

Shared Decision-Making for Teachers



FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT TALKING POINTS AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

You can use this list to explain to families what formative assessment is, why it is important, and how they can partner in this ongoing process. You can also distribute this list to families so they can gain a deeper understanding of formative assessment and their child's development.

What is formative assessment?

- Formative assessment is an ongoing classroom data collection process that provides information about what each student is learning while he or she is learning. It is not a test for students. Teachers use the information to adapt their instruction to better fit the needs of each student as they work to meet learning goals. And, students use the information to understand their own progress towards meeting learning goals.

Where does the formative assessment process take place?

- The formative assessment process can take place in any setting where a student is engaged in the teaching and learning process (e.g., Classroom, Cafeteria, Playground, Hallways).

Why is formative assessment an important teaching practice for teachers?

- Formative assessment helps teachers to understand individual student learning. With the information teachers gather, they are better able to monitor each student's progress and growth over time. Having this understanding means that teachers know when to provide something more or something different to each student as they work to meet learning goals. This information also helps teachers figure out which teaching strategies worked in helping a child make progress.

This resource is for teachers to prepare for questions and discussion around the formative assessment process with families.

Recommendations

- Implementation Settings
- Family-teacher conferences
 - Before or after school
 - Related school events
 - Parent community meetings

Planning Time: None

Implementation Time: 20 minutes to read; 20 minutes to have discussion

Families can use this resource to learn more about the formative assessment process.

Principals can use this resource to support teachers in having data-driven conversations with families.

Why is formative assessment important for students?

- In the formative assessment process, students understand what their learning goals are; and learn strategies for planning for and making progress towards goals. Students recognize their strengths and areas for growth in relation to the performance criteria or expectations.

What do these skill levels (from the construct progression and child documentation form) mean?

- These skill levels lay out the step-by-step progression children typically take to reach learning goals.

When does the formative assessment process occur?

- The formative assessment process is ongoing; it happens on a day-to-day basis. It is a continuous feedback loop in which teachers and children learn and document progress towards learning goals. Families can contribute to this process by sharing observations and work samples from the child's experience outside of school.

Are there any specific materials that are required for the formative assessment process? Generally, the materials needed are the routine materials used in the classroom. For example, with crossing the midline, teachers may use a variety of writing/drawing materials including paper, paint, paintbrushes, easel and paper, board games, or other fine-motor manipulatives (e.g. Legos, counting bears). With book orientation, teachers would need to have a book available for each child.

What input can family members provide to support the formative assessment process? Families are essential partners in this process. Families can share observations and work samples from the child's experience outside of school.

What decisions do teachers and families need to make together throughout this process? Together, teachers and families can make decisions about what additional opportunities for practice and supports each child may need to meet identified learning goals.

What is an example of an observation formative assessment? An example related to object counting may look like this: *When observing a child or children arranging or playing with a set of objects, the teacher could ask, "How many are there?" or "Could you give me 4?" (or 6 or 8, etc.). The teacher also can rearrange the objects after they have been counted and then ask, "How many are there?" to see if the child can recognize that the number stays the same. For children who can correctly count 18-20 objects, the teacher can add one more and ask "How many are there?" and observe which strategy the child uses. When collecting evidence for determining a child's learning status, teachers do not use supports such as pointing to the objects or helping the child point to the objects while the child is counting.*

How does formative assessment support each child's orientation towards learning? Formative assessment can promote self-regulation, increased effort, autonomy and the belief that effort will lead to academic success.¹ Formative assessment focuses on individual improvement, recognizes effort, evaluates children individually, involves children in decision-making, fosters children's sense of responsibility and independence, provides meaningful and interesting

learning activities, and encourages students to set short-term, self-referenced goals - all of which support lifelong learning.

How can families take this information and use it once the school year comes to an end? Families can become familiar with their child's progress and continue to offer opportunities for their child to demonstrate progress on the identified skills. By knowing what's next, families can create opportunities for practice towards the next level. Families can provide specific feedback to their child as he or she continues to make progress.

How can teachers include students in the formative assessment process? Teachers can translate the content standards into goals that are written in student-friendly language. Teachers can also discuss individual feedback with children privately.

How can teachers include families in the formative assessment process? Teachers can invite families to stay informed by regularly sharing the child's experiences and work samples that form a child's school/home portfolio. Teachers can share formative assessment findings in ways that are understandable and meaningful to families.

How can families get involved in the formative assessment process? Families can ask their child to review any criteria associated with assignments to be completed at home, and ask questions of their child that pertain to the criteria to check for accuracy and completion. In addition, families can keep their child's teacher informed by regularly sharing the child's non-school learning experiences and work samples that together form a child's school/home portfolio. Families can engage with teachers in discussions of children's learning and development.

RESOURCES

- ⁱ (Ames, C. (1992) Classroom: Goals, structures, and student motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 84 (3), 261-271.
- Pintrich, P. R. (2003). A motivational science perspective on the role of student motivation in learning and teaching contexts. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(4), 667-686.
- Seifert, T. (2004). Understanding student motivation. *Education Research*, 46(2), 137-149.)