

# Formative Assessment

Consistent and systematic implementation of formative assessment tools and processes builds students' commitment and accountability to persevere through challenging learning tasks and complete them with pride and satisfaction.

## Formative Assessment Defined:

Real-time, reciprocal student-teacher feedback that enables teachers to:

- a) assess students' skill acquisition and understanding,
- b) adjust and differentiate instruction according to learning needs, and
- c) provide feedback that supports students to close learning gaps and correct errors and misunderstandings in order to successfully meet learning outcomes.

Formative assessment is one of the greatest levers for increased student achievement. The formative assessment strategies on the following pages were selected based on two criteria: size effect on student learning and engagement and ease of implementation.

## FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

### 1) In the Moment, Whole Group Checks for Understanding

In the Moment, Whole Group Checks for Understanding provide snapshots of student understanding and skills at specific points in a lesson. They offer teachers immediate insights into student learning and an immediate opportunity to clarify student thinking. The teacher asks all students to demonstrate their current understanding of the content, skill or process by: (a) providing a prompt, (b) requiring a response from all students, and (c) looking for patterns across student responses and opportunities to re-teach or clarify.

- Entry Tickets
- Exit Tickets
- Cold Call + No Opt Out  
(business cards, popsicle sticks,  
etc.)
- Concept Maps
- Mini Whiteboards
- Card Sorts
- Four (or More) Corners
- Post It-Up
- One Minute Note Cards
- Toss One, Take One

## 2) Walk Around Look Fors

The teacher clarifies the skills/knowledge students should be using/practicing, walks around as students work independently or in small groups collecting data on what students understand and can do AND what students do not yet know, understand or can do related to the learning outcome. Based on the patterns observed, the teacher determines next steps for instruction. (i.e., students need additional teaching, the whole class is ready for the next step, a few students need some additional feedback and supports, etc.)

### EXAMPLES:

- “As you’re working in your groups, I’m going to be listening for ways you’re working cooperatively and doing your fair share of work.” Teacher walks around documenting participation levels by all group members.
- “As you start working on the homework, I am going to walk around and see how everyone does with question #3.” Teacher walks around and documents how many students are able to complete question #3 accurately and any trends in mistakes that are being made.
- “I’m going to be looking for the research question you’ve formulated and the relevant variables you’ve identified.” Teacher walks around and checks that variables are relevant to research question documenting trends in student

## 3) Academic Check-In

The academic check-in offers teachers access to student thinking in ways that few other practices offer. It allows the teacher an opportunity to connect with students and discuss their individual understanding of the content as well as gain insight into patterns in student work. They invite students to consider their own learning and progress, set goals and solve-problems so they can begin to develop the tools and mindsets to be stewards of their own academic growth.

### EXAMPLE:

The teacher scans the room to identify students with which to check in and moves through a consistent script of questions. For example: (1) “What are you working on?” (2) “How’s it going?” and (3) “What are you going to do next?” or “What questions do you have?”

## 4) Corrective Feedback

The teacher communicates what he/she has observed, heard, seen, read and/or noticed that indicates errors, confusion, or misunderstandings AND offers concrete suggestions or re-teaching that will enable students to reach the learning outcome.

### EXAMPLES:

- “Look at the T-charts we created. Commit to two cooperative behaviors you’re going to demonstrate in the next 5 minutes.”
- Teacher puts a dot (•) at the end of any line that includes a run-on or sentence fragment.
- "Look again at the suggested steps for solving the problem. Identify the step you’re on.”
- "Go back and highlight evidence in your introduction that demonstrates it meets the rubric criteria.
- "Circle all relevant variables connected to your research question.”

## 5) Value-Added Feedback

The teacher offers students specific feedback about the internal qualities/assets they used when completing something successfully. The teacher provides:

- a) specific, concrete description of what the student did, and
- b) names the asset or personal quality that enabled the student to do it.

### EXAMPLES:

- “I noticed you wanted to hear everyone’s opinion in your group before making a decision. You really demonstrated your capacity to work cooperatively in your small group.”
- “I noticed how you completed your last three labs. You tackled every part of each lab. That showed real perseverance.”
- “Before you started on your project today, I noticed that you took the time to check the machinery and get all of your tools out before jumping in. That shows me you’ve got great self-discipline. You know what to do without being told.”
- “I saw that you were frustrated today when we were graphing linear equations AND you took a break and asked for help. This showed an ability to be your own advocate in order to learn something you find challenging.”

## 6) Student Self-Assessment

In a study of 800+ meta-analysis of pedagogical practices that move the needle on student achievement, increasing student expectations of themselves had the single greatest size effect (Hattie, 2008). This requires a teacher discovering what students’ expectations of themselves are (student self-assessment) and pushing learners to exceed these expectations. With student self-assessments, the teacher offers students the opportunity to reflect on their engagement and/or learning individually or in groups. This also supports students in developing academic mindsets, habits of learning, and metacognitive thinking that will facilitate them becoming more self-directed, self-managing, self-aware, socially aware and responsible in their decisions.

### EXAMPLES:

#### Looking Ahead at a Task, Performance or Demonstration

- What topics do you feel confident about?  
What topics are you unsure about?
- What might be some things you will do to clear up concepts you have yet to master?
- What grade do you predict you will get?

#### Assessing the Lesson/Unit

- What worked best for you today?
- What is something important you learned?
- What activity did you like the most? Least?  
Why?
- What questions do you have?

#### Assessing Performance at Completion of a Unit Test, Project, or Presentation

- Assess your study efforts and preparation
- Rate your confidence level in taking the test
- Predict your grade.

#### Assessing Habits of Learning

Name an experience when you:

- felt really self-disciplined, overcame frustration or anger successfully.
- felt self-motivated, and/or persevered (did what it took to complete an assignment/project).