepts. Frequent abrupt transitions. | No attempt at explanation or communication is made. |
| Engagement | Engages the audience effectively through eye contact, | Maintains good eye contact and enthusiasm but may not consistently | Engagement with the audience is limited. Little encouragement for | Fails to engage the audience effectively. Does not encourage | No engagement with the audience. |



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| | enthusiasm, and interaction. Encourages questions and participation. | engage the audience. Encourages some questions and participation. | questions or participation. | questions or participation. | |
| Visual Aids (if used) | Visual aids are highly relevant, enhance understanding, and are well-organized. | Visual aids are mostly relevant and organized but may have minor issues. | Visual aids are somewhat relevant but lack organization and clarity. | Visual aids are mostly irrelevant, disorganized, or confusing. | No visual aids used, or they are entirely irrelevant. |
| Time Management | The presentation is well-paced and within the allotted time frame, with an appropriate balance of content and discussion. | The presentation is generally well-paced but may slightly exceed or fall short of the allotted time. | The presentation is somewhat uneven in pace and may significantly exceed or fall short of the allotted time. | The presentation is poorly paced, with significant deviations from the allotted time. | Presentation is not delivered within the allotted time frame. |
| Overall Impact | The presentation is highly effective in conveying the content and engaging the audience. | The presentation is effective but may have minor areas for improvement. | The presentation has some effectiveness but has notable areas for improvement. | The presentation lacks overall effectiveness and leaves the audience with significant questions or confusion. | The presentation has no impact or is counter-productive. |

Conclusion

Many teachers find formative assessment to be a dynamic and indispensable tool. It fosters a learning-centered approach that uses student data to inform real-time instructional adjustments or interventions. By implementing formative assessments effectively, educators can gain valuable insights into their students' progress, tailor instruction to meet individual needs, and create an environment that nurtures continuous improvement.

As you embark on creating and integrating formative assessments, remember that the process is also about the ongoing dialogue and collaboration that grows between educators and students. Embrace the flexibility and adaptability that formative assessments offer, and don't be afraid to adjust your instructional strategies based on the feedback you receive. Keep in mind that the goal of formative assessment is not to label or judge but to inform and empower. Ultimately, formative assessment is a



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journey of growth for educators and students alike. To learn more about formative assessment, visit these additional resources.

Additional Resources

[Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning Feedback on Student Learning Module](#)

[Oregon Department of Education Formative Assessment Resources](#)

[Wisconsin Department of Education Formative Assessment Video](#)