Exploring Formative Assessment – Assessment for Learning

Online Workshop
Who will find this workshop useful?

- Teachers
- Syndicates / departments
- AtoL facilitators

How to use this workshop:

- To update, review and/or reflect on formative assessment practice.
- As a focus for professional development in exploring formative assessment.
- To support AtoL in-depth programmes in schools.
The word ‘assess’

Comes from the Latin verb ‘assidere’ meaning ‘to sit with’. In assessment one is supposed to sit with the learner. This implies it is something we do with and for students and not to students (Green, 1998)
What are summative and formative assessment?

The garden analogy

If we think of our children as plants …

**Summative assessment** of the plants is the process of simply measuring them. It might be interesting to compare and analyse measurements but, in themselves, these do not affect the growth of the plants.

**Formative assessment**, on the other hand, is the equivalent of feeding and watering the plants appropriate to their needs - directly affecting their growth.
Formative and summative assessment are *interconnected*. They seldom stand alone in construction or effect.

The vast majority of genuine formative assessment is informal, with interactive and timely feedback and response.

It is widely and empirically argued that formative assessment has the *greatest impact* on learning and achievement.
Some definitions

Formative assessment

“… often means no more than that the assessment is carried out frequently and is planned at the same time as teaching.” (Black and Wiliam, 1999)

“… provides feedback which leads to students recognising the (learning) gap and closing it … it is forward looking …” (Harlen, 1998)

“… includes both feedback and self-monitoring.” (Sadler, 1989)

“… is used essentially to feed back into the teaching and learning process.” (Tunstall and Gipps, 1996)
Some definitions

Summative assessment

“... assessment (that) has increasingly been used to sum up learning” (Black and Wiliam, 1999)
“... looks at past achievements
“... adds procedures or tests to existing work
“... involves only marking and feedback grades to student
“... is separated from teaching
“... is carried out at intervals when achievement has to be summarised and reported.” (Harlen, 1998)
How do you see assessment?

Activity:
Use the listed terms as a starting point to develop a representation (model, mind-map, concept map) of how you see the relationship between summative and formative assessment. This may form the basis for professional discussion in your learning community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment point/task</th>
<th>After learning</th>
<th>During learning</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Feed-forward</th>
<th>Learning continuum</th>
<th>Of learning</th>
<th>For learning</th>
<th>Looks back</th>
<th>Looks forward</th>
<th>Review/reflect</th>
<th>Improve/enhance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
What does the research say?

In 1998 Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam of Kings College London published their wide-ranging analysis of research into classroom-based assessment:

*Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards through Classroom Assessment*

Full text
http://www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/education/publications/blackbox.html

Summary of research, with a professional reading activity
The Black Box: findings

Black and Wiliam’s research indicates that improving learning through assessment depends on five deceptively simple factors:

1. Providing effective feedback to students.
2. Students’ active involvement in their own learning.
3. Adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment.
4. Recognising the profound influence of assessment on students’ motivation and self-esteem - both crucial influences on learning.
5. Ensuring pupils assess themselves and understand how to improve.
Implications for classroom practice

• Sharing learning goals with students.
• Involving students in self-assessment.
• Providing feedback that helps students recognise their next steps and how to take them.
• Being confident that every student can improve.
Self-evaluation

Rate yourself from:

5 – I do this consistently well to: 0 – I don’t do this at all

• How well do you:
  – Share learning goals with students?
  – Involve students in self assessment?
  – Provide timely focused feedback?

• Do you have confidence that every student in your class can improve?

• Think now about some of the things that prevent us from assessing in a formative manner.
Hattie on feedback

In his 1999 inaugural professorial lecture John Hattie (University of Auckland) noted:

The most powerful single moderator that enhances achievement is feedback.

The simplest prescription for improving education must be ‘dollops of feedback’.

In particular, this should be about:

• how and why the student understands and misunderstands

• what directions the student must take to improve.

(For more on feedback, see PowerPoint ‘Giving Quality Feedback’)
In summary…

Practice drawn from the research base involves:

- Clarifying learning outcomes at the planning stage.
- Sharing learning outcomes with students.
- Encouraging students’ self-assessment against the learning outcomes.
- Focusing oral and written feedback on the learning outcomes of lessons and tasks.
- Organising individual student target-setting that builds on previous achievement as well as aiming for the next level up.
- Appropriate and effective questioning.
- Raising students’ self-esteem through the language of the classroom and the ways in which achievement is celebrated.
What do we want for our students?

The test of a successful education is not the amount of knowledge that a student takes away from a school, but the appetite to know and the capacity to learn.

If a school sends out students with a desire for knowledge and some idea of how to acquire and use it, it will have done its work. Too many students leave school with the appetite killed and the mind loaded with undigested lumps of information.

(Abbott, 1999)
Links

The following PowerPoint workshops may be found on TKI at http://www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/one/formative_e.php

Planning for Formative Assessment
For more on learning outcomes or intentions.

Giving Quality Feedback
For more on questioning and feedback.

Teacher-Student Conversations that Promote Learning
For more on questioning and feedback


Teaching the strategies of self and peer assessment
For a self and peer assessment workshop
This concludes this workshop.

However, for those with a yen to delve deeper, the following slides provide a theoretical perspective on assessment.
A Theoretical Perspective on Assessment
Convergent and divergent models


**Convergent assessment** aims to discover *whether* the learner knows, understands or can do a pre-determined thing.

**Divergent assessment** aims to discover *what* the learner knows, understands or can do.

List the assessment methods used in your school/classroom.
The two approaches

The methods of assessment will vary according to whether the teacher sees the task as convergent or divergent.

**Convergent**
- Tick-lists, can-do statements
- Closed questions
- Focus on contrasting errors with correct responses
- Judgmental, quantitative evaluation
- Student as a recipient of assessments
- Precise planning and an intention to stick to it

**Divergent**
- Open recordings, narratives
- Open-ended questions
- Focus on miscues which give insights into the learner’s understanding
- Student as an initiator and recipient of assessment
- Flexible or complex planning, with alternatives
- Descriptive rather than judgmental evaluation

Match your methods with this list – which are convergent, which divergent?
Identifying the differences

**Convergent assessment** might be seen less as formative assessment than as repeated summative assessment, or continuous assessment.

**Divergent assessment** correlates more closely to contemporary theories of learning, and accommodates the complexity of formative assessment.
What they represent

Convergent assessment represents:

• A behaviourist view of learning.
• An intention to teach or assess the next pre-determined thing in a linear progression.
• A view of assessment as accomplished by the teacher.

Divergent assessment represents:

• A constructivist view of learning.
• A non-linear development.
• A view of assessment as accomplished jointly by the teacher and the student.
Torrance and Pryor (1998) suggest approaching some assessment tasks in a convergent manner, but also argue that appreciating the two assessment modes and moving from one to the other in a principled way, will enhance the formative impact of classroom assessment.

How does this mesh with your view of learning?
Share your ideas with your colleagues.
Assessment references


Assessment references


