Formative Assessments in Professional Learning Communities

Douglas Reeves & Jennifer L. Sparrow

Learning Objectives

1. Apply criteria to identify and improve effective common formative assessments.
2. Use a tool, modified for the needs of each participant, to improve assessments.
3. Improve collaboration among students and teachers through a focus on results.

Birthday (e.g., September 11)
What are some commitments that brought you into this room?
What are some of the celebrations you have had with assessments?
What are some of the crossroads you are facing with assessments?
Be prepared to share a “most important point” with the larger group.

Effective Assessment

“Even though teachers can spend as much as a third to a half of their professional time involved in assessment-related activities, study after study shows that K–12 teachers lack skill in assessing their students and feel unprepared and uncomfortable in their own knowledge of assessment practices.”

—Northwest Regional Educational Lab, Addendum to Improving Classroom Assessment: A Toolkit for Professional Developers (2000), p. 3
The Hinge Point; Average Effect Size 0.4

Desired (>0.4)

- Direct instruction (.59)
- Study skills (.59)
- Teaching strategies (.6)
- Prior achievement (.67)
- Meta-cognitive strategies (.69)
- Feedback (.73)
- Teaching clarity (.75)

Top 3

3. Providing formative evaluation (.9)
2. Piagetian programs (1.28)
1. Self-reported grades (1.44)
"The evidence that what we are doing systematically isn’t working, coupled with the research on best practices in assessment design and use, fosters the overwhelmingly convincing argument that we must develop our assessment literacy."

—Erkens, in Guskey, The Teacher as Assessment Leader (2009), p. 13

"Exactly what is assessment literacy? It is the ability to understand the different purposes and types of assessment in order to select the most appropriate type of assessment to meet a specific purpose."

—Ainsworth & Viegut, Common Formative Assessments: How to Connect Standards-Based Instruction and Assessment (2006), p. 53

Assessment Literacy Standards

http://www.measuredprogress.org/c/document_library/
### Assessment Literacy Standards

**Teachers must be able to create or select and effectively use classroom assessments for a variety of purposes.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category of Evidence</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Summative</td>
<td>Norm-referenced tests, Criterion-referenced tests</td>
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- Quality of instruction and feedback:   - Assessments of understanding and learning progress
- Reporting options:                    - Inform changes
- Interpretation of results:            - Different student groups

- **School and Student:**
  - Student feedback
  - Targeted results
  - Improvement in instruction

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**Teachers and administrators must be able to select and effectively interpret and use results from external interim and summative assessments designed for a variety of purposes.**

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### Assessment

Gathering evidence on student behavior and performance which provides feedback to modify teaching and learning activities.

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Assessment

Gathering evidence on student behavior and performance which provides feedback to modify teaching and learning activities.

Evaluation

Judging the degree to which evidence demonstrates the desired level of achievement.

Pre-test
Teach
Teach
Teach
Teach
Post-test
Assign grades

Pre-assess
Analyze results
Plan for differentiation
Teach
Monitor, reflect, adjust
Teach
Post-assess

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Formative
- Occurs during the course of a unit of study
- Determines a student’s knowledge and skills, including learning gaps
- Informs instruction and guides learning
- Includes assessment as and for learning

Summative
- Occurs at the end of a unit of study
- Determines the degree to which a student has met a learning target
- Evaluates or judges student achievement
- Includes assessment of learning

When given + How used = Formative or Summative

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Re-affirmation
This is something I already knew …

Revelation
This is something new to me …

Re-evaluation
Mmm … This is something about which I need to learn more …

What Makes “Common” Common?
Research has shown that when teachers develop common formative assessments, examine the results of these assessments in collaborative scoring sessions, and adjust instruction in light of the results of those common assessments, we can improve student achievement.

(Marzano, Classroom Assessment and Grading That Work, 2006)

“[Not doing common assessments] allows, and even encourages, individual teachers to include, at their own discretion, different non-achievement factors in the assignment of grades; it allows individual teachers to differentially weight assessment; and it mixes different types of knowledge and skills into single scores on assessments. All these then will have a profound impact on the accuracy of student achievement scores and the resulting decisions.”


Components

- Designed by PLC to assess student understanding of expected learner outcomes
- Collaboratively scored
- Results collaboratively analyzed and used
Step 1: Identify Essential Learning (Unpack Curriculum)

Benchmark = Content + Cognitive Behavior

The student will explain the associative property.

Benchmark = Content + Cognitive Behavior

The student will list the elements of narrative structure.

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### Step 2: Assemble and Review Assessment Items

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
<th>Evaluations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claim</td>
<td>Introduce</td>
<td>Distinguish from opposing claim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons, Evidence</td>
<td>Organize logically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>Use accurate and credible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Demonstrate understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words, Phrases, Clauses</td>
<td>Create cohesion and clearly relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Style</td>
<td>Establish and maintain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Statement</td>
<td>Support argument</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

### Step 3: Design Scoring Tool

Collaborative teams need to **agree on the evaluation criteria** to determine proficiency, quality of response, and result or impact of the response.

[Ainsworth]

### Step 4: “Anchor” the Work

“When teachers work together to consider the work students have produced, or listen to their presentations or analyze their electronic projects and so on, they bring the collective wisdom of all the people in the group to the exercise. More eyes (and consequently more brains) result in more reliable determinations of what students understand.”


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Step 5: Use the Results

“One of the most overlooked and understated aspects of the common formative assessment process and the role these assessments play in a professional learning community has to be the degree to which the results of high-quality assessments inform teachers about the need to change instructional practice …”


What is most important to remember about the concept of “common assessments”? To what degree have you identified “common assessments” for each unit of study? How might you take this concept back to your team?

Put Into Practice
The Meta-Assessment

- Eight dimensions
- Four levels for each dimension
- Please read the meta-assessment, highlighting or underlining phrases about which you have questions.

Directions for Using Tool

- Start by working alone. Evaluate the sample assessment on each of the eight dimensions. You can score each dimension zero through four, for a total score of zero through thirty-two.
- As soon as you are finished, please report your total rating to the facilitators.
- Thank you!

Improving Collaboration
"Unless the goals of collaboration were explicitly focused on achievement, the dynamics of team meetings would prevent any meaningful critique of current practice that would lead to improvement. Instead, typical teamwork tended to..."


"... confirm present practice without evaluating its worth."

—Little, "The Persistence of Privacy: Autonomy and Initiative in Teachers’ Professional Relations," *Teachers’ College Record*, 91, p. 517

**Common Roadblocks**

- Not seeing the need to analyze data
- Viewing data analysis as more work added by administrators
- Feeling intimidated by data and analysis
- Not knowing strategies to guide the use of data
- Not having school systems that facilitate and support teacher use of data
Impact of Common Formative Assessment Data

- Whether a learning target or outcome has been achieved
- Which students require additional time and support
- Which areas require additional teaching
- Whether students will be ready for the summative assessment at the end of the unit or course

Impact of Common Formative Assessment Data

- Whether curriculum is aligned across the grade or subject
- Whether teachers can employ effective strategies in their instruction in the event that one or more teachers are not obtaining satisfactory results
Step 1: Find the data—“treasure hunt.”

Step 2: Analyze the data.

Step 3: Prioritize needs.

Step 4: Set or refine goals.

Step 5: Select strategies.

Step 6: Determine results indicators.

Meeting 1: Getting Started

Meeting 2: Determining Pre-Assessment

Meeting 3: Data-Driven Decision-Making Process

Meeting 4: Reviewing Post-Assessment and Determining Next Steps

Alternate Meetings: Monitoring Results

Pre-assess, Analyze results, Plan for differentiation, Teach, Monitor, reflect, adjust, Teach, Post-assess

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To what degree do your PLCs use common formative data?
What might be some roadblocks you need to overcome in the area of data analysis?
How might the bedrock principles or data-driven, decision-making processes help your PLCs?

Here’s What
Here’s something important for me to remember about...

So What
So what impact will this have if I put it in place?

Now What
Now what do I need to do to make it happen?

Thank You!
To schedule professional development at your site, contact international@solution-tree.com.
# Metarubric for Assessing Creativity Rubrics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>1–Developing</th>
<th>2–Progressing</th>
<th>3–Proficient</th>
<th>4–Exemplary</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research Basis</strong></td>
<td>The rubric is based on intuition or hunches and has little basis in research, as evidenced by the promotion of practices that are contrary to research. For example, the rubric might encourage brainstorming without filtering or criticism.</td>
<td>The rubric includes some elements based in research and some other elements that are speculative, outdated, or not based on research.</td>
<td>The rubric reflects current research on the relationship between student actions and creative results.</td>
<td>The rubric reflects the latest and best research, including clear citations that other teachers, parents, or students can use to better understand the rubric writer's reasoning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multidisciplinary Perspective</strong></td>
<td>The rubric focuses narrowly on subjects and ideas within a single discipline, and explicitly punishes or dissuades students from using sources or media from other disciplines.</td>
<td>The rubric allows students to explore projects using an individualized, interdisciplinary approach, but does not clearly promote that approach.</td>
<td>The rubric specifically encourages and rewards an interdisciplinary perspective.</td>
<td>The rubric encourages students to expand the scope of their work, through an iterative process, to include ideas and perspectives from three or more different disciplines and sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source Material</strong></td>
<td>The rubric expects students to be completely original and punishes the use of outside material for inspiration or use.</td>
<td>The rubric allows students to consider outside sources but makes no special note of the process.</td>
<td>The rubric encourages the use of a variety of digital, print, and personal sources to form the basis of the creative product for the current project.</td>
<td>The rubric requires the use of external sources and the identification of ideas from other sources on which the current project is based.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarity of Guidelines</strong></td>
<td>The rubric contains ambiguous language, which makes the difference between rubric levels unclear to students and inconsistently applied by teachers.</td>
<td>The rubric is expressed in language that is inaccessible to students. It may be clear to the teacher, but the obscurity and complexity of the language make the rubric of little use as a feedback tool.</td>
<td>The rubric guidelines clearly specify the criteria and performance levels by which the students are evaluated. The teacher has evidence that at least two different evaluators have used the rubric to come to very similar conclusions about student performance.</td>
<td>The rubric is clear and specific in how it distinguishes each performance level. A group of teachers, including those from different grade levels and from outside the subject discipline, applied the rubric to an anonymous piece of student work and came to very similar conclusions.</td>
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<td><strong>Product</strong></td>
<td>The rubric calls for the creation of a work product, but the requirements are ambiguous or absent, and differences among performance levels are unclear. The teacher values process to the exclusion of product.</td>
<td>The rubric requires the teacher to objectively evaluate the student's work product using a clear assessment rubric. The rubric not only evaluates the end product but also student work through every step of the process. As a result of this feedback, there is evidence that students are improving their methods, processes, and products.</td>
<td>The rubric requires the teacher to objectively evaluate the student's work product using a clear assessment rubric. There is also evidence that the students can, independently and in groups, use the rubric to revise and improve the product.</td>
<td>The rubric requires multiple drafts of work products, with students using the rubric to improve performance. There is clear evidence that students learn from their mistakes. The ideal work is never error free but full of learning that results from a virtuous cycle of error, feedback, reflection, and improvement.</td>
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<td><strong>Process</strong></td>
<td>The rubric’s process requirements are ambiguous, and students have difficulty using the rubric to improve their work.</td>
<td>The rubric has clear process requirements, and students can differentiate performance levels based on the rubric.</td>
<td>The rubric’s process requirements are inconsistent, and students have difficulty using the rubric to improve their work.</td>
<td>The rubric establishes guidelines for collaboration, including specifying which elements of the team product are the work of individual students, and it is clear from the rubric that great performance is a combination of work by individuals, pairs, and larger teams.</td>
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<td><strong>Collaboration</strong></td>
<td>The rubric requires students to work in complete isolation, without the aid or feedback of other students or teachers. Getting hints, suggestions, or ideas from other students is strictly forbidden.</td>
<td>The rubric allows for collaborative or group work, but it includes no guidelines for evaluating the process of collaboration.</td>
<td>The rubric allows for collaborative or group work, with guidelines for evaluating the process of collaboration.</td>
<td>The rubric requires a portion of the project to be group based. It establishes clear guidelines as to how group collaboration works and how students share responsibilities for the process and product.</td>
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<td><strong>Practice and Error</strong></td>
<td>The rubric promotes one-thought attempts at performance. The ideal submission is error free and done right the first time it is submitted to the teacher.</td>
<td>The rubric allows for redrafting work products that are not acceptable on the first attempt.</td>
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