

FORMATIVE ASSESMENT AND FEEDBACK

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Annotation

“Students crave feedback,” says Shannon Davis, an English teacher at Seward High School in Nebraska. “Good teaching requires that you give students feedback along the way in class. They can’t always assess themselves. Formative assessments enable to show students what they do know and have mastered and to point out what they need to spend more time with before the next quiz or test or whatever comes next. I can’t imagine teaching for more than a day without getting a sense of how the students are responding to the material. Formative assessment is just as important as summative.”

Annotatsiya

Nebraskadagi Sevard o'rta maktabining ingliz tili o'qituvchisi Shennon Devis: "Talabalar fikr-mulohazalarini talab qiladilar", deydi. “Yaxshi o'qitish uchun siz o'quvchilarga dars davomida fikr-mulohaza bildirishingiz kerak. Ular har doim ham o'zlarini baholay olmaydilar. Formativ baholash o'quvchilarga nimalarni bilganliklarini va o'zlashtirganliklarini ko'rsatishga hamda keyingi viktorina yoki test yoki keyingi nima bo'lishidan oldin nimaga ko'proq vaqt sarflashlari kerakligini ko'rsatish imkonini beradi. Talabalar materialga qanday munosabatda bo'lishlarini sezmasdan turib, bir kundan ortiq dars berishni tasavvur qila olmayman. Formativ baholash ham xuddi summativ kabi muhim ahamiyatga ega.”

Key words: formative, achievement, interpreted, peers, instruction, decisions, evidence, elicited.

Kalit so'zlar: shakllantiruvchi, yutuq, sharhlangan, tengdoshlar, ko'rsatmalar, qarorlar, dalillar, olingan.

“Practice in a classroom is formative to the extent that evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, learners, or their peers, to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, or better founded, than the decisions they would have taken in the absence of the evidence that was elicited.”

Characteristics of formative assessment:

According to Harlen and James (1997), formative assessment:

- is essentially positive in intent, in that it is directed towards promoting learning; it is therefore part of teaching;
- it takes into account the progress of each individual, the effort put in and other aspects of learning which may be unspecified in the curriculum; in other words, it is not purely criterion-referenced;
- it has to take into account several instances in which certain skills and ideas are used and there will be inconsistencies as well as patterns in behaviour; such inconsistencies would

be 'error' in summative evaluation, but in formative evaluation they provide diagnostic information;

- validity and usefulness are paramount in formative assessment and should take precedence over concerns for reliability;
- even more than assessment for other purposes, formative assessment requires that pupils have a central part in it; pupils have to be active in their own learning (teachers cannot learn for them) and unless they come to understand their strengths and weaknesses, and how they might deal with them, they will not make progress.

Feedback is the central function of formative assessment. It typically involves a focus on the detailed content of what is being learnt, rather than simply a test score or other measurement of how far a student is falling short of the expected standard. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, synthesising from the literature, list seven principles of good feedback practice:

- It clarifies what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards);
- It facilitates the development of self-assessment in learning;
- It provides high quality information to students about their learning;
- It encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning;
- It encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem;
- It provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;
- It provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape teaching.

Examples:

The time between formative assessment and adjustments to learning can be a matter of seconds or a matter of months. Some examples of formative assessment are:

- A language teacher asks students to choose the best thesis statement from a selection; if all choose correctly, she moves on; if only some do she may initiate a class discussion; if most answer incorrectly then she may review the work on thesis statements.
- A teacher asks her students to write down, in a brainstorm activity, all they know about how hot-air balloons work so that she can discover what students already know about the area of science she is intending to teach.
- A science supervisor looks at the previous year's student test results to help plan teacher workshops during the summer vacation, to address areas of weakness in student performance.
- A teacher documents student work and student conferences to help plan authentic activities to meet student needs.
- Students could be given each one of three "traffic cards" to indicate the level at which they are understanding a concept during a lesson. Green means that the student is understanding the concept and the teacher can move on, yellow indicates that the instructor should slow down because the student is only somewhat understanding the concept, and red indicates

that the student wishes that the teacher stops and explains a specific concept more clearly because they are not understanding it.

Evidence

Meta-analysis of studies into formative assessment have indicated significant learning gains where formative assessment is used, across all content areas, knowledge and skill types, and levels of education. Educational researcher Robert J. Marzano states: “Recall the finding from Black and Wiliam's (1998) synthesis of more than 250 studies that formative assessments, as opposed to summative ones, produce the more powerful effect on student learning. In his review of the research, Terrance Crooks (1988) reports that effects sizes for summative assessments are consistently lower than effect sizes for formative assessments. In short, it is formative assessment that has a strong research base supporting its impact on learning.”

While empirical evidence has shown the substantial impact formative assessment has in raising student achievement, it is also "recognized as one of the most powerful ways to enhance student motivation". Believing in their ability to learn, contributing learning successes to individual efforts and abilities, emphasizing progress toward learning goals rather than letter grades, and evaluating "the nature of their thinking to identify strategies that improve understanding" are all manners in which motivation is enhanced through an effective use of formative assessment.

However, for these gains to become evident formative assessment must

- (1) Clarify and share learning goals and success criteria;
- (2) Create effective classroom discussions and other tasks which demonstrate evidence of student understanding;
- (3) provide feedback which can and will be acted upon;
- (4) allow students to become instructional resources for one another; and
- (5) stimulate students to become owners of their own learning.

Some researchers have concluded that standards-based assessments may be an effective way to "prescribe instruction and to ensure that no child is left behind".

The strongest evidence of improved learning gains comes from short-cycle (over seconds or minutes within a single lesson) formative assessment, and medium to long-term assessment where assessment is used to change the teacher's regular classroom practice.

Strategies

Understanding goals for learning

It is important for students to understand the goals and the criteria for success when learning in the classroom. Often teachers will introduce learning goals to their students before a lesson, but will not do an effective job in distinguishing between the end goals and what the students will be doing to achieve those goals. "When teachers start from what it is they want students to know and design their instruction backward from that goal, then instruction is far more likely to be effective". In a

study done by Gray and Tall, they found that 72 students between the ages of 7 and 13 had different experiences when learning in mathematics. The study showed that higher achieving students looked over mathematical ambiguities, while the lower achieving students tended to get stuck on these misunderstandings. The study showed that higher achieving students were able to look past this while other students were not.

Another study done by White and Frederiksen showed that when twelve 7th grade science classrooms were given time to reflect on what they deemed to be quality work, and how they thought they would be evaluated on their work, the gap between the high achieving students and the low achieving students was decreased.

One way to help with this is to offer students different examples of other students' work so they can evaluate the different pieces. By examining the different levels of work, students can start to differentiate between superior and inferior work.

Feedback

There has been extensive research done on studying how students are affected by feedback. Kluger and DeNisi (1996) reviewed over three thousand reports on feedback in schools, universities, and the workplace. Of these, only 131 of them were found to be scientifically rigorous and of those, 50 of the studies shows that feedback actually has negative effects on its recipients. This is due to the fact that feedback is often "ego-involving", that is the feedback focuses on the individual student rather than the quality of the student's work. Feedback is often given in the form of some numerical or letter grade and that perpetuates students being compared to their peers. The studies previously mentioned showed that the most effective feedback for students is when they are not only told in which areas they need to improve, but also how to go about improving it.

It has been shown that leaving comments alongside grades is just as ineffective as giving solely a numerical/letter grade (Butler 1987, 1989). This is due to the fact that students tend to look at their grade and disregard any comments that are given to them. The next thing students tend to do is to ask other students in the class for their grade, and they compare the grade to their own grade.

Questioning

Questioning is an important part of the learning process and an even more important part is asking the right types of questions. Questions that promote discussion and student reflection make it easier for students to go on the right path to end up completing their learning goals. Here are some types of questions that are good to ask students:

- What do you think of [student]'s answer?
- What can we add to [student]'s explanation?
- [Student] said this and [student] said that, but how can we combine these explanations into a complete answer?

Wait time

Wait time is the amount of time that is given to a student to answer a question that was posed and the time allowed for the student to answer. Mary Budd Rowe went on to look at the outcomes of having longer wait times for students. These included:

- answers were longer;
- failure to respond decreased;
- responses from students were more confident;
- students challenged and/or improved the answers of other students;
- more alternative explanations were offered.

Peer-assessment

Having students assess each other's work has been studied to have numerous benefits:

- When students know that they are going to be assessed by their peers, they tend to put more attention to detail in their work.
- Students are able to speak to one another in a language that they are more comfortable with than they would be with an instructor. The insight of a fellow student might be more relatable than that of a teacher.
- Students tend to accept constructive criticism more from a fellow student than from an instructor.
- While students are in the process of peer-assessment, a teacher can more easily take command of the learning going on. The teacher can also stand on the sidelines and watch as the students continue to assess each other's work and may intervene at any time if need be.

Formative assessment is valuable for day-to-day teaching when used to adapt instructional methods to meet students' needs and for monitoring student progress toward learning goals. Further, it helps students monitor their own progress as they get feedback from the teacher and/or peers, allowing the opportunity to revise and refine their thinking. Formative assessment is also known as educative assessment, classroom assessment, or assessment for learning.

CONCLUSION

What do class discussions, quick writes, reader response journals, quizzes, and writing conferences all have in common? They are all examples of the wide range of classroom-based activities that teachers use to measure how well their students are learning.

When Davis realizes students are struggling she'll either re-teach a topic, put students in small groups so they can help one another, or hold another class discussion to clarify the material. Davis also uses reading checks to see how students are doing throughout the process of reading a long novel.

“If they stop understanding the story, we’ll slow down and review,” she says. “If they’re getting it and starting to get bored, we’ll pick up the pace.”

Summative assessment, an exam that comes at the end of a unit, for example, identifies those students who did not learn the material, but it does so too late to help them. With the advent of No Child Left Behind legislation and its emphasis on standardized, high-stakes summative testing, it is good to keep in mind that formative assessments provide more timely and accurate measures of what students are learning. NCTE supports formative assessment as the most valuable classroom tool for evaluating student learning in time to adjust teaching to meet student needs.

Brian Huot, professor of English and the writing program coordinator at Kent State University, suggests it’s important to avoid the trap of thinking “formative assessment: good, summative assessment: bad.”

“There are times, when students are struggling to learn, when formative assessment is very good,” he says. “But that does not mean summative assessment, or testing and giving out grades, is bad. Grades and tests are qualitatively different from formative assessments. They do different jobs.”

Teachers use formative assessment in a variety of ways.

The unit on Manifest Destiny had complex concepts the students needed to understand and were not “as simple as ‘choose a, b, or c’ on a multiple-choice test,” said Pierce. By having students perform an informal writing assignment, Pierce could determine whether or not the students grasped concepts in the unit as well as writing concepts, such as how to write a thesis paragraph. By looking at the responses, Pierce could make sure all students were up to speed before moving on and determine an approach if some were lagging. If some students were struggling, Pierce might pull that group of students out to do more instruction while the rest of the class worked on a different project.

“Formative assessment is a feedback loop between the teacher and the student. It is an assessment for learning rather than of learning,” she says.

In order to use this approach effectively, teachers must be able to see students both as individuals and as a group, Pierce adds. And for teachers who fear formative assessments will mean even more work in an already over-crowded schedule, Pierce would argue that it’s “not so much about collecting new or more data as actually using the data you have.”

“The approach means that you have very much in mind what your ultimate goals are, you’re actively communicating them to the kids, and you’re using the feedback you provide to help them move toward those goals and to give them honest feedback about how they are doing at a point where they can do something about it,” she says.

This ability to see students both as individuals and as part of a group is what Heidi Mills, professor of elementary education at the University of South Carolina and one of the founders of the Center for Inquiry, a magnet elementary school, calls “kidwatching.” Kidwatching, a term coined in 1985 by Yetta Goodman, refers to observing and recording children’s literacy development. In the course of kidwatching, teachers also gain new understandings of the ways children think and learn. Ultimately, their observations help teachers plan curriculum and instruction that are tailored to individual strengths and needs.

“By looking closely at and listening carefully to children as readers and writers, we are able to pay attention to the strategies they use to construct and share meaning,” she says. “We learn about our children’s favorite authors, the genres they access most frequently, the connections they make within and across engagements, the kinds of questions they pose, and the issues and ideas that capture their hearts and minds.”

For teachers who see many students in a day, one-on-one conversations may be rare, but there are many other ways to monitor student progress.

For example, Julie Waugh, another teacher at the Center for Inquiry, has her students keep reading logs. She asks them to review their own logs and reflect (in writing) on the kind of reading that they’re doing; to document what they are doing well and to set new goals for themselves as readers. She might see, for example, that the class is not reading poetry much which might lead her to invite students to participate in reading another genre. The big question she poses is, “What are we doing well, what makes sense for us to do next?”

Assessments and feedbacks are particularly valuable for measuring how students are progressing toward learning goals because the results of the assessment give both the teacher and the student immediate feedback on what to do next.

References

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