

Module 10: Getting Started with Formative Assessment

Extended Learning Activities

Background

In **Module 10: Getting Started with Formative Assessment**, teachers explored formative assessment as a process of using evidence to inform learning. Understanding the research-based characteristics of effective formative assessment is an important first step to clarify the definition and address misconceptions for educators who wish to engage with formative assessment to improve instruction, strengthen the student role, and advance academic achievement.

These optional extended learning activities include three learning tasks that teachers and leaders may wish to engage with to advance their understanding of the definition of formative assessment and explore their perspectives on the core shifts in practice that are identified in the module. The three areas of focus for the extended learning are defining formative assessment, unpacking misconceptions, and considering shifts in practice.

These learning opportunities can be done independently as individual readings and reflection or with colleagues. Guiding questions are offered to support individual reflection, as well as to strengthen collaborative dialogue, increase shared understanding for site-based teams, and resolve typical issues that can hinder effective use of formative assessment.

How to Use This Resource

Educators may choose **one (or more)** of the following learning experiences to further explore emerging ideas and insights from this module.

- If you and your colleagues want to learn more about the ways researchers have tried to clarify and refine the definition of formative assessment, go to Activity 1: *Exploring Definitions of Formative Assessment*.
- If you and your colleagues wish to consider several early implementation challenges that can, when left unresolved, lead to significant implementation issues, go to Activity 2: *Addressing Early Stage Challenges in Formative Assessment*.

- If you and your colleagues would like to explore your own reflections on how you are currently addressing the shifts in formative assessment that are identified in the module, go to Activity 3: *Reflecting on the Module 10 Self-assessment on Shifts in Practice*.

Module 10: Extended Learning Activity 1

Exploring Definitions of Formative Assessment

Context

In Module 10, *Getting Started with Formative Assessment*, teachers explored Bell and Cowie’s definition of formative assessment as a, “process used by teachers and students to notice, recognize, and respond to student learning in order to enhance that learning, during the learning.” This definition highlights that there are explicit formative assessment practices that strengthen student learning, including that evidence is elicited, interpreted, and used during daily lessons.

This optional extension activity can be done alone or in a collaborative group. Its purpose is to explore numerous research-based, published definitions of formative assessment in order to better understand key characteristics of formative assessment.

Time: 30 minutes

Learning Goals

- Explore the various definitions of formative assessment
- Understand foundational characteristics of formative assessment across research-based definitions

Success Criteria

- I can articulate the key characteristics of formative assessment
- I can communicate how formative assessment is different from “just good teaching”

Task Directions

Step 1: Individually, or in a group, listen to the audio recording describing a brief history of the definition of formative assessment. Discuss or jot notes in your journal that list key points from the audio clip.

Step 2: Read [A Review of Formative Assessment Definitions to Determine Key Principles](#).*

Engage with the following guiding questions to reflect on this series of definitions.

- List and discuss key themes that researchers show across these varied definitions of formative assessment. How do these themes inform your understanding of formative assessment?
- Which of these ideas affirmed your thinking about the definition of formative assessment? Which ideas challenged your thinking?
- If you or your group could share one idea that distinguishes formative assessment from “just good teaching,” what from these definitions would you name as the single most important difference?

Step 3: Review the anchor reading from Module 10, [Defining Formative Assessment](#).^{*}

- Consider, now that you’ve had a chance to review the resources in this extended learning activity, what stands out for you from this reading?

Module 10: Extended Learning Activity 2

Addressing Early-Stage Challenges in Formative Assessment

Context

In Module 10, *Getting Started with Formative Assessment*, teachers and students explore the idea that formative assessment is not just “good teaching,” but is a process of eliciting, interpreting, and using evidence, during daily lessons, to guide learning. In formative assessment, teachers and students work in partnership to explore evidence. Its power is in the shifts in the teacher and student roles, particularly how students learn the practices of using evidence of learning to take next steps in their own learning. When implemented in these ways, which takes some time to do well, there is a profound benefit to students such as increased motivation to learn, ownership in their learning, and the ability to monitor and direct their own learning.

A challenge to formative assessment in the United States is that it is more often understood in ways that are not fully aligned with the research-base of that definition. This is even more confusing as the definition has shifted in the field, going through numerous iterations over time. We have learned that early implementation is more successful when these definitional issues are resolved as soon as possible.

This optional learning activity is designed to have teachers and leaders explore these definitional challenges. Educators can engage in this learning activity independently or in small groups.

Time: 20-30 minutes

Learning Goal

- Understand various misconceptions of formative assessment and how they may hinder implementation

Success Criteria

- I can identify existing misconceptions that I or others at my site may have about the definition and attributes of formative assessment.
- I can articulate how to address colleagues’ misperceptions to develop a shared understanding of formative assessment.

Task Directions

Step 1: Individually, or in a group, read [Addressing Early-Stage Challenges in Formative Assessment](#).*

- Discuss or write in your journal reflections you have regarding these misconceptions.
- Which of these misconceptions, or other misconceptions of formative assessment, have you experienced in your own work?
- What might you or your group be able to do to address current misconceptions?

Step 2: Review the brief reading [Considering the Feedback Loop](#). *

- Consider how this reading provides context to address the definition of formative assessment at your site.

Module 10: Extended Learning Activity 3

Reflecting on the Module 10 Self-Assessment on Shifts in Practice

Context

Module 10: The Getting Started in Formative Assessment outlines changes in practice, referred to as shifts, that develop over time as teachers learn formative assessment. To some, these shifts align with a range of effective educational improvement practices, such as culturally responsive teaching, deeper learning, personalized learning, and many approaches to more student-centered learning. These learning approaches are aligned with formative assessment in that they are all rooted in sociocultural learning, or the belief that learning takes place through social interaction and within existing cultural norms.

In the United States, many teachers have been on a path towards adopting changes in instruction and assessment for some time. We anticipate that as we introduce the shifts in each module, some of the shifts will feel well-established, and others will seem quite new. One idea that is unique to formative assessment is that significant shifts in the student role are central to effective implementation – even with regards to those practices that have historically been in the purview of the teacher. In the formative assessment literature, this critical partnership between students and teachers is referred to as “flattening the hierarchy.” You may have noticed how the student role was represented in the shifts document that was shared in Module 10.

The purpose of this learning task is to simply explore your understanding of the formative assessment shifts (i.e., how you make meaning of them) and reflect on their level of use in your classroom(s). As in the other extended learning activities, this can be done individually, through journaling and reflection, or with a group of colleagues.

Time: 20 minutes

Learning Goal

- Explore the key shifts for teachers and students as outlined in *Module 10: Getting Started with Formative Assessment*

Success Criteria

- Reflect on current instructional practices in comparison to the teacher and student role shifts
- Identify next steps in shifting current key practices to those that support implementation of formative assessment

Task Directions

Step 1: Read [Supporting Student Agency Through Formative Assessment](#)*

- How does this reading add to your understanding of what changes for teachers and students in formative assessment?

Step 2: Review your responses to the self-assessment of [Formative Assessment Shifts in Practice](#)*, completed as part of Module 10.

- Which shifts do you feel are furthest along in your practice?
- Which of the shifts might you wish to explore to more fully align to the ideas outlined in this module?
- How do these shifts align with instructional efforts underway at your site?

*You will need to log into your Canvas account to access the links marked with an asterisk.