

RIDE LINKING  
**LEARNING & ASSESSMENT**  
IN RHODE ISLAND SCHOOLS

## Facilitator Guides and Professional Development Resources



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# Linking Learning and Assessment: Introduction to Facilitator's Guide

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## Overview of Online Course on Formative Assessment

The Rhode Island Department of Education has developed an online course in formative assessment, *Linking Learning and Assessment*, which consists of five modules that introduce several key concepts as described briefly below:

### Module 1: Exploring the Foundations of Classroom Formative Assessment

*Note: The Rhode Island Department of Education has adopted the Council of Chief State School Officers' definition of formative assessment: Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes (CCSSO, 2008).*

Formative assessment is a **process** that takes place **in the classroom** to **enable learning**. It is not a one-time test, but an ongoing cycle of evidence collection and feedback to help move students' learning forward. To *enable learning*, formative assessment practices are designed so that teachers **and** students use feedback to make ongoing adjustments, as needed, in their learning or instructional practice. Since it takes place *in the classroom*, it is planned for and managed by individual teachers. Formative assessment is grounded in research in the areas of cognition, learning, and student motivation. It is one component of a district's comprehensive assessment system, which may consist of classroom formative assessment (in-the-moment feedback from teachers to students in the classroom), common formative assessments (developed by a team of teachers to assess their students' progress in a unit for the purpose of regrouping, re-teaching, or enrichment), benchmark or interim assessments, and annual assessments.

### Module 2: Planning for Classroom Formative Assessment

Planning for formative assessment involves integrating five key elements into existing lesson or unit design. First, teachers identify the unit's big idea—an essential concept or insight at the heart of the discipline. Second, they clarify the learning goals. Third, they determine the success criteria, which describe what success *looks like* when the learning goals are met. Fourth, they outline a learning progression to detail the pathways that students are likely to take as they move from being introduced to a new concept or skill, to applying it successfully, and then to transferring it effectively. Finally, teachers develop learning activities that will elicit evidence of learning matched to the success criteria and the

learning progression. Through these enhanced lesson planning techniques, teachers develop increased clarity about how to gather evidence of learning. More importantly, these planning elements provide teachers with an understanding of the types of in-the-moment feedback that will support students to move forward in their learning wherever they are on the learning progression.

### **Module 3: Eliciting and Using Evidence of Learning**

Teachers decide in their planning what types of learning tasks will be used to elicit evidence of learning. These tasks can take many different forms, from paper and pencil assessments to performance tasks to questioning techniques, e.g., pre-assessment, classroom discussion, analysis of student work, or documenting student progress over time. Simply collecting evidence, however, is not enough. In classroom formative assessment, teachers review evidence immediately to determine any instructional changes needed, or to provide specific feedback to students. Once gathered and analyzed, evidence is considered *formative* if an adjustment is made as a result of the evidence. Through formative assessment, teachers provide ongoing information to students about their status relative to learning goals. Most teachers will adjust and strengthen their existing instructional routines to include formative assessment, but for some, it may mean giving up or un-doing some practices, e.g., less tests and quizzes and more formative assessment.

### **Module 4: Engaging Students to Take Next Steps in Learning**

Assessment that encourages students to learn fosters motivation by focusing on students' progress toward learning goals rather than their failure. Student motivation is enhanced when student work is reviewed against success criteria rather than compared to other students, when students are given tools that will promote self-reflection, and when students are clear about their next steps in learning. Self-assessment helps students reflect on the learning process, act on the feedback they have received, and determine next steps. When students work together to evaluate progress toward learning goals, they are developing skills to engage in self-reflection and to internalize the learning goals. This fosters self-regulation and helps students develop skills to manage their own learning in a culture that encourages risk and promotes collaboration.

### **Module 5: Developing and Sustaining Formative Assessment Practice**

At its core, formative assessment is a planned, evidence-based approach to improving student outcomes. It is a process for instructional planning that includes collecting evidence of learning and using that evidence with students to determine their next steps. Its implementation represents a challenge as it is not a product, program, or system that is easily adopted. Formative assessment implementation requires that school leaders and faculties work together to: 1) clarify where to focus ongoing school-wide learning in formative assessment; 2) review current practices in data use, unit planning, classroom pedagogy, and student engagement to ensure that they are aligned with formative assessment; and 3) incorporate evidence of the school's focus on formative assessment in school or district improvement plans, data use

policies, or grading policies. How well this ongoing dialogue is structured, supported, and led within a school or district is essential to long-term implementation.

## **Communities of Practice: Transforming Behaviors and Beliefs**

The online modules have been designed to be completed by individual educators—building their knowledge and skills in formative assessment. In recognition of the importance of collaborative reflection on participants’ deeper learning and on the implementation of formative assessment in their classrooms, the Rhode Island Department of Education is supporting the creation of Communities of Practice (CoP) in each participating school and the development of these guides that an educator in each building can use to facilitate the CoP meetings.

In a Community of Practice members have an opportunity to share ideas, develop common understanding, and build knowledge around a concern or passion. Strong CoP foster interactions between individuals focused on important elements of practice. CoP are at their best when discussion focuses on tacit knowledge, or the know-how that tells us in any setting how things really get done.

CoP will meet after the completion of each module to deepen participants’ common understanding of formative assessment through dialogue; to provide a space to develop, implement, discuss, and refine formative assessment in their individual classrooms and school; and to enable members to support each other through this learning experience and beyond. During the CoP, 6-12 teachers, who may be from a grade-level, content-area, or vertical team, will:

- Review materials from the online module they have just completed;
- Discuss the module’s key points in light of their instructional practices and local context; and
- Reflect on changing practice in their classrooms and school.

Since formative assessment is essentially a standards-based model, teachers must have a common understanding of the state’s standards<sup>1</sup> and a similar vision of what constitutes rigor and high-quality student work for meaningful formative assessment to occur. When various users in the system have the same interpretation of quality or idea of what proficiency looks like, teachers and students benefit.

Communities of Practice are designed in large part to provide the kind of reflective practice through which participants can come to these common understandings and clarify how their existing practices relate, or not, to formative assessment. Through the course, teachers in a CoP may decide to change or adapt existing practices in favor of an instructional technique that elicits more rigorous and higher-quality work from their students. Decisions of which instructional practices to maintain, revise, or eliminate require

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<sup>1</sup> Rhode Island expects to fully implement the Common Core State Standards by 2013-14.

reflection and analysis over time. Communities of Practice provide the time and opportunity for that thoughtful deliberation.

## Implications for School and District Structures to Support Learning and Practice

School and district structures that support learning play a vital role in the effective implementation of new processes and practices. Research has shown that “the challenge of all professional development efforts is to help teachers transfer new knowledge into practice” (Wylie, Lyon, and Goe, p. 3). Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) revealed that 50 hours or more of professional development is needed to effectively change teacher practice.

Given these findings, teachers cannot be expected to incorporate new practices in formative assessment into their teaching without the support of district- and school-level leaders (Wylie et al., 2009) and extensive in-service professional development (Heritage, Kim, Vendlinski, and Herman, 2009; Shepard, 2000). Districts and teachers need to know that when they begin a course of professional development on formative assessment they will be in it “for the long haul” (Heritage and Wylie, 2010, p. 218). CoP create the kind of contextualized learning that aligns with these findings. They offer the opportunity for teachers to transfer their new knowledge into practice in a supportive environment with a neutral facilitator.

To prepare “for the long haul,” district- and school-level leaders may need to ensure that teachers continue to have concentrated time and support to build their knowledge through further study and experience in implementing formative assessment practices in their classrooms. CoP, particularly if they are configured within existing team structures, can meet that need. District- and school-level leaders may also wish to review current policies and procedures to ensure that other barriers to implementation of formative assessment in the classroom are removed.

*Note: It is important to realize that most districts are not starting from scratch with regard to professional development in formative assessment. Many will have teachers who are more ready to adopt the formative assessment process as they are already using similar elements of it in their practice. For example, teachers who have had professional development in instructional practices that have some of the key features of formative assessment, e.g., “process writing instruction” with its peer assessment and multiple rounds of feedback to the writer (Cowie, 1995), reciprocal teaching (Palincsar and Brown, 1984), or project-based learning (Thomas, Mergendoller, and Michaelson, 1999) find it easier to incorporate formative assessment processes into their instructional repertoire. In addition, teachers with very strong content knowledge and those who are familiar with short-cycle classroom data use (e.g., running records, DIBELS, Measures of Academic Progress) adopt formative assessment processes in their instructional routines more easily.*

# Becoming a Successful Community of Practice Facilitator: *Linking Learning and Assessment* Facilitator Development

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The *Linking Learning and Assessment* initiative recommends the development of Communities of Practice to deepen teachers' learning about and use of formative assessment. These communities benefit from the guidance and support of knowledgeable and skillful facilitators who understand the needs of adult learners.

Cognitive learning theories suggest that adult learners need much the same framework to support their learning as do young students. Adult learners require that new information is made meaningful by showing how it fits in with what they already know. Adult learners need opportunities to connect existing classroom instructional practices with new instructional concepts through practice and reflection. Like students, adult learners benefit from actively testing new ideas, starting small while they incorporate new techniques, and getting feedback on their progress. The facilitator's central responsibility, then, is to support teachers' learning during Community of Practice (CoP) sessions that follow each of the five formative assessment online modules.

To support facilitators' efforts, a CoP agenda has been developed for each session. These detailed agendas focus on the content that is most likely to need further analysis and review. They also provide specific activities and prompts that will generate the kind of dialogue that will deepen and sustain a group's learning. This document outlines some basic information and strategies that will help facilitators use the CoP agendas most effectively.

## What is a Community of Practice?

Communities of practice are *groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better* (Wenger, 2006).

These communities are intended to provide safe and supportive spaces for teachers to share resources and ideas, explore and question their understandings, solve challenges, and form common commitments for action and improvement.

Communities of practice learn collectively through several types of activities, such as the following:

<b>CoP Activities</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Requesting information	<i>Where can I find examples of effective formative assessment strategies?</i>
Seeking experience	<i>Has anyone started writing their unit plans yet? What suggestions can you share with those of us just starting?</i>
Coordinating efforts	<i>Let's share responsibility for the development of our success criteria for our geometry unit.</i>
Analyzing data	<i>What trends are apparent across our students' work?</i>
Solving problems	<i>Can we generate some ideas for how to integrate these assessment strategies? I'm stuck.</i>
Discussing developments	<i>What are we learning from our use of these assessment strategies so far? Have they been helpful? What do you think?</i>
Documenting efforts	<i>Let's record these assessment modifications so we can refer back to them when we design our units next week.</i>
Planning visits	<i>Could some of us observe how you use that strategy in your lessons? What would be a useful way to discuss what we saw after we visit?</i>
Building agreement for action	<i>What assessment strategies shall we commit to trying in our classrooms before we meet next?</i>
Identifying and addressing gaps	<i>We need to understand how to refine our Student Learning Objectives. Who might we consult with about this?</i>
Reflecting on group processes	<i>How could we improve our meetings? How can we improve our follow-through on our action commitments?</i>

Facilitators must have clear understandings of their roles and responsibilities and need to persist in developing the knowledge and skills to facilitate collegial interaction in this range of learning activities.

*Content Adapted from the Following Sources:*

Wenger, E., (2006). Communities of practice: A brief introduction. [www.ewenger.com/theory/](http://www.ewenger.com/theory/)

## **What Core Principles Guide Productive Communities Of Practice?**

Effective facilitators possess clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They bring knowledge of how groups function, as well as skills in focusing and supporting productive discussions and inquiry that can advance the group's ongoing learning. They are guided by three overarching principles:

## Promote broad participation

Effective facilitators encourage each person to contribute by giving attention, supporting, validating, and showing curiosity. They convey a belief that each person's contribution is important. These actions elicit more diverse contributions and ensure that a group has shared a sufficient number of perspectives to support the development of new insights on an issue or problem. Broad participation reinforces the importance of pooling knowledge to benefit the group's learning.

When the connection between what a person is saying and the topic at hand is not evident, linking is one way to give the speaker more time to think, to clarify, and to share perspective. A question such as, "What's the connection between your statement and the core topic of our discussion?" can help to reinforce a participant's importance in the group. In so doing, the speaker's confidence is strengthened, which impacts everyone else, some of whom may feel more ready to speak in the future based on the way they saw a colleague treated.

## Ensure equity

Effective facilitators ensure equity within the group by attending to colleagues' varied learning needs and perspectives. This not only allows individuals to learn what they need to learn, but also supports the group in developing strong collective understandings and commitments. Facilitators need to ensure that all group members have opportunities to raise questions and alternative perspectives so that the group's learning pushes beyond simply perpetuating accepted practice. This means that the facilitator needs to establish norms and structure conversations so that dissidence between ideas comes forward. Only when a group understands the range of perspectives of its members can it begin to form shared commitments and actions that will benefit students' learning.

When dominant voices tend to drown out varied perspectives or suppress new members' voices, it can be helpful to intervene by simply stating, "Let's remember to hear from some people who haven't shared their views yet." Group processes, such as think-pair-share, reflective writing prompts, or structured protocols can provide opportunities for all team members to generate ideas or to consider complex issues. Such encouragement reinforces that diverse perspectives are valuable to the group while also signaling those who have been talking more to pause to consider and reflect on others' views.

## Build trust

When communities of practice support learning, members invite risk taking, encourage learning from mistakes, and foster mutual trust. This does not mean that everyone feels "comfortable." In fact, when a community of practice invests in trust building, members are allowed to experience *discomfort* as they wrestle with exposing their practice and understandings to others and encounter the dissonance that comes with questioning established practices and testing out the worth of new practices.

Facilitators can support trust building by acknowledging members' feelings and learning experiences, upholding norms of interaction within the group, and by following through on actions and agreements. Open and honest relationships are essential and are often built upon interactions that occur not only during group sessions, but also during informal conversations during other parts of the school day.

Content Adapted from the Following Sources:

Kaner, S. & Wright, D. (2009). Working effectively in groups: Developing your collaborative mindset. In Bandrowski, J , *Discover your inner strength*, Ch. 15. Sevierville, TE: Insight Publishing.

McDonald, J. P., Mohr, N., Dichter, A., & McDonald, E. C. (2007). *The power of protocols: An educator's guide to better practice (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*. New York: Teachers College Press.

## What Are The Facilitator's Roles And Responsibilities?

Facilitators have several roles and responsibilities in guiding their communities of practice. In particular, they serve as organizers, guides, supporters, documenters, and historians. Associated responsibilities include tasks such as the following:

Roles	Responsibilities
Organizer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arrange meeting space and times</li><li>• Communicate meeting times and agendas to teammates</li><li>• Prepare materials and activities for each CoP session</li></ul>
Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Customize session plans to meet CoP's learning needs</li><li>• Guide CoP through activities described in Facilitator's Guide</li><li>• Reinforce guiding principles and effective Norms of Collaboration</li><li>• Facilitate dialogue that enables teachers to link their learning with their instructional practice and the school's context</li><li>• Foster reflection on formative assessment practices and professional growth and learning</li></ul>
Supporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage risk taking, learning from mistakes, and group trust</li><li>• Support individual teacher's learning needs</li><li>• Provide extended learning opportunities</li></ul>
Documenter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Record the group's understandings, experiments, and learning</li><li>• Document how formative assessment efforts impact students' learning or growth over time</li></ul>
Historian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remind participants of their previous learning</li><li>• Link each new session with the learning from previous sessions</li><li>• Follow-up on the group's identified action steps</li></ul>

## Which Facilitation Strategies Safely Engage All Group Members?

Every group member needs opportunities to reflect, explore, and think through the new ideas that will be part of the online formative assessment course. The simplest strategy for this is to ensure that during each session, every participant has several chances to talk and write about his or her learning. This can be done through individual and partner reflections, as well as small and large group structured activities, such as the following:

### **Provide time to get focused on learning**

In schools, educators are so busy, with many tasks and responsibilities on their minds each day. It helps to allow people to settle into a meeting. Facilitators can ask colleagues to reflect on their recent efforts to use formative assessments in the classroom and to identify a focal area for their continued learning. This reflection also helps the facilitator find ways in which participants might be further engaged during the meeting.

### **Provide personal “think time”**

Reflection is at the heart of learning. In order for people to think deeply about cognitively complex material (and formative assessment is just that) there must be time for reflection. Cognitive science literature from the 1970’s referred to this as the “10-2” rule. For every 10 minutes of presentation time, there should be 2 minutes of personal reflection. Individual reflection can be structured as a simple pause in the dialogue, a written reflection, or a “think-pair-share” activity.

### **Create frequent opportunities for paired dialogue**

One mechanism for facilitators to create a positive environment for learning is to provide opportunities for paired dialogue. Paired dialogue creates a cognitive safety zone, where a person can try things out, hear what something sounds like, or get confirmation about an idea before bringing it the entire group. Many new group facilitators say that having a “pair share” when working in a group of six feels odd or unnecessary. Quite the contrary: paired dialogue is essential, even during small group work.

### **Provide structured small group dialogue**

Small group dialogue is the primary vehicle through which individuals can receive feedback during a Community of Practice session. Small group dialogue, usually set up in groups of three, four, or five people, offers everyone the opportunity to participate, provides some diversity of opinion that is not typical of paired discussion, and allows teachers to receive feedback on new strategies they are trying in their classrooms.

Small group work is also very effective at addressing problematic group dynamics. Facilitators often worry about group members who dominate discussion time during meetings, group members who seem completely disengaged, or others who go off on a tangent because they have difficulty bringing the whole group back to focus. As a colleague, it can be hard to address these issues in a large group setting. Using structured protocols for small group dialogue can often break the cycle of less functional large group work. It is likely that while the root cause of the issue may not change through this strategy, it is often the case that small group work can significantly change the dynamic and make the entire meeting more productive.

### **Whole group dialogue**

During whole group dialogue, the facilitator listens and observes, acknowledges individual contributions, asks probing questions, paraphrases and summarizes, surfaces conflicting ideas or alternative

perspectives, and identifies cross-cutting patterns or themes. In these ways, the facilitator shapes discussions and assesses when a group is ready to move on to a new topic.

The facilitator's role is not to have all the answers, but to guide the group toward deeper and extended learning, at both the individual and group levels.

## How Can Facilitators Promote Meaningful Communication?

Groups and individuals often move quickly to solve problems or make decisions when they are first thinking about a topic or challenge. However, it is important that groups allow themselves time to communicate freely, without seeking to reach a decision prematurely. Facilitators can guide groups to distinguish work that promotes understanding from work that leads to decision-making.

Initially, groups do well to engage in *dialogue*, in which they are sharing viewpoints and exploring deeply-held assumptions. Dialogue supports the group's inquiry stance. Later, *discussion* can engage group members in making decisions and weighing the things they learned through their dialogue. Discussion allows members to advocate for particular ideas or solutions, based on the understandings they gained through their earlier inquiry.

In addition to distinguishing between dialogue and discussion, facilitators can promote the use of the *Seven Norms of Collaboration* as a productive way to interact, either in groups or with individuals. The Norms of Collaboration are: pause; paraphrase; probe; presume positive intentions; put ideas on and off the table; pay attention to self and others; and pursue a spirit of inquiry. While the Norms are words or ideas that educators know and practice much of the time, they are more complex than you might initially think if you haven't encountered them before.

**Pause** is a norm that many teachers try to enact in their classrooms when they provide "wait time" for students' responses in class discussions. It is often just as difficult for teachers to provide wait time for their colleagues during team discussions. This is as much a function of the fast pace of the environments in which educators work as it is of their personal style. When time is limited, people often talk faster, and jump right in if there is a split second of silence in a conversation. People are sometimes hesitant to use this norm because they feel that if they pause before speaking, they will lose their opportunity to get into the conversation. Yet pause, either while one person is listening to another, or after someone has just spoken, is a great way for people to think more about what they are hearing, and perhaps for the speaker to add other important information or clarifications.

There are ways for a person to signal that he or she is pausing and wants to speak in a moment. For example, one can say, "I want to think about what you said for a moment, before I comment." In a group, one might say, "That was an interesting suggestion. Let's think for a moment about it before we discuss it." Becoming comfortable with silence is a challenge for some, but it is worth persevering because using silence, rather than trying to fill it, can be highly effective.

**Paraphrase** is a very important way to check for understanding, convey that one is listening, and help individuals or groups move the discussion forward. Paraphrasing may have gotten a bad reputation because of the way it was taught years ago. “I hear you saying...” was a phrase that put the focus on the listener instead of the speaker. While there were reasons for paraphrasing that way, it is often much more effective to keep the focus on the speaker by using a starter such as, “So you’re saying/ thinking/ feeling...” People should not worry about paraphrasing incorrectly, as long as it is clear to the speaker that they are seeking to understand. If the person says, “No, that’s not what I meant; I think...” then, as long as the listener is open to hearing the clarification, the communication is enhanced.

**Probe**, using questions to understand, is a way to learn more and promote another’s reflection. When pause and paraphrase are used well, meaning they are non-inferential and non-judgmental, probing can be done without people feeling interrogated. Instead, they feel that the listener cares about what they are saying and is seeking to learn more. People often relish being asked to speak about what they are doing, thinking, or feeling, and appreciate it when someone takes the time to listen. Rather than asking, “Don’t you think it would be a good idea to...,” a probing questions might ask, “What was your thinking when you...” The important thing to remember about probing is that open-ended questions encourage people to talk, and then specific follow-up questions can be asked to gain more specific understanding of key points or ideas that were shared.

The listener needs to feel safe when being asked questions, so is it important to remember that most communication is conveyed non-verbally through body language and syntax. Mehabrian’s (1980) research found that spoken words account for 7% of the message, tonality communicates 38%, and body language accounts of 55%.

**Presume positive intention** involves working from an assumption that the person or the group cares about what they are doing, wants to do the best for students, and is thinking about ways to do a good job. Sometimes it is difficult to presume positive intention when past experience has led to a different conclusion. However, there is a lot to be said for thinking the best of colleagues and thereby encouraging them to be their highest selves. In addition, there are times when group members may think they know what someone means, only to find that was not the case. Instead, members can be explicit about their positive intentions by prefacing comments with their assumptions, such as, “Assuming that the fifth grade team was trying to respond to our concerns, let’s see if we can generate some additional options.”

Take care not to jump to faulty assumptions, also called “climbing the Ladder of Assumptions,” or the “Ladder of Inference.” To avoid this, it is best to more safely presume that individuals and groups have a reason for what they do, or are acting on what they think is best. When people feel that they are being perceived with this assumption, their behavior is more likely to meet the expectation. For more about the Ladder, see <http://www.jadcommunications.com/yvonnefbrown/files/The%20Ladder%20of%20Inference.pdf>

**Put ideas on and off the table** is a way of making explicit when an idea or suggestion is being offered, and when someone is ready to leave that idea or to encourage someone else to let it go and think of something else. Taking things off the table is helpful when a person or group is perseverating on why an idea was not a good one. The person who offered it may be ready to let it go, but without making that

explicit, a lot of time may be wasted because reasons for not doing it keep resurfacing. By taking the idea off the table, it signifies, “All right. Maybe it wasn’t a good idea or maybe the time is not right. Since we’ve considered it, let’s move on.”

**Pay attention to self and others** may seem self-evident. Often, people are aware of what they are doing and how they are thinking and feeling about it. However, when something has triggered an emotional reaction, people need to be careful to separate the feeling from the idea. People must also think about how to support someone who is having a strong, though perhaps largely internal, reaction. For example, someone might ask a group member, “You’ve been quiet for a while. What are you thinking?” Another option would be to paraphrase for someone the emotional reaction that she shared. A paraphrase such as, “That sounds really frustrating!” can be very useful, particularly when the tone of the comment matches the intensity of the emotion that was first expressed. Paying attention to self and others in these ways helps to prevent conversations from being derailed and supports more productive and inclusive dialogue.

**Pursuing a spirit of inquiry**, formerly called pursuing a balance of advocacy and inquiry, is a norm that conveys, “Seek to understand before seeking to be understood.” (Covey, 2004). Inquiry conveys a genuine interest in understanding and sets aside the tendency to advocate for particular perspectives or solutions until the group has explored a range of perspectives. A spirit of inquiry can be conveyed through prompts such as, “Can you tell us more about...” or “I am wondering about how you....” It is sometimes surprising to realize that the thinking behind someone’s idea is quite different than what the person originally conveyed. Also, once a viewpoint and reasoning are known and understood, advocating a different viewpoint is much more likely to be done in a way that can be received and considered by the group.

Each of these seven norms represents an essential facilitation skill, as well as a tool for effective communication. It is important to note here that modeling the norms of collaboration in a group setting has been shown to create more effective group practice, even when others do not know these skills well.

*Content Adapted from the Following Sources:*

Covey, S. (2004). *Seven habits of highly effective people*. New York: Free Press.

Garmston, R. & Wellman, B. (2009). *The adaptive school (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon Publisher.

Mehabrian, A. (1980). *Silent messages: Implicit communication of emotions and attitudes*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

## **How Can Facilitators Promote Successful Meetings?**

There are five standards for facilitating successful meetings (Garmston and Wellman, 2009):

1. Discuss only one topic at a time
2. Use only one group process at a time

3. Achieve interactive and balanced participation
4. Respect cognitive conflict among ideas by eliciting disagreements and respecting other viewpoints
5. Have all understand and agree to meeting roles and responsibilities

Successful meetings reflect the group's collaborative mindset to follow specific agreements for interaction and use approaches to working together productively. Facilitators can ensure effective meetings by choosing and modeling appropriate structures and protocols that will enable the group's adherence to these standards.

Processes for group work need to attend to participants' different thinking and learning styles. For example, introverts think before they speak, while extroverts think while they are speaking. An extrovert might actually reveal, "I don't know what I think until I hear what I said." There need to be ample opportunities for introverts to process information and ideas and then speak, for if careful attention is not paid to this issue, the conversation may be limited to the thoughts of extroverts. Think-write-pair-share is an example of a process that gives think time to all participants before they are encouraged to speak.

It is the facilitator's role to give careful consideration to the most effective ways that group members can be encouraged to think and engage in dialogue and discussion with others. Further, when facilitative moves are based in the core principles of facilitation and integrate and model the Seven Norms of Collaboration, CoP members will have ample opportunity to participate in the group's dialogue and decision-making and meeting outcomes are likely to be addressed. These, in turn, will contribute to members' satisfaction with the group and its continued work.

*Content Adapted from the Following Sources:*

Garmston, R. & Wellman, B. (2009). *The adaptive school (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon Publisher.

# Becoming a Successful Community of Practice Facilitator: *Linking Learning and Assessment*

## Facilitator Development

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### **I will know this was a successful session if:**

1. I can explain to others how the online course and Communities of Practice will support teachers as they move forward with formative assessment
2. I understand my roles and responsibilities as a facilitator
3. I can use targeted facilitation skills, known and recently learned, to implement the given agenda
4. I have several strategies for addressing challenges that may arise in my Community of Practice.
5. I feel ready to facilitate the Community of Practice in my building

### **Agenda**

Entry activity before session begins:

#### **Part I Overview**

1. Welcome, Purposes and Agenda
2. RIDE Linking Learning and Assessment Initiative
3. Introduction to e-learning

#### **Part II Facilitator Roles and Responsibilities**

1. Community of Practice
2. Principles of Facilitation
3. Facilitator's Roles in the Community of Practice
4. Facilitator's Guide

#### **Part III Skill Building**

1. Paraphrasing to Promote Understanding

BREAK

2. Dialogue and Discussion-Pursuing A Spirit of Inquiry
3. Challenging Scenarios

#### **Part IV Closing**

1. e-resources for Facilitators
2. Unanswered Questions

### **Evaluation**

## Facilitation Challenges

### Scenario #1

Your Community of Practice has agreed to the beginning and ending time for its meetings. You have confirmed the meeting date and time with each member by email in advance, and then a couple of days before in person. On the day of the meeting, one person is absent. No one knows anything about why the person is missing, and a colleague offers to go and find out. The person returns with the colleague and shrugs, saying “I have a lot of papers to correct for tomorrow.”

### Scenario #2

During a Community of Practice meeting, teachers are discussing what they have tried during and after they completed the Module 1 online. Individuals talk about connections they are making between the key concepts in the module and their own practice. One teacher, Gerardo, suggests that everyone should visit another’s classroom to see how others use formative assessment in a math lesson. Rick says that it’s too hard to schedule, so they should just talk about what they are doing at the next meeting. Gerardo says why he thinks it’s important to observe each other, saying “There’s really nothing to be afraid of.” At this point, Rick says, “Well, I’m not doing it.”

### Scenario #3

Several teachers in your Community of Practice are talking about how much extra time it takes to create learning progressions and design frequent formative assessments. They are beginning to talk disparagingly about the statewide initiative on formative assessment, and a couple of teachers wonder aloud if they really have to do all the things that are stated in the modules. One teacher says, “I’ve been around a long time, and things come and they go. Just wait a while. This too shall pass.”

### Scenario #4

A teacher comes to a Community of Practice meeting with a lot to say about how impossible it is to assess what all students know at different times during the unit, and that the idea of changing instruction based on the fact that a few students aren’t meeting the criteria is absurd. He says, “Those kids just aren’t trying. I’ve taught the lessons for years, and most kids get it. I can’t be expected to make sure that every last one is successful. What would I do about all the kids that got it, who would start acting up while they wait for light to dawn over Marblehead? There is a dead silence.

### Scenario #5

A teacher who joined the staff a year ago is a member of your Community of Practice. You know from conversations with her that she knows a lot about formative assessment to inform teaching. She often plans several ways to differentiate instruction, and some students who previously struggled in school are surprising people by how well they are performing. During the Community of Practice meeting, she is very quiet, and when you draw her out and she starts to speak, another teacher says, “She’s just starting out. Don’t put her on the spot. She couldn’t possibly be able to do all that we are being told is necessary. Give her a break.”

## Facilitation Challenges Discussion Guide

### Key considerations to guide your discussions:

- ✓ Focus on your role as the facilitator and what you can do
- ✓ Avoid autobiographical storytelling
- ✓ Consider how others in the CoP may contribute to a solution
- ✓ Consider possible resources, beyond the CoP, that may be useful
- ✓ Mine the wisdom and experience of others in your trio

### Seven Norms of Collaboration

1. Pause
2. Paraphrase
3. Probe
4. Presume positive intention
5. Put ideas on and off the table
6. Pay attention to self and others
7. Pursue a spirit of inquiry

Garmston, R. & Wellman, B. (2009). *The adaptive school* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon Publisher.

### Guiding Principles of Facilitation

- Promote broad participation
- Ensure equity
- Build trust

McDonald, J. P., Mohr, N., Dichter, A., & McDonald, E. C. (2007). *The power of protocols: An educator's guide to better practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

## Measures of Success

Please check one of the following: \_\_\_\_\_ Will facilitate a CoP      \_\_\_\_\_ Will not facilitate a CoP

Consider the learning objectives for today's session on facilitating Communities of Practice. Please rate how accurately each statement reflects your knowledge and skills *before* today's session, and then how accurately each reflects your knowledge and skills *after* today's session.

	Mostly accurate	Somewhat accurate	Somewhat inaccurate	Mostly inaccurate
<b>Before</b> this session, I could explain to others how the online course and communities of practice will support teachers as they move forward with formative assessment.				
<b>After</b> this session, I can explain to others how the online course and communities of practice will support teachers as they move forward with formative assessment.				
<b>Before</b> this session, I understood my roles and responsibilities as a facilitator.				
<b>After</b> this session, I understand my roles and responsibilities as a facilitator.				
<b>Before</b> this session, I could use targeted facilitation skills to implement a given agenda.				
<b>After</b> this session, I can use targeted facilitation skills to implement a given agenda.				
<b>Before</b> this session, I had several effective strategies for addressing challenges that may arise in my Community of Practice.				
<b>After</b> this session, I have several effective strategies for addressing challenges that may arise in my Community of Practice.				
<b>Before</b> this session, I felt ready to facilitate the Community of Practice in my building.				
<b>After</b> this session, I feel ready to facilitate the Community of Practice in my building.				

*Please clarify what you would change about today's session or where you would appreciate additional support:*

1. To move my own learning forward in facilitating Communities of Practice, I could use continued support in the following:

2. What didn't work for me (or what I would change) from today's session:

# Facilitator's Guide for Module 1: Exploring the Foundations of Classroom Formative Assessment

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The facilitator's guide for Module 1 contains the following:

- A description of the facilitator's role;
- A review of the key concepts in Module 1;
- An annotated draft agenda for the first 90-minute meeting of your Community of Practice (CoP) that can be adapted to fit your context; and
- Appendices (frequently asked questions or misconceptions with suggested responses, resource materials and an evaluation form, descriptions of extended learning opportunities that you can draw upon in response to needs of members of your community of practice, and references).

## The Facilitator's Role

*Note: The Department realizes that facilitators from different schools and districts may have more/less time dedicated to their facilitation work and that what is described here is the ideal.*

As facilitator, you will guide your team through activities that follow the completion of each module in the online course, *Linking Learning and Assessment*, to help them build a common understanding and to integrate formative assessment processes into their instructional practice. You will lead them through activities, discussions, and readings, customizing each session to meet the learning needs of your team in the context of your school.

Your primary responsibility is to deepen teachers' understanding of what is learned in each module through reflection on key points, dialogue that enables them to link their learning to their instructional practices and their school's context, lesson or unit design that integrates key elements from the course, and ongoing observation of its impact on student performance. Through recurring activities in the CoP meetings, you will also be the CoP documenter, keeping track of participants' learning, and its historian, starting each session by reminding them where they have been and where they are going.

In preparation for facilitating the first meeting with your community of practice, you will want to review the Module 1 online course and this facilitator guide, including its appendices. If you have not already done so, you will also want to read or skim the four assigned readings for this module:

- *Coherence: Key to Next Generation Assessment Success* by Joan Herman;
- *Attributes of Effective Formative Assessment*, a work product coordinated by Sarah McManus at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction;
- *Connecting Formative Assessment Research to Practice* by Learning Points Associates; and
- *Balanced Assessment Systems: Redefining Excellence in Assessment* by Rick Stiggins.

**Two weeks before the session**, arrange for a meeting space and email the team to remind them of the meeting and any actions they agreed to take between meetings.

**One week before the session**, check in with each participant to get a sense of their understanding of formative assessment—what skills, knowledge, and understanding they bring to the group and what questions they have. You might ask them to share their initial reflections on the matrix in Appendix A, which they completed at the end of the online course for Module 1. Prepare chart paper, copy materials, and gather supplies that will be needed.

**On the day of the meeting** set up the room and provide refreshments or ask participants to bring their own drinks and/or snacks, especially if the meeting is held after school. Begin and end the meeting on time and include every participant in the group discussions. Obtain feedback from participants on the effectiveness of activities and facilitation (see evaluation form on page 43 in Appendix C).

## Key Concepts in Module 1

Learning Goals for the CoP Meeting on Module 1:

- Deepen and extend my understanding of formative assessment
- Begin to understand what changes need to occur in my practice and what impact formative assessment will have on my team’s practice
- Understand formative assessment’s position in my classroom’s and my team’s comprehensive assessment system

Success Criteria for the CoP Meeting on Module 1:

- I can explain the key ideas in the state’s definition of formative assessment to colleagues.
- I can recognize the changes that formative assessment requires in my practice and that of my team.
- I can explain and visually depict the place of formative assessment in my classroom’s and my team’s comprehensive assessment system.

One of your goals in facilitating this session is to clarify and deepen participants’ understanding of the three key concepts of this module:

- The CCSSO definition of formative assessment;

- Why and how formative assessment fits into a district’s comprehensive assessment system; and
- The compelling evidence supporting the impact of formative assessment on student performance.

The next few pages provide a summary of the key concepts in Module 1. They offer what you need to know to feel confident about discussing the content with your CoP team.

### Definition of formative assessment

Rhode Island’s definition of formative assessment is adopted from that of the Council of Chief State School Officers: Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students’ achievement of intended instructional outcomes (CCSSO, 2008).

*Note: When asked, participants will often identify the following as important words in this definition: process, during, feedback, and improve. They are pivotal in helping teachers to understand some common misconceptions about formative assessment.*

- *It is the same as common formative assessment.*
- *It is the same as benchmark assessment.*
- *It is a set of engagement strategies. (See Appendix B for succinct responses to additional frequently asked questions and misconceptions.)*

Formative assessment is a process that takes place continuously during the course of teaching and learning to provide teachers and students with feedback to close the gap between students’ current learning and desired goals (Heritage, 2010). It is a planned, intentional, and ongoing instructional process to elicit and interpret evidence about student learning that allows a teacher and student to adjust teaching and learning in real time to close the gap between that student’s current learning and a specific learning goal. It encourages a partnership in learning between teachers and students.

To further deepen participants’ understanding, it is important to reinforce the five characteristics of formative assessment (CCSSO, 2008) that were introduced in Module 1. To be considered formative assessment, all of the following attributes must be part of the process:

- *Learning progressions* clearly articulate the pathway typical students travel to meet a learning goal;
- *Learning goals and success criteria* are clearly defined and shared with students;
- *Descriptive feedback* is evidence based and linked to the intended instructional outcomes and success criteria;
- *Self- and peer-assessment* are used frequently to encourage students to understand and internalize the success criteria; and
- *Collaboration* in the classroom creates a culture in which teachers and students are partners in learning.

Note: As educators adopt formative assessment processes, they may experiment with one characteristic, e.g., sharing learning goals and success criteria with their students, and add other attributes as they become secure in their application of each.

### **Formative assessment within a district's comprehensive assessment system**

In order to better understand formative assessment's role in a comprehensive assessment system, participants need to know how it should be integrated with current methods of assessment in their classroom and district. A comprehensive assessment system may consist of in-the-moment formative assessment, common formative assessments, benchmark or interim assessments, and annual assessments—each administered for a different purpose and often varied audiences.

There are resources for you in Appendix C and in the PowerPoint for Module 1 on the wiki. On page 34 in Appendix C, Herman and Heritage use a cone diagram to visually portray the different types of assessment, e.g., from minute-by-minute, formative assessment to annual, summative assessments. "Unpacking the Cone Diagram" on the following page describes the differences among elements of a comprehensive assessment system. For example, common formative assessments, developed by teachers and administered to classes for the purpose of regrouping for instruction, re-teaching, or enrichment, are more formative than large-scale accountability assessments, such as NECAP, which are summative. Grading, which usually measures student progress after instruction on a particular learning goal, is summative.

Formative assessment provides feedback to students and teachers to make ongoing adjustments in their learning or instructional practice. The results of large-scale accountability assessments are used by administrators, the public, and policy makers.

On page 36 in Appendix C, Brookhart displays the major elements of a comprehensive system from more formative to more summative and from more classroom-focused to more large scale in a quadrant. On the following page, she shows the relative emphasis and time teachers should devote to each type of assessment (Brookhart, 2011).

### **Research evidence on impact of formative assessment is compelling**

The evidence supporting formative assessment comes from a spectrum of researchers approaching it from different perspectives. The handout entitled "Research Worth Knowing" on pages 38-42 in Appendix C offers abstracts on research on formative assessment highlighting:

- Black and Wiliam, 1998 – Formative assessment is an integral part of classroom instruction and its implementation can significantly improve students' learning outcomes, particularly for low achievers.
- Brookhart, 2010 – An examination of how a formative assessment professional development program impacted remedial reading teachers' classroom practices and students' learning found

that teachers began to see formative assessment as a type of instruction, and noticed improvements in student engagement. Results also showed that students of teachers who participated in the formative assessment professional development showed greater gains.

- Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 1989 and 1998; and Shute, 2008 – Meta-analyses revealed that feedback given by teachers to students in the course of formative assessment has a strong positive effect on learning.
- Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, Kulik, and Morgan, 1991; and Kluger and DeNisi, 1996 – Feedback designed to improve learning is more effective when it is focused on the task and provides the student with suggestions, hints, or cues, rather than offered in the form of praise or comments about performance.
- Sadler, 1989 – Feedback in formative assessment is only feedback when it is used to alter the gap between a student's current learning status and desired learning.
- Torrance and Pryor, 2001 – Investigation of formative assessment practices in a more applied and practical setting found that in order to improve formative assessment practice, teachers must have the opportunity and ability to reflect on their own classroom practices, particularly questioning and feedback strategies. They concluded that a collaborative action research approach is an effective way to help teachers understand and apply formative assessment theory to their classroom practice.
- Vygotsky, 1978 – The distance between what a child can do with the guidance of a more experienced peer or adult, and what the child can do during independent work is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). In formative assessment, feedback becomes a mechanism for supporting students to work effectively within their ZPD and move toward more independent work.

Research has also shown that the effectiveness of formative assessment is dependent upon the implementation of a rich curriculum, deep domain knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge on the part of teachers (Heritage, Kim, Vendlinski, and Herman, 2009; Shepard, 2009). Other factors are skill with implementation of formative assessment (Furtak, Ruiz-Primo, and Shemwell, 2008) and an ability to come to plausible interpretations of students' responses based on their developmental levels and experiences (Black and Wiliam, 2009). However, research shows that teachers may succeed in gathering learning evidence and accurately interpret a student's gap in learning, but not be able to target and implement specific instructional steps to close the learning gaps (Herman, Osmundson, Dai, Ringstaff, and Timms, 2011).

## Agenda for Module 1 Community of Practice

Communities of practice are formed by people who are engaged in a process of collective learning around a topic of interest, in this case, formative assessment. As the facilitator, your role is to provide opportunities for participants to reflect on their learning from the online course, deepen their understanding by discussing their learning, and determine how to embed formative assessment in their instructional practice.

The learning goals and success criteria for the first 90-minute meeting of your CoP are offered below. A participant agenda and a facilitator's agenda, which describes the purpose and outcome, the facilitator's tasks, the set-up required, and the approximate duration of each activity follow.

### Learning Goals for the CoP Meeting on Module 1

- Deepen and extend my understanding of formative assessment
- Begin to understand what changes need to occur in my practice and what impact formative assessment will have on my team's practice
- Understand formative assessment's position in my classroom's and my team's comprehensive assessment system

### Success Criteria for the CoP Meeting on Module 1

- I can explain the key ideas in the state's definition of formative assessment to colleagues.
- I can recognize the changes that formative assessment requires in my practice and that of my team.
- I can explain and visually depict the place of formative assessment in my classroom's and my team's comprehensive assessment system.

# Community of Practice

## Participant Agenda for Module 1

### Learning Goals:

- Deepen and extend my understanding of formative assessment
- Begin to understand what changes need to occur in my practice and what impact formative assessment will have on my team’s practice
- Understand formative assessment’s position in my classroom’s and my team’s comprehensive assessment system

### Success Criteria:

- I can explain the key ideas in the state’s definition of formative assessment to colleagues.
- I can recognize the changes that formative assessment requires in my practice and that of my team.
- I can explain and visually depict the place of formative assessment in my classroom’s and my team’s comprehensive assessment system.

Upon arrival	<b>Explore Our Learning from the Online Course</b>  <i>Purpose:</i> Identify what I understand from Module 1, what is unclear, and what topics I would like to discuss with my colleagues to develop a common understanding of formative assessment.  <i>Outcome:</i> Identification of topics that need more exploration and dialogue for the CoP to have a clear understanding of the content in Module 1.
15 minutes	<b>Getting Started</b>  <i>Purposes:</i> Establish purposes of online course and CoP meetings, review learning goals and success criteria for the meeting, and identify areas needing more attention.  <i>Outcome:</i> List of concerns, questions, or topics that need more exploration or discussion by our community of practice (CoP).
15-20 minutes	<b>Deepen Understanding of Key Content in Relation to Current Context</b>  <i>Purpose:</i> Develop a shared definition of formative assessment.  <i>Outcome:</i> Clearer understanding of which of my practices align with state’s definition of formative assessment and recognition of the changes in practice that I and/or my team will need to undertake.
30-40 minutes	<b>Integrating Key Concepts with Our Current Practice</b>  <i>Purpose:</i> Understand how formative assessment is part of a comprehensive approach to data use in my classroom and in my team. Begin exploring what needs to change to reach Brookhart’s useful balance in my classroom and in my team.

	<p><i>Outcome:</i> A road map of what assessment practices we, as individuals and as a team, need to do “more of” or “less of” to reach balanced assessment practices.</p>
5 minutes	<p><b>Notice What’s Changing, What’s New</b></p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> Reflect on my learning.</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> Understanding how my thinking is changing and what in my practice might need to change.</p>
5 minutes	<p><b>Agree on Next Steps</b></p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> Identify what is still unclear from Module 1 and what needs more discussion in the group to reach a common understanding, answer any questions I might have regarding the homework assignment from Module 1, and begin to think of a unit I/we plan to teach in 2-3 months in which I’ll/we’ll incorporate formative assessment processes.</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> List of concepts that need more discussion and, before the conclusion of Module 2, the identification of a unit I’ll/we’ll be teaching in which I’ll/we’ll integrate formative assessment processes.</p>
Total = 70-90 minutes	<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> Gather feedback to assist facilitator in planning the next session</p>

## Facilitator’s Agenda for CoP Meeting for Module 1

Time Allotted	Purpose/Outcomes	Facilitator’s Tasks	Set-up
As arriving	<p><b>Explore Participants’ Learning from Online Course</b>  <b>Purpose:</b> Identify what teachers’ understand from Module 1, what is unclear, and topics they would like to discuss with their colleagues to develop a common understanding.</p> <p>Uncover misconceptions (see Appendix B for succinct responses to frequently asked questions and misconceptions).</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Identification of which topics need more exploration and dialogue for the CoP to have a clear understanding of the content in Module 1.</p>	<p>Greet participants as they arrive and ask them to record their responses on the CoP Prep form (in Appendix A) that they completed at the conclusion of Module 1 on a separate sticky and post each in the appropriate column on the chart paper.</p> <p><i>Note: This activity will be repeated throughout the five CoP meetings, and returned to at the end of each session when questions not yet answered are starred. In effect, this repetitive process will chart the CoP’s progress over time.</i></p>	<p>Post large sheet(s) of chart paper with three columns headed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What’s clear?</li> <li>• What’s not clear?</li> <li>• What would I like to spend time talking to colleagues about to develop a common understanding?</li> </ul> <p>Place post-it stickies on tables.</p>
15 minutes	<p><b>Getting Started</b>  <b>Purpose:</b> Establish purposes of online course and CoP meetings. Establish learning goals and success criteria for today.</p> <p>Identify areas needing more attention by the group or individuals.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> List of concerns, questions, or topics that need more exploration or discussion by the group or individuals.</p>	<p>Review purposes of online course, answer participants’ questions.</p> <p>Review agenda, learning goals, and success criteria for the CoP meeting; answer participants’ questions.</p> <p>Facilitate group review of the responses to the three questions asked upon arrival at the meeting. Note common responses and identify areas needing more attention (see Appendix D for extended learning activities to recommend to group or individuals).</p>	<p>Post purposes of the online course on chart paper or display on PowerPoint slide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To deepen and extend understanding of key concepts in modules</li> <li>• To determine how what you/we are learning is different from what you/we are doing in our classroom/school</li> <li>• To integrate formative assessment into one lesson or unit in your classroom or team</li> <li>• To reflect on the impact of changing practice on classroom culture and student performance</li> </ul> <p>Post agenda, learning goals, and success criteria for CoP meeting on chart paper or show on a PowerPoint slide.</p>
15-20 minutes	<p><b>Deepen Understanding of Key Content in Relation to Current Context</b>  <b>Purpose:</b> Develop a shared definition of</p>	<p>Review the CCSSO’s/state’s definition of formative assessment. Ask participants to take an index card or half-sheet of paper and</p>	<p>Post the CCSSO’s/state’s definition of formative assessment on chart paper or a PowerPoint slide – <i>Formative assessment is a process used</i></p>

Time Allotted	Purpose/Outcomes	Facilitator's Tasks	Set-up
	<p>formative assessment.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Clearer understanding of teacher practices that align with the state's definition of formative assessment and the changes in practice that may/will need to be undertaken.</p>	<p>answer the questions on chart paper or a PowerPoint slide.</p> <p>After a few minutes, ask participants to turn to a colleague on their right and share their thoughts with each other. Ask them to be ready to report out a key thought or question to the larger group.</p> <p>Facilitate sharing of responses from two or three pairs. Collect participants' responses for future planning.</p>	<p><i>by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes (CCSSO, 2008).</i></p> <p>Post the following questions on chart paper or display on a PowerPoint slide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As I think about what I learned in this module, what am I currently doing that aligns with the state's definition of formative assessment?</li> <li>• When I compared my practice to that of teachers in the videos, what similarities and differences did I notice?</li> <li>• What do I wonder? What am I concerned about?</li> <li>• What kind of support do I need to make that change?</li> </ul> <p>Have 5"x8" index cards or half-sheets of paper on each table.</p>
30-40 minutes	<p><b>Integrating Key Concepts with Our Current Practice</b></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Understand how formative assessment is part of a comprehensive approach to data use in their classroom and school.</p> <p>Begin process of exploring what needs to change to reach Brookhart's useful balance in their classroom and in their team/school.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Facilitator and group have road map of what assessment practices they will need to do more of or less of to reach balanced</p>	<p>Review Brookhart's "Useful Balance" four-square (see page 37 in Appendix C). Give participants a blank four-square sheet and ask them to reflect on the relationship between Brookhart's thinking on assessment practices and their own and to depict their assessment practice on the blank four-square sheet.</p> <p>Set up next activity: Regroup participants in trios, quads, or teams to review their representations of balance of assessments in their classrooms and to create one for their team.</p> <p>Assist in posting of the trios', quads', or teams'</p>	<p>Display PowerPoint slide of Brookhart's "Useful Balance." Post the following on chart paper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the relationship between Brookhart's thinking and my practice?</li> <li>• Draw a four-square template that represents assessment practice in my classroom for a full year.</li> </ul> <p>Have enough 8 ½' x 11" sheets of paper with lines of the quadrant on it for each participant.</p> <p>Post directions for trios, quads, or teams on chart paper or a PowerPoint slide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review your individual four squares.</li> <li>• Develop a "Useful Balance" four</li> </ul>

Time Allotted	Purpose/Outcomes	Facilitator's Tasks	Set-up
	assessment practices in their classroom and school.	<p>four-square diagrams. Facilitate the large group's discussion of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The commonalities and differences between the teams' four-square diagrams; and</li> <li>• What do the results mean for the school's implementation of formative assessment practices?</li> </ul> <p>Ask participants to think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One thing they will be doing more of; and</li> <li>• One thing they will be doing less of in the next three months to achieve a balanced assessment frame similar to Brookhart's.</li> </ul> <p>After 1-2 minutes, facilitate group's analysis of "more of" and "less of" responses recording them on chart paper. You may want to type up responses to share with group after session.</p>	<p>square for your team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss what your team would need to do to have an assessment frame similar to Brookhart's four square.</li> <li>• Review and, if necessary, revise your earlier thinking on the type of support your team would need to make those changes.</li> </ul> <p>Have one sheet of post-it chart paper for each team to record its representation of its future balance of assessment practices.</p> <p>Prepare chart paper with one column headed "More of" and one headed "Less of," and post on wall.</p>
5 minutes	<p><b>Optional Activity</b>  <b>Purpose:</b> Pair each CoP teacher with someone from the CoP or with their grade-level or content-area team for deeper reflection and sharper implementation in the CoP's activities—collaborative learning.</p>	<p>Explain the why behind this request—it is helpful to share mutual reflections on your learning as you move through the modules and embed formative assessment into your instructional practice.</p>	
5 minutes	<p><b>Notice What's Changing, What's New</b>  <b>Purpose:</b> Individually reflect on their learning.  <b>Outcomes:</b> Individual understanding of how CoP members' thinking is changing, and information for the facilitator as to where each participant is and needs to move.</p>	<p>Ask participants to respond to a reflective prompt: "I used to think and now I think..."</p> <p>Facilitate sharing of reflections from two or three participants. Collect index cards, review responses after the session, and use in planning next session.</p>	<p>Post reflective question on chart paper.</p> <p>Index cards on tables.</p>
5 minutes	<p><b>Agree on Next Steps</b>  <b>Purpose:</b> Identify what is still unclear or needs more discussion from the initial activity and</p>	<p>Facilitate group's review of responses to the initial activity. Place a star in front of items that need more clarification or discussion. Inform</p>	<p>Chart paper from first activity.</p>

Time Allotted	Purpose/Outcomes	Facilitator's Tasks	Set-up
	<p>share appropriate extended learning opportunities with individuals or the CoP (see Appendix D).</p> <p>Check to make sure that participants understand their homework assignment from Module 1.</p> <p>Forecast need for identification of a future unit in which participants will integrate formative assessment processes.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> List of aspects of Module 1 that need more discussion.</p>	<p>participants that this information will be used to plan the next session and to address individual needs. If appropriate, share the most relevant extended learning opportunity with individuals or the CoP (see Appendix D).</p> <p>Ask participants if they have questions about the assignment at the conclusion of Module 1, i.e., to complete the first page of the Formative Assessment Lesson Planning Template and develop a learning progression for a unit with which they are very familiar. Review and record agreed-upon next steps.</p> <p>Let participants know that, during the next two modules, they will be working in pairs or in teams to incorporate formative assessment processes into a unit they plan to teach in 2-3 months. As the facilitator, you may have to help participants organize themselves into pairs or a group.</p>	
As leaving	<p><b>Evaluation Purpose:</b> Gather feedback to assist you in planning the next meeting.</p>	Ask participants to complete the evaluation form to help you plan for the next session.	A copy of the evaluation form is on page 43 in Appendix C for each participant.

**Appendix A: My Initial Reflections on Module 1**  
**Exploring the Foundations of Classroom Formative Assessment**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>What's clear</b>	<b>What's not clear</b>
<b>What would I like to spend time talking to colleagues about to develop a common understanding?</b>	

## Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions/Misconceptions with Suggested Responses

To assist you in supporting members of your Community of Practice, we have compiled a few of the most common questions and misconceptions at this stage with recommended responses.

### **Q: Isn't formative assessment a test?**

A: Formative assessment is a process that links instruction and assessment. It provides teachers and students with data that identify where students are in their learning related to a specific learning goal and help students to move their learning forward. It is not usually a pen and paper test, but rather an observation using a rubric, a discussion with a student as he shares his thinking on solving a problem, or a series of questions that help the teacher understand a specific student's grasp of a key concept.

### **Q: Isn't formative assessment "just good teaching"?**

A: Formative assessment is really quite different from traditional teaching practices as it links instruction and assessment. It is grounded in learning progressions, learning goals, success criteria, descriptive feedback, and collaboration between student and teacher. Good teachers may already use some of the key elements of formative assessment, but formative assessment provides a framework and more intentional practices around the key elements of the work: planning on how to collect evidence, collecting evidence, and using evidence with students.

### **Q: Doesn't formative assessment just involve adding new strategies to my teaching practices?**

A: No, formative assessment links instruction and assessment, so teachers need to carefully determine how they will collect evidence and how it will be used as they plan lessons/units. The evidence gathered by a student and the teacher allows something to be formed from it, e.g., next steps in learning for a student or an adjustment in instructional practice for a teacher.

### **Q: How is formative assessment different from common formative assessment?**

A: Typically, common formative assessments are paper and pencil tests developed by teacher teams who collectively review the resulting data to adjust instruction within a unit. They may use the data to regroup students—identifying those students who need re-teaching of a concept or skill and those who are ready for enrichment. This process helps a group of teachers to align their instruction, develop common data use practices, and create shared agreements about how to address instructional issues. Formative assessment is a process used by teachers *and* students *during instruction* that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning. It focuses on a single learning goal, and does not usually involve a paper and pencil test.

### **Q: How is formative assessment different from benchmark assessments?**

A: Benchmark assessments are interim assessments that focus on multiple standards and are usually administered to all students in the same grade or course within a school or district at prescribed

intervals. Their purpose is to determine student mastery of standards within an identified time frame and to identify strengths and gaps in curriculum and instruction. Benchmark assessment data are designed to be aggregated beyond the classroom and used for data-driven decisions throughout the school or district.

**Q: Can summative data be used formatively?**

Formative assessment is a process that results in data that are used immediately to provide feedback to students. Summative data usually result from a common classroom, benchmark, or annual assessment once an instructional cycle has been completed. The data are often not available to teachers or students until days, weeks, or even months after the assessment. Results of summative assessments are more often used to drive decisions at the school, district, or state level.

**Q: Isn't formative assessment a set of engagement strategies?**

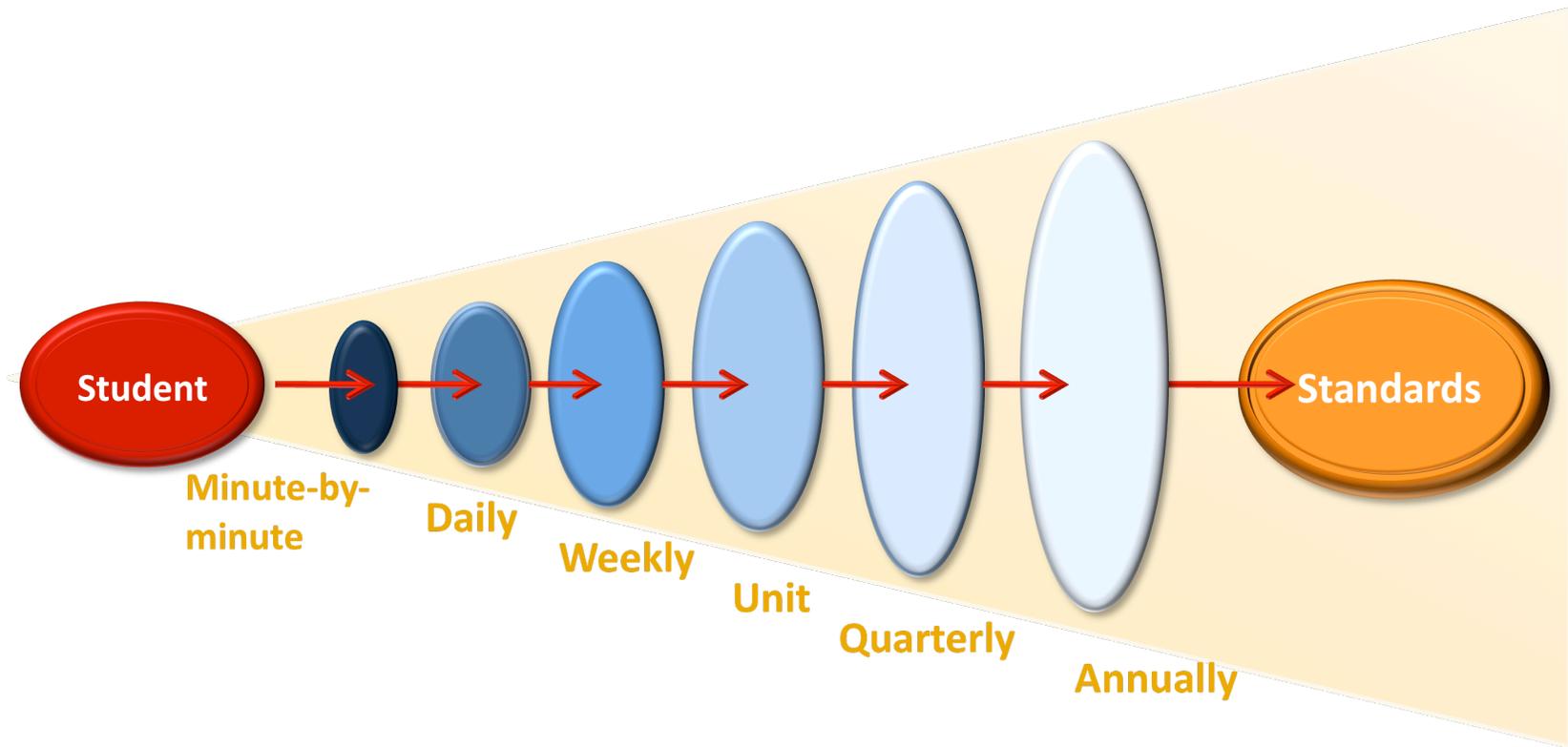
A: Although formative assessment makes students active agents in their own learning, it is not a set of engagement strategies. It is a process that provides feedback to students and teachers on the knowledge and skills a specific student has or has not acquired and leads to next steps in that student's learning. An engagement strategy effectively involves students in classroom activities, but does not offer evidence to the teacher or student about next steps in learning.

**Q: Isn't the only definitive research underlying formative assessment contained in the article, "Inside the Black Box," by Black and Wiliam?**

A: There is a significant research base supporting formative assessment from a variety of disciplines, e.g., cognitive theory, learning research, psychosocial. Research syntheses provide consistent agreement about the power of formative assessment practices when fully employed. (See handout entitled "Research Worth Knowing" on pages 38-42 in Appendix C.)

## **Appendix C: Resources and Evaluation Form**

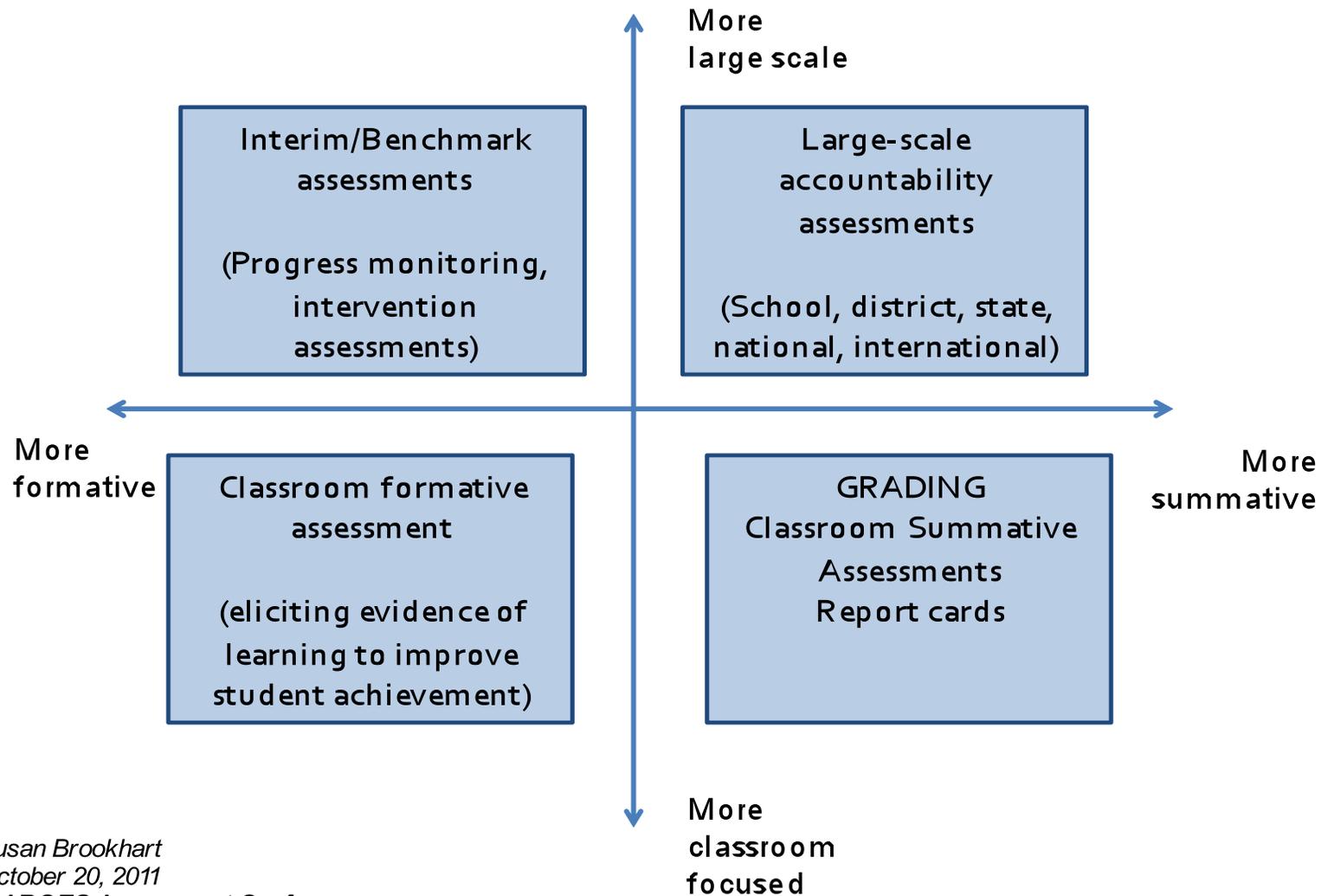
**Sources of Assessment Data**  
Taking a closer look at the *Assessment Cone*



Source:  
Herman and Heritage (2007)  
*Moving from Piecemeal to Effective  
Formative Assessment*  
Used with permission

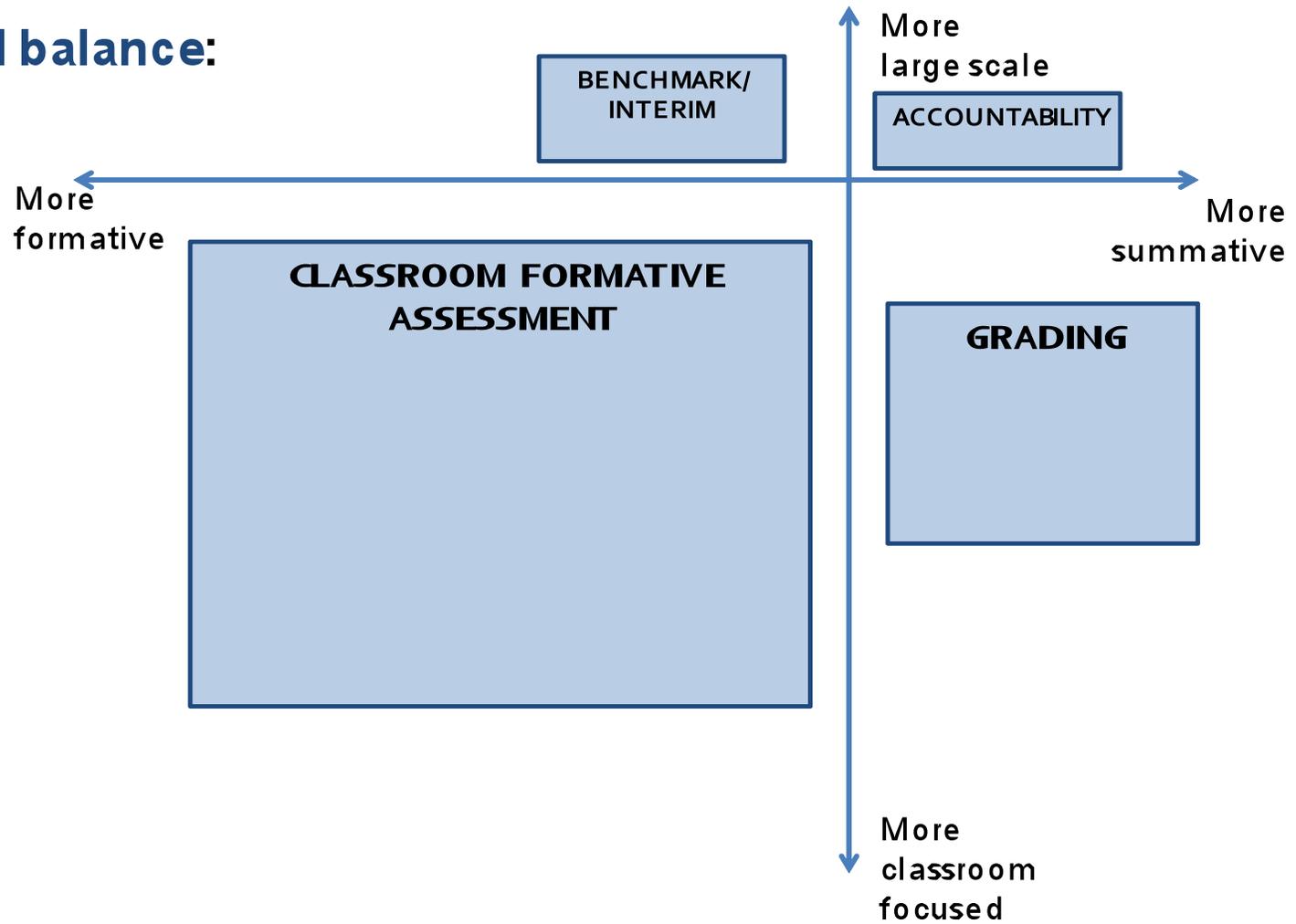
## Unpacking the Cone Diagram

	<b>In the moment assessment</b>	<b>Daily-weekly assessment</b>	<b>Common formative assessment</b>	<b>Quarterly benchmark/interim/diagnostic assessment</b>	<b>Annual summative assessment</b>
<b>Type of feedback</b>	Formative, if used to guide or change students' learning tactics or teachers' instruction	Formative, if used to guide or change students' learning tactics or teachers' instruction	Formative, if used to adjust instruction within instructional cycle	Summative	Evaluative
<b>Type of assessments</b>	Journals Questioning Exit tickets Short answer Voting cards Concept maps Observations Ungraded work	Projects Weekly quizzes Short writing assignments Labs Essays Peer assessment Self assessment Rubric analysis	Rubrics Written assessments Short answer Multiple choice Short writing assignments Performance assessment	Short answer Multiple choice Essay Performance assessment Graded class work	Short answer Multiple choice Essay End of course examples
<b>Primary purpose of information</b>	Teachers and students use descriptive information to guide next steps in learning	Teachers and students use descriptive information to guide next steps in learning	Teacher teams clarify specific content/skills for additional instructional time Regrouping strategies	School leadership teams, teacher teams to clarify big picture view of student progress Determine specific intervention needs	Schools Districts Public
<b>Expectations for teachers</b>	How can I adjust instruction tomorrow? Did I reach all learners? What did my students deeply understand?	Have students made progress over the course of the week? Have my daily assignments supported students to meet the learning goals?	Who needs additional support? How far along are students toward mastery? Which content/skills require additional coverage?	What are proficiency levels of students? What are specific supports for at-risk students? Are systemic interventions needed?	Programmatic strengths, programmatic changes
<b>Standards-focus</b>	Focus on single learning goal "Single purpose"	Focus on single learning goal or single standard	Focus on single standard or a closely related set of standards taught in a single unit	Focus on multiple standards	Focus on wide range of standards covered through year
<b>Information most often used to</b>	Provide descriptive feedback to guide next steps in student learning	Teacher engages students in using feedback to monitor learning and set learning goals	Build a shared understanding of what quality work looks like amongst teachers, explore instruction options to support next steps	Determine mastery Indicate strengths and gaps in curriculum and instruction	Institutional Accountability



Susan Brookhart  
 October 20, 2011  
 MARCES Assessment Conference

## Useful balance:



*Presented by Susan Brookhart  
October 20, 2011  
MARCES Assessment Conference*

### Research Worth Knowing Leading formative assessment research

#### Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam – Inside the Black Box

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(2), 139-148.

Black and Wiliam argue that formative assessment is an integral part of classroom instruction and that its implementation can significantly improve student learning outcomes. The authors begin by examining whether or not there is research showing that improvements to formative assessment practices in the classroom raise standards, and they find that students who experience formative assessment strategies, particularly low achievers, demonstrate significant learning gains. Black and Wiliam also provide numerous suggestions on how to improve formative assessment practices in the classroom (e.g., train students in self-assessment, provide specific and reflective feedback, give students the guidance to improve their performance, etc.). Overall, the authors maintain that formative assessment is essential to effective teaching.

#### Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam – Working Inside the Black Box (Follow-up to original study)

Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B., & Wiliam, D. (2004). Working inside the black box: Assessment for learning in the classroom. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86(1), 8-21.

In this follow-up to their "Inside the Black-Box," the authors report on their efforts to gather evidence about how to improve classroom formative assessment. In order to carry out this work, the authors conducted a study of the implementation of formative assessment concepts in practice with 24 secondary school mathematics and science teachers in England. Through the use of improved questioning techniques, feedback focusing on how to improve rather than grading, involving students in peer-assessment and self-assessment, and using summative assessments in a formative way, teachers found that the motivation and attitudes of their students improved, and the students achieved higher scores on tests than their peers in the same schools. Changes brought also prompted teachers to increase their knowledge and use of learning theory and to develop assessment strategies appropriate for their subject matter. The authors conclude with suggestions for teachers to

*"When anyone is trying to learn, the feedback about the effort has three elements: recognition of the desired goal, evidence about present position, and some understanding of a way to close the gap between the two. All three must be understood to some degree by anyone before he or she can take action to improve learning" (Black and Wiliam, 1998, p. 143).*

*"An assessment activity can help learning if it provides information to be used as feedback by teachers and by their pupils in assessing themselves and each other to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment becomes 'formative assessment' when the evidence is actually used to adapt teaching work to meet learning needs" (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, and Wiliam, 2003, p.2).*

enhance student learning, including rethinking lesson planning and redefining their roles and expectations.

### **Royce Sadler – The Just Right Gap**

Sadler, D.R. (1989). Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. *Instructional Science*, 18(2), 119-144.

Sadler's (1989) analysis and research delved into the instructionally appropriate way of making effective qualitative judgments using formative assessment techniques. Sadler submits that formative assessment is a process to identify and close the gap between a student's current and desired learning. Students must be able to monitor and modify their working and thinking in the midst of their working and thinking. Because much that students do cannot easily be labeled correct or incorrect, this demands three abilities from students: 1) knowing what desired work looks like; 2) comparing their current performance with the desired performance; and 3) taking action to close the gap.

Identifying the right gap is critical. If the learner perceives the gap as too large, the goal may be regarded as unattainable. Conversely, if the gap is perceived as too small, closing it might be considered not worth any additional effort. The teacher can play a role in identifying the right gap, but the ultimate goal should be to have the student set, internalize, and adopt the goal, so that there is some determination to reach it. Developing the capacity of students to perform this work removes the ceiling on what students are capable of performing, in part by freeing students from reliance on the teacher.

### **Hattie and Timperley - Feedback**

Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Education Research*, 77, 81-112.

This article synthesizes 12 previously reported meta-analyses of feedback, covering 196 studies, on the effect of feedback on student achievement. The authors found considerable variability in the effect of feedback depending on implementation and context. The authors organize feedback into four categories: feedback directed at the task, the processing of the task, self-regulation, and the student as an individual. They find that feedback aimed at the task, processing, and self-regulation are generally beneficial and that assessment should offer a balance of feedback across these

*"The indispensable conditions for improvement are that the student comes to hold a concept of quality roughly similar to that held by the teacher, is continuously able to monitor the quality of what is produced during the act of production itself, and has a repertoire of alternative moves or strategies from which to draw at any given point"* (Sadler, 1989, p. 121).

*"Formative assessment is concerned with how judgments about the quality of student responses (performances, pieces, or works) can be used to shape and improve the student's competence by short-circuiting the randomness and inefficiency of trial and error learning"* (Sadler, 1989, p.120).

*"A key premise is that for students to be able to improve, they must develop the capacity to monitor the quality of their own work during actual production"* (Sadler, 1989, p. 119).

levels. Looking at the types of feedback, findings show an average effect size of 0.79. Feedback directed at the self level, however, is the least effective. The most common feedback in the classroom, their research finds, targets feedback at the self and task levels.

### **Lev Vygotsky – The Zone of Proximal Development**

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of higher mental processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

The zone of proximal development (or ZPD), originally coined by Vygotsky, is defined as the distance between what a child can do with the guidance of a more experienced peer or adult, and what the child can do during independent work. Vygotsky's research raised an important idea in formative assessment theory, that what a child can do with the assistance of others is even more indicative of their learning than what they can do alone. What a child can do today with help, a child can then do in the near future independently. The teacher's task, then, is rooted in working collaboratively with the child to understand their emergent knowledge, and, through collaboration and guidance, support students toward increasingly independent performance.

In formative assessment, feedback becomes a mechanism for supporting students to work effectively within their zone of proximal development. In other words, feedback, which provides clues or ideas about next steps in learning for the child, supports growth of emerging structures. In this way, formative feedback becomes an instructional scaffold – an approach that helps students move towards more independent work.

### **National Research Council – Knowing What Students Know**

National Research Council. 2001. *Knowing what students know: The science and design of educational assessment*. Committee on the Foundations of Assessment. Pelligrino, J., Chudowsky, N., and Glaser, R., editors. Board on Testing and Assessment, Center for Education. Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

*"Specific learning goals focus students' attention, and feedback can be directed to them. The goals and associated feedback include information about the criteria for success in attaining them" (Hattie and Timperley, 2007).*

*"Feedback should be clear, purposeful and meaningful, compatible with students' prior knowledge, and provide logical connections. It should prompt active information processing on the part of learners and relate to clear and specific goals" (Hattie and Timperley, 2007).*

*"...an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers" (Vygotsky, 1978).*

An authoritative text on assessment grounded in research in cognitive and measurement sciences, this book offers guidance for policy, research, and practice that spans classroom and large scale contexts. Its recommendations include supporting “the development of new systems of multiple assessments that would improve their ability to make decisions about education programs and the allocation of resources” and shifting “the balance of mandates and resources” “from an emphasis on external forms of assessment to an increased emphasis on classroom formative assessment designed to assist learning.” Also among the coverage is the fact that “every assessment, regardless of its purpose, rests on three pillars: cognition, observation, and interpretation.”

### **Kluger and DeNisi – Feedback**

Kluger, A.N., & DeNisi, A. (1996). The effects of feedback interventions on performance: A historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(2), 254-284.

This meta-analysis reviews findings from 131 research studies related to feedback. Results of the meta-analysis reveal many inconsistent findings related to the effect of feedback on student performance. The researchers conclude that feedback effects are moderated by the nature of the learning task. A key finding from the analysis is that on the balance, feedback has a positive impact on student learning (effect size 0.38), but four times out of ten feedback affects student learning negatively. The authors note that feedback harms achievement when it focuses on one’s self-esteem or self-image.

### **Torrance and Pryor – Using Action Research for Professional Development in Formative Assessment**

This study builds on Torrance and Pryor’s previous findings on formative assessment by investigating its practices in a more applied and practical setting. The researchers also evaluate the

*“One of the most important roles in assessment is the provision of timely and informative feedback to students during instruction and learning...” (NRC, 2001, p. 87).*

*“Every assessment, regardless of its purpose, rests on three pillars: a model of how students represent knowledge and develop competence in the domain, tasks or situations that allow one to observe students’ performance, and an interpretation method for drawing inferences from the performance” (NRC, 2001, p. 2).*

*“Students are more likely to increase their effort to learn when the intended learning goal “is clear, when high commitment is secured for it, and when belief in eventual success is high” (Kluger and DeNisi, 1996, p. 260).*

*“Feedback to students should be descriptive and criterion-based as opposed to a judgment or grade with no indication of how to improve” (Kluger and DeNisi, 1996).*

effectiveness of a collaborative action research approach to professional development designed to improve teachers' classroom assessment practices. Overall, the researchers find that in order to improve formative assessment practice, teachers must have the opportunity and ability to reflect on their own classroom practices, particularly questioning and feedback strategies. Torrance and Pryor conclude that a collaborative action research approach is an effective way to help teachers understand formative assessment theory and apply it to their classroom practice.

### **Brookhart – Professional Development for Formative Assessment**

Brookhart, S. M., Moss, C. M., & Long, B. A. (2010). Teacher inquiry into formative assessment practices in remedial reading classrooms. *Assessment in Education*, 17(1), 41-58.

The purpose of this study was to examine how a formative assessment professional development program impacted remedial reading teachers' classroom practices and students' learning. Researchers examined teacher professional development activities including online postings, meeting notes, observation notes from district supervisors, student work samples, and student performance on a reading readiness measure. Results indicated that teachers showed greater mindfulness regarding formative assessment practices, increased record-keeping, more specificity in feedback, and a greater understanding of the importance of student involvement and motivation. Teachers also began to see formative assessment as a type of instruction, and noticed improvements in student engagement. Results showed that students of teachers who participated in the formative assessment professional development showed greater gains.

Text for these selections was downloaded from the AACC Data Use website (<http://datause.cse.ucla.edu/library>) and the New York Comprehensive Center Formative Assessment website ([http://www.nycomprehensivecenter.org/pubs/form\\_assess/](http://www.nycomprehensivecenter.org/pubs/form_assess/))

*Asking genuine questions "seems to be a crucial factor when teachers are eliciting a response from pupils that not only provides insight into their current state of understanding, but is also potentially useful in stimulating future learning. Such situations seem to provide a context where pupils interpret questioning as genuine and attend to the principles at stake rather than the ritual of question and answer" (Torrance and Pryor, 1998, p. 129).*

*"...the zone of proximal development is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).*

**Rhode Island Department of Education  
Formative Assessment Community of Practice  
Module 1 Evaluation**

Consider the following **before and after** questions, which help us better understand your background knowledge:

	Mostly unfamiliar	Somewhat unfamiliar	Somewhat knowledgeable	Very knowledgeable
<b>Before</b> this CoP meeting, my knowledge of formative assessment research was...				
<b>After</b> this CoP meeting, I would characterize my knowledge of formative assessment research as...				
<b>Before</b> this CoP meeting, my knowledge of using classroom formative assessment to improve instruction was...				
<b>After</b> this CoP meeting, I would characterize my knowledge of using classroom formative assessment to improve instruction as...				
<b>Before</b> this CoP meeting, my knowledge of how formative assessment fits in with a comprehensive approach to school-wide data use was...				
<b>After</b> this CoP meeting, I would characterize my knowledge of how formative assessment fits in with a comprehensive approach to school-wide data use as...				
<b>Before</b> this CoP meeting, the knowledge I had about the elements of the formative assessment process was...				
<b>After</b> this CoP meeting, the knowledge I have about the elements of the formative assessment process is...				

Please clarify what you would change about today's session or where you are seeking additional support:

3. To move my own learning forward in formative assessment, I could use continued support in the following:
  
4. What didn't work for me (or what I would change) from today's CoP meeting:

## Appendix D: Extended Learning Opportunities

### Tracking Changes Over Time

Ask teachers to keep a journal through their CoP experience, and provide time in each session for them to record what they are learning, thinking about, wondering, or excited by. It could also be used to capture their learning from experimenting with changes in their practice, e.g., what they tried each day, how they addressed challenges, and how formative assessment is impacting student learning.

### Challenged by Definition of Formative Assessment

If participants or teams are having trouble understanding the definition of formative assessment, they might find it helpful to watch one of the following videos. After viewing the video, they can discuss with a colleague(s) what resonates with their current practice, what is different, and how they might incorporate what is new into their practice.

- *Secondary Assessment: Formative Assessment* – A 14-minute video that could be a starting point for a discussion of formative assessment and some of its key features and/or to focus on a feature (e.g., questioning, feedback, or peer- or self-assessment) and how teachers think it might be implemented in their classroom.

Paul Black and Christina Harrison, with assistance from two teachers, discuss formative assessment and three of its features: questioning, feedback through comments rather than grades, and peer- and self-assessment.

- *Formative Assessment with Dylan Wiliam* – A two-minute video in which he describes key features of formative assessment ([www.journeytoexcellence.org/uk](http://www.journeytoexcellence.org/uk) – search for Dylan Wiliam and select video entitled “Formative Assessment”).
- *Assessment for Learning with Dylan Wiliam* – A three-minute video in which he discusses formative assessment and its impact on students ([www.journeytoexcellence.org/uk](http://www.journeytoexcellence.org/uk) – search for Dylan Wiliam and select video entitled “Assessment for Learning”).

### Challenged by the Relationship between Formative Assessment and Instruction

If participants or teams are having difficulty visualizing how formative assessment and instruction are linked, they could watch one of the videos described below with a colleague(s) and discuss the role of the teacher and the student in these classrooms. How are their roles alike or different from those in their own classroom?

- *Peer-to-Peer Assessment* – A four-minute video that shows high school students working on three levels of math examples with students solving and justifying their solutions to peers (<http://teachfind.com/teachers-tv/peer-to-peer-assessment>).

- *Primary Assessment for Learning-Speaking and Listening: Year 1* – A 15-minute video in which a teacher begins work on formative assessment in the early grades. Students are learning how to develop skills to look for key qualities in student work (success criteria), and are starting to learn how to give feedback to peers based on success criteria (<http://teachfind.com/teachers-tv/primary-assessment-learning-speaking-and-listening-year-1>).

### **Challenged by Formative Assessment’s Role in a Balanced Assessment System**

If participants are having difficulty in understanding formative assessment’s role in a balanced assessment system or the imperative for formative assessment, they can read the following 14-page article posted on the wiki (<http://portal1.tcplearning.com/ridefapilot>) and discuss its key themes with their team members or their sharing partner in the CoP.

- Stiggins, R. (2008). *Assessment manifesto: A call for the development of balanced assessment systems*. Portland, OR: ETS Assessment Training Institute.

### **In Search of More Information on Research Supporting Formative Assessment**

If participants would like additional information on the research supporting formative assessment, they may wish to read the following 13-page article posted on the wiki and discuss its key ideas with team members or their sharing partner in the CoP.

- Black, P. J., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(2), 139-148.

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# Facilitator’s Guide for Module 2: Planning for Classroom Formative Assessment

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The facilitator’s guide for Module 2 contains the following:

- A review of the key concepts in Module 2;
- A participant’s agenda and an annotated facilitator’s agenda for the second 90-minute meeting of your community of practice (CoP); and
- Appendices (frequently asked questions or misconceptions with suggested responses, resource materials for the CoP meeting, a list of extended learning opportunities, and references).

## Preparations for the CoP Meeting

In preparation for facilitating the second meeting with your community of practice, you will want to review the Module 2 online course and this facilitator guide, including its appendices. If you have not already done so, you will also want to read or skim the readings associated with the module:

- “Leveling the Playing Field: Sharing Learning Targets and Criteria for Success,” Chapter 2 in *Advancing Formative Assessment in Every Classroom* by Connie Moss and Susan Brookhart;
- *The Lowdown on Learning Progressions* by James Popham;
- *Linking Formative Assessment to Scaffolding* by Lorrie Shepard (reading for facilitators); and
- *Learning Progressions: Supporting Instruction and Formative Assessment* by Margaret Heritage (optional).

**Two weeks before the session**, arrange for a meeting space and email the CoP members to remind them of the meeting and their homework assignment (completing the first page of the formative assessment lesson planning template and developing a learning progression).

**One week before the session**, have informal conversations with each participant to get a sense of their understanding of the essential elements of formative assessment planning (big ideas, learning goals, success criteria, and learning progressions), what questions they have about them or the homework, and which trio you might place them in for the segment of the CoP in which they are providing feedback to their peers on their lesson planning template. You might ask them again to share their initial reflections on the CoP prep form (Appendix A), which they completed at the end of each lesson in Module 2. Prepare chart paper, copy materials, and gather supplies that will be needed.

**On the day of the meeting** set up the room and provide refreshments or ask participants to bring their own drinks and/or snacks, especially if the meeting is held after school. Begin and end the meeting on time and include every participant in the group discussions. Obtain feedback from participants on effectiveness of activities and facilitation (see evaluation form on page 72 in Appendix C).

## Where the CoP Has Been and Where It Is Going

At the conclusion of Module 1 and the first community of practice meeting, your CoP members have a common definition of formative assessment, are beginning to recognize the changes that formative assessment requires in their practice, and have an understanding of what they need to be doing “more of” or “less of” to implement a balanced comprehensive assessment system in their classroom and team.

Module 2 reinforces the fact that formative assessment is not a program to be adopted; there is no prescribed road map for it. It is more bottom up than top down—resting in the decisions that are made by teachers. Formative assessment offers a set of guiding practices (the five attributes introduced in Module 1) that, when implemented, make it look different in every classroom.

In Module 2, teachers have been introduced to the essential elements of formative assessment planning (big ideas, learning goals, success criteria, and learning progressions). The next three modules will help members of your CoP think deeply about the guiding practices and use the essential elements of formative assessment planning, so that they can develop the skills to apply formative assessment processes in their own classroom.

During the next year, the expectation is that teams of teachers will use the unit planning template introduced in Module 2 to complete one or two unit(s). The template, through its use, helps to build teachers’ capacity to plan for formative assessment. It is meant to help them learn the steps so they can ultimately attend to its instructional processes on their own.

### Key Concepts in Module 2

Learning Goals for the CoP Meeting on Module 2:

- Clarify terms and definitions from course materials and align them with the school’s context
- Learn strategies to introduce, discuss, and co-construct success criteria with students
- Enhance completed unit planning template through collegial dialogue

Success Criteria for the CoP Meeting on Module 2:

- I understand how planning big ideas, learning goals, success criteria, and learning progressions can help contribute to greater transparency in a student’s learning experience.
- I have learned new approaches for using success criteria with students.
- I can develop a learning progression that outlines how learning typically progresses in a unit of study.

### Planning for Formative Assessment

Given the complexity of teaching and learning, careful planning for formative assessment is **the only way** that teachers can use formative evidence “on-the-fly” during instruction. That planning involves identifying common misconceptions that students are likely to have as they work on learning goals, generating questions to gather evidence of learning, and determining options for responding to students’ needs as revealed by the evidence gathered.

Formative assessment processes are aligned to learning goals and, ultimately, to standards—in Rhode Island, the Common Core State Standards that will be implemented by 2013-14. However, the standards, in and of themselves, are not sufficient to help teachers or students understand what students need to accomplish to meet mastery. Teachers need to unpack the standards, develop a common understanding of each standard, and identify the steps leading to mastery of each standard.

The formative assessment planning process is very similar to other standards-based lesson/unit planning frameworks, such as Understanding by Design (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005). Each of the elements of the formative assessment lesson planning template is quite intentional, but teachers may not see the value of each immediately. The formative assessment planning process includes:

- Understanding the **big idea** of the unit/standards being taught;
- Clarifying the specific **learning goals** of a unit;
- Outlining what success will look like for students (**success criteria**); and
- Clarifying what learning looks like as students progress toward the learning goal(s) (**learning progression**).

## Definitions

Big ideas, learning goals, and success criteria are complex to disaggregate (see handout entitled “Definitions of Critical Elements of Formative Assessment Lesson Planning” on page 64 in Appendix C). For that reason, teachers may have difficulty understanding the unique purposes of each. It is helpful for them to look at their colleagues’ examples of formative assessment lesson planning templates to see examples of how the elements can be approached.

### Definitions of the Critical Elements in Formative Assessment Lesson Planning

Element	Definition
Big idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlights an essential concept or insight that resides at the heart of the discipline</li> <li>• Has lasting value, and helps support transfer of learning to other disciplines and beyond the classroom</li> <li>• Helps students link important facts and skills into a more coherent “mental map;” it is a theme or issue that gives meaning and connection to discrete facts and skills</li> <li>• May not be immediately obvious, and might need to be “uncovered” through learning</li> </ul>
Learning goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are directly aligned to the academic standards and the big idea of a unit</li> <li>• Use clear and precise language</li> <li>• Capture the skills and/or processes students need for learning to occur</li> <li>• Are focused on what students will learn as a result of instruction rather than what activities they will do</li> <li>• Help students make connections to prior learning and to envision future learning</li> </ul>
Success criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify what it looks like when students are successful meeting the learning goal</li> <li>• Are used as the basis for students to judge the quality of their work</li> <li>• Are discussed and agreed upon with students prior to learning</li> </ul>
Learning progressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include major building blocks of learning required for students to meet the learning goal</li> <li>• Indicate how skills and concepts develop over time in the domain</li> <li>• Focus on what students can do at each level of the progression</li> <li>• Are checked against national and international research, when possible</li> </ul>

*Note: Sometimes you will find that teachers are using these words in their practice already, but they have a different meaning than in the formative assessment lesson planning template. The most likely culprits are big ideas and learning goals. For example, learning goals may also be called learning objectives, learning targets, learning intentions, performance objectives, or instructional objectives. To eliminate confusion, your CoP may use a different word in the template as long as its definition conforms to the meaning provided above for that particular element and their colleagues in the school share the same vocabulary.*

A big idea is the core concept, principle, theory, or process that serves as the focal point of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. It signifies where teachers want students to be heading as they develop conceptual knowledge and understanding and is the basis for students' transfer of knowledge from use in one situation to another. A big idea helps students determine what is most important about this particular learning and aids them in identifying how ideas fit together.

Learning goals are statements that describe to students what they will know, understand, and be able to do at the end of a sequence of instruction around a big idea(s). They help students understand the concepts that matter most in the unit, and what skills and/or processes they will need to acquire for learning to occur. Students must internalize the learning goal and success criteria if they are to take their own next steps in learning. Student understanding of the learning goals(s) is an essential pre-requisite for students to monitor their learning through self- and peer-assessment.

Learning progressions depict a sequence of successively more complex ways of reasoning students are likely to take as they move forward in their learning over time. They are strengths-based, document learning, and show what students **can do** at different points along the progression. They are a tool to help teachers think about how learning develops in the classroom and how to scaffold it. They help teachers make decisions about a student's status relative to the prescribed learning goals, and assist the teacher and student to determine what the student's next step in the learning process will be.

Learning progressions are best developed locally by teachers. They have knowledge of their curricula and students and have experience with sequencing and scaffolding learning. Learning progressions are dynamic. They can and should be revised by teachers based on evidence they gather in their classrooms. In this way, developing, using, and revising learning progressions can function like an action research model, where teachers apply new ideas and revise them based on the results. When collaboratively developed, they also build a common understanding among teachers about how to scaffold learning for a particular standard or big idea and provide an opportunity to strengthen a team's capacity.

*Note: There is a lot of confusion about why and how to develop learning progressions. The handout entitled “Key Criteria for Developing Learning Progressions” on pages 65-67 in Appendix C explains the process.*

*As learning progressions are being crafted, you, as facilitator, should try to ensure that there is at least one educator in each team who is very experienced with the content knowledge under review.*

Success criteria identify what quality work looks like and what the teacher should be looking for as evidence that students have met the learning goal. They are best developed through an analysis of student work. They allow students to check on their learning and better understand where they are in relation to the learning goal. They focus students on *how* they are learning rather than *what* they are learning, thereby creating a positive learning culture in the classroom and empowering students to become independent learners.

### **Hints for Using the Formative Assessment Lesson Planning Template**

Initially, it is helpful for teachers to use the formative assessment lesson planning template (pages 70-71 in Appendix C). Using this template, even if teachers do not typically write and/or share lesson plans, builds habits of mind, e.g., how to approach the work, how to explore different ways of thinking about the content and the path students take to meet mastery. Teachers may be tempted to short cut it, but it is not something to ignore.

If completed by a team of teachers, it provides an opportunity for them to engage in dialogue around the lesson’s content, instruction, and the scaffolding needed. It also allows them to have a quicker turnaround when they think of responses to students. As teachers learn the steps, they will ultimately attend to these instructional processes on their own and will not need to use the template.

*Note: When teachers first plan for formative assessment, it is helpful for them to re-plan a unit they have taught previously. They will be familiar with the content and have a sense of the path that student learning/progress typically takes, which will make the addition of formative assessment processes easier.*

Collaborative planning also makes the work more manageable. When teachers work together, they can help each other think about the different expressions of mastery embedded within a particular standard and explore a range of instructional strategies that support learning throughout a unit. Teacher dialogue promotes shared understanding of the standards, deepens strategies for differentiating instruction based on evidence, and promotes personal accountability to implement new classroom formative assessment routines.

## Agenda for Module 2 Community of Practice

As the facilitator, your role is to continue to provide opportunities for participants to reflect on their learning from the online course, deepen their understanding by discussing their learning, and determine how to embed formative assessment in their instructional practice.

The learning goals and success criteria for the second 90-minute meeting of your CoP are offered below. A participant agenda along with a facilitator's agenda, which describes the purpose and outcome of each part of the agenda, the facilitator's tasks, the set-up required, and the approximate duration of each activity, follow.

### Learning Goals for the CoP Meeting on Module 2

- Clarify terms and definitions from the course materials and align them with the school's context
- Learn strategies to introduce, discuss, and co-construct success criteria with students
- Enhance unit planning template through collegial dialogue

### Success Criteria for the CoP Meeting on Module 2

- I understand how planning big ideas, learning goals, success criteria, and learning progressions can help contribute to greater transparency in a student's learning experience.
- I have learned new approaches for using success criteria with students.
- I can develop a learning progression that outlines how learning typically progresses in a unit of study.

## Community of Practice

### Participant Agenda For Module 2

#### **Learning Goals:**

- Clarify terms and definitions from course materials and align them with the school's context
- Learn strategies to introduce, discuss, and co-construct success criteria with students
- Enhance unit planning template through collegial dialogue

#### **Success Criteria:**

- I understand how planning big ideas, learning goals, success criteria, and learning progressions can help contribute to greater transparency in a student's learning experience.
- I have learned new approaches for using success criteria with students.
- I can develop a learning progression that outlines how learning typically progresses in a unit of study.

Upon arrival	<b>Explore Our Learning from the Online Course</b>  <i>Purpose:</i> Identify what I understand from Module 2, what I am unclear about, and what topics I would like to discuss with my colleagues to develop a common understanding of the critical elements of formative assessment lesson planning.  <i>Outcome:</i> Identification of which topics need more exploration and dialogue for the CoP to have a clear understanding of the content in Module 2.
10 minutes	<b>Getting Started</b>  <i>Purpose:</i> Relay what worked well when I shared success criteria with my students and what changes I observed in them; review the agenda, learning goals, and success criteria for this CoP meeting.  <i>Outcomes:</i> Understand the power of success criteria; add information from my colleagues' experiences in sharing success criteria with their students to my own.
15 minutes	<b>Deepen Understanding of Key Content in Relation to Current Context</b>  <i>Purpose:</i> Identify differences between terms and definitions in Module 2 with terms and definitions we use at school.  <i>Outcome:</i> List of discrepancies in terms and definitions that will be shared by our facilitator with the school's leadership team for resolution.

20 minutes	<p><b>Reflecting Experience</b></p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> Observe how the relationship between teacher and students is redefined in a formative assessment classroom.</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> Strategies to share, discuss, and co-construct success criteria with students in my classroom.</p>
30 minutes	<p><b>Integrating Key Concepts with Our Current Practice</b></p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> Obtain feedback from my peers that will enable me to strengthen elements of my formative assessment lesson planning template or my learning progression.</p> <p><i>Outcomes:</i> Suggestions for refining elements of my formative assessment lesson planning template or my learning progression; better understanding of critical elements of formative assessment planning.</p>
5 minutes	<p><b>Notice What's Changing, What's New</b></p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> Reflect on my learning.</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> Understanding of what in my thinking and practice is changing.</p>
5 minutes	<p><b>Agree on Next Steps</b></p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> Identify what needs more discussion in the group to reach a common understanding of the concepts in Module 2; opportunity to ask questions about our homework assignment.</p> <p><i>Outcomes:</i> List of concepts that need more discussion in our CoP, answers to my questions about the assignment at the end of Module 2, and confirmation of the teacher(s) or team I'll work to complete the assignment.</p>
5 minutes	<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> Assess my background knowledge of planning for formative assessment to help me determine my next step in learning, and provide feedback to the CoP facilitator.</p> <p><i>Outcome:</i> Information for me and for our facilitator to use in planning the next meeting and providing assistance to individual CoP members.</p>

## Facilitator’s Agenda for CoP Meeting for Module 2

Time Allotted	Purpose/Outcome	Facilitator’s Tasks	Set-up
Upon arrival	<p><b>Explore Our Learning from the Online Course</b></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Identify what teachers understand from Module 2, what they are unclear about, and what topics they would like to discuss with their colleagues to develop a common understanding. Uncover misconceptions (see Appendix B for succinct responses to frequently asked questions and misconceptions).</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Identification of which concepts in Module 2 need more exploration and discussion to come to a common understanding within the CoP.</p>	<p>Greet participants as they arrive and ask them to record their responses on the CoP prep form (page 64 in Appendix A) that they completed at the conclusion of each lesson in Module 2 on a separate sticky and post each in the appropriate column on the chart paper. <i>Note: This repetitive process will chart the CoP’s progress over time.</i></p>	<p>Post large sheet(s) of chart paper with three columns headed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What’s clear?</li> <li>• What’s unclear?</li> <li>• What would I like to spend time talking to colleagues about to develop a common understanding?</li> </ul> <p>Place post-it stickies on the table.</p>
10 minutes	<p><b>Getting Started</b></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Relay what worked well and what changes they observed in their students; review the CoP’s agenda, learning goals, and success criteria.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Key thoughts to share with their colleagues about their experiences.</p>	<p>Ask two to four participants to discuss their experiences with sharing or co-developing success criteria with their students. When appropriate, probe for deeper responses, e.g., what they observed in their students.</p> <p>Review agenda, learning goals, and success criteria for this meeting; answer participants’ questions.</p>	<p>Post agenda, learning goals, and success criteria for this CoP meeting on chart paper or show on a PowerPoint slide. Chart paper and markers.</p>
15 minutes	<p><b>Deepen Understanding of Key Content in Relation to Current Context</b></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Identify differences between terms and definitions for the critical elements (big ideas, learning goals, learning progressions, and success criteria) used in the online course and those used in the school.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b> Identification of discrepancies in</p>	<p>Ask teachers, in pairs, to review the terms and definitions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify terms and/or definitions for the critical elements used in Module 2 that are different from those used in the school, e.g., learning goals vs. learning targets, big ideas vs. essential questions.</li> <li>• Record these differences on a sticky and post on chart paper.</li> </ul>	<p>Have enough copies of the handout entitled “Definitions of Critical Elements of Formative Assessment Lesson Planning” on page 64 in Appendix C for each participant.</p> <p>Post chart paper labeled “Differences in Terms and/or Definitions.”</p> <p>Place stickies on each table.</p>

Time Allotted	Purpose/Outcome	Facilitator's Tasks	Set-up
	<p>terms and/or definitions of the critical elements and, soon after the CoP meeting, leadership's decision on terms to use and their respective online course definition.</p>	<p>Since this discussion could absorb the 90 minutes, teachers are to note differences in terms and/or definitions. Inform them that you will take the differences they have noticed to the school's leadership for resolution and will share leadership's decision with them as soon as possible.</p> <p><i>Note: The terms may be different, but the definition needs to be the same as the one in the online course. For example, if a school uses learning objectives rather than learning goals, it has to have the same definition as learning goals in Module 2.</i></p>	
20 minutes	<p><b>Reflecting Experience</b>  <b>Purpose:</b> Provide an opportunity for teachers to elicit evidence of what teachers and students are doing in a formative assessment classroom; see how the relationship between students and teacher is redefined in a formative assessment classroom.</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b> Gain strategies to use with students in co-constructing success criteria, better understanding of success criteria and how they enable students to take charge of their learning.</p>	<p>Set up video viewing: Formative assessment transforms the way teachers teach and students learn. Using success criteria with students is a good place to begin implementing formative assessment. The use of success criteria is essential to enable students to take the first step in understanding their own learning.</p> <p>Tell teachers that they are going to view a video(s) of a teacher(s) discussing and/or co-constructing success criteria with their students.</p> <p>As they watch the video(s), ask teachers to write on index cards what they notice about the roles of the teacher and students in the video.</p>	<p>Computer, LCD projector, screen, and index cards.</p> <p>Select most appropriate video(s) for level of teachers in your CoP and have it (them) set up on your computer:</p> <p><b>Elementary:</b>  "Word Study in Action:" A grade 2 or 3 language arts classroom in which the teacher is creating success criteria with students (4:03 minutes)  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cazZckbvBMc">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cazZckbvBMc</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>Ontario Ministry of Education's Assessment for Learning Video Series: Self-Assessment and Defining Success Criteria – An elementary math class in which the teacher and students are co-creating success criteria (start at 4:38 and end at</p>

Time Allotted	Purpose/Outcome	Facilitator's Tasks	Set-up
		<p>After viewing the video(s), ask teachers to turn to a partner to describe what they observed teachers and students doing and how that differs from their own classroom. Ask one or two teachers to share their thoughts in the large group. Then, ask the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the benefits to the teacher and students from co-constructing success criteria?</li> <li>• What evidence did you observe of the success criteria being linked to learning goals?</li> </ul>	<p>10:36) <a href="http://www.edugains.ca/resourcesAER/VideoLibrary/index.html?movieID=2">www.edugains.ca/resourcesAER/VideoLibrary/index.html?movieID=2</a></p> <p><b>Secondary:</b> Ontario Ministry of Education's Assessment for Learning Video Series: Aligning Assessment with Instruction – A high school English class in which students and teacher are co-creating success criteria (start at 6:37 and end at 13:08) <a href="http://www.edugains.ca/resourcesAER/VideoLibrary/index.html?movieID=30">www.edugains.ca/resourcesAER/VideoLibrary/index.html?movieID=30</a></p>
30 minutes	<p><b>Integrating Key Concepts with Our Current Practice</b> <i>Purpose:</i> Obtain critical feedback from peers that will enable teachers to refine elements of their formative assessment lesson planning template or their learning progression (assignment at end of Module 1 online course).</p> <p><i>Outcomes:</i> Suggestions for strengthening elements of their formative assessment lesson planning template or learning progression, ideas and strategies from colleagues, and better understanding of the essential terms and definitions of formative assessment planning.</p>	<p>Ask participants to pull out their partially completed Formative Assessment Lesson Planning Template (pages 70-71 in Appendix C). Refer them to the handout on terms and definitions they previously used as a resource for this activity.</p> <p>In trios, with approximately 10 minutes per person, ask each participant to allow their colleagues two to three minutes to review their formative assessment lesson planning template and learning progression, then in the remaining seven to eight minutes the first presenter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shares something he/she feels good about their template or learning progression;</li> <li>• Discusses an aspect that he/she struggled with; and</li> <li>• Gets feedback/suggestions from colleagues on how to address that challenge.</li> </ul> <p>After 10 minutes, ask the first presenter to quickly bring the segment to a close and let the second teacher go through the same cycle. After</p>	<p>Directions on chart paper for the task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow time for colleagues to review your template and learning progression</li> <li>• Share something that you feel good about the template or learning progression</li> <li>• Discuss an aspect with which you struggled</li> <li>• Obtain feedback/suggestions from colleagues to address that challenge</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: An electronic version of the formative assessment lesson planning template is available on the wiki under Module 2 class materials.</i></p>

Time Allotted	Purpose/Outcome	Facilitator's Tasks	Set-up
		<p>20 minutes, ask the second presenter to come to a close and let the last member of the trio proceed through the same cycle.</p> <p><i>Note: Given information you have about group members, you may wish to predetermine the trios. You will want to make sure that each group has a mix of skills and knowledge. If there is someone who hasn't done the work or someone who got stuck on some aspect of the template, make sure to pair that teacher with someone who understands the process.</i></p>	
5 minutes	<p><b>Notice What's Changing, What's New</b>  <b>Purpose:</b> Individually reflect on their learning.  <b>Outcomes:</b> Individual understanding of how CoP members' thinking and practice are changing and information for facilitator as to where each participant is and needs to move.</p>	<p>Ask participants to respond to a reflective prompt: "I used to think and now I think..."</p> <p>Facilitate sharing of reflections from two or three participants. Collect index cards, review responses after the session, and use in planning the next session.</p>	Post reflective question on chart paper and place index cards on tables.
5 minutes	<p><b>Agree on Next Steps</b>  <b>Purpose:</b> Identify what still needs more discussion from the initial activity and share appropriate extended learning opportunities with individuals or the CoP (see Appendix D).</p> <p>Clear understanding of the homework assignment that requires applying skills and knowledge learned in Module 2 (assignment at end of the Module 2 online course).</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b> List of aspects of Module 2 that need more discussion; teams and units identified by all participants in anticipation of completing homework assignment.</p>	<p>Facilitate group's review of status of their responses to the initial activity (e.g., what is clear, what needs more discussion to arrive at a common understanding). Ask participants to show with "thumbs up," "thumbs sideways," or "thumbs down," if they need more discussion on a particular topic. Place a star in front of ones that need more attention.</p> <p>After inserting appropriate dates, hand out directions for homework assignment from online course for Module 2. Ask teachers if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have any questions.</li> <li>• Have chosen a familiar unit that will be implemented in 2-3 months.</li> <li>• Have identified colleagues who will dialogue with them as they add formative assessment processes to their unit plan and</li> </ul>	<p>Chart paper from initial activity, markers.</p> <p>Make enough copies of the directions entitled "Revise an Upcoming Unit Plan to Include Key Formative Assessment Planning Elements" for each participant (see pages 68-71 in Appendix C).</p>

Time Allotted	Purpose/Outcome	Facilitator's Tasks	Set-up
		<p>develop a learning progression.</p> <p>As facilitator, you may have to help them make the collaborative piece happen. They will gain deeper knowledge and skills through working with colleagues.</p>	
5 minutes	<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Gather feedback that will help teachers to determine their next step in learning; obtain information that will assist you in planning the next session.</p>	<p>Ask participants to complete the evaluation form to obtain an understanding of their next step in learning and to help you plan for the next session.</p>	<p>Make a copy of the evaluation form on page 72 in Appendix C for each participant.</p>
90 minutes total			

**Appendix A: My Initial Reflections on Module 2**

**Planning for Classroom Formative Assessment**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>What's clear</b>	<b>What's not clear</b>
<b>What would I like to spend time talking to colleagues about to develop a common understanding?</b>	

## Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions/Misconceptions with Suggested Responses

To assist you in supporting members of your Community of Practice, we have compiled a few of the most common questions and misconceptions at this stage with recommended responses.

**Q: Doesn't formative assessment just involve adding new strategies to my teaching practice?**

A: No, formative assessment links teaching and assessment, so teachers need to carefully plan how they will elicit evidence and for what purpose. The evidence gathered by a student and the teacher allows an action to be taken as a result of it, e.g., next steps in learning for a student or an adjustment in instructional practice for a teacher.

**Q: Aren't teachers the primary users of assessment data?**

A: No, formative assessment is largely about the student's role in learning. Students are integral partners in the process with teachers, and will take ownership for learning with the right conditions. Ultimately, students are users of assessment evidence and use it to move their own learning forward.

**Q: Aren't big ideas, learning goals, and success criteria the same?**

A: A big idea highlights an essential concept or insight about a discipline. It's a core concept, theory, or issue that gives meaning to and connects discrete facts and skills (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005). A big idea is the basis for transfer of knowledge to a new challenge, e.g., figuring out what knowledge and skill matters and adapting what we know to address it. It outlines where you want students to be heading as they develop conceptual knowledge and understanding.

Learning goals specify the learning that is intended for a lesson or a sequence of lessons. They focus students on what new understandings they will have from the lesson, not the tasks they will complete. They enable students to know what they are learning and why.

Success criteria are primarily designed to capture what learning *looks like* when a student has reached proficiency. They show the kinds of evidence that a teacher or student can look for to see if learning is taking place.

**Q: Aren't learning progressions the same as rubrics?**

A: A learning progression is strengths-based. It identifies what students *can do* as they progress in their learning. A good one clarifies for teachers and students what successful learning *looks like* as students progress toward mastery. Learning progressions help teachers locate students' current status along a continuum and assist them in determining the most useful instructional actions that will move students' learning forward.

A learning progression, unlike a rubric, is not meant to measure or evaluate learning. A good learning progression can show that learning can be messy and uneven. For example, as a student is learning a skill or concept, it is not always the case that the student moves from doing a little of something to a lot

of something as is usually described in rubrics. It is often the case that there is a gap in understanding, and then when that gap is addressed the student moves to a new and different kind of understanding.

Rubrics primarily document expectations for product quality that will be used to score or evaluate student work. Rubrics are often designed in ways that tell students what they have not done well, and as such are often deficit-based.

**Q: Aren't learning goals and success criteria primarily for teacher planning?**

A: No, learning goals and success criteria are primarily for students. Students must internalize the learning goals and success criteria to take their own next steps in learning. Learning goals enable them to understand what they have learned, what they are learning, and what they will learn next. Success criteria provide a way for the students, their peers, and their teacher to come to a common understanding of success that can be used to assess their learning.

**Q: How can I take time away from teaching (or justify the time it takes) to co-construct success criteria with students?**

A: Although making a change in classroom teaching requires extra work until it becomes routine, improving assessment practices results in increased student engagement and performance. It really involves a redistribution of effort (Black et al., 2004). For example, teachers may spend more time using formative assessment processes and less time on tests and quizzes in class or they may spend more time providing comments on student's written work and less on giving grades.

**Q: What if students do not know enough about the knowledge and skills they are to demonstrate to identify success criteria?**

A: You can activate prior knowledge by engaging students in activities to discuss the goals and/or task with a partner. You can also provide exemplars of the task or performance for students to analyze, and from their analysis they can develop success criteria.

**Q: What if students identify criteria that are not relevant to the goals or task, or leave out criteria that are significant for successful demonstration of learning?**

A: When co-constructing success criteria with students, the teacher doesn't relinquish the role as lead learner—if significant criteria are not generated, teachers should contribute them to the list. The teacher can also help refine students' thinking about the criteria as they are generated.

**Q: Won't showing exemplars to students limit their creativity or encourage imitation?**

A: If you show a diversity of samples or offer a choice in how to demonstrate their learning, the samples and options of expression will expand students' thinking. The use of exemplars usually encourages students to do better than those who completed the task before them.

## **Appendix C: Resources and Evaluation Form**

# FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

## Definitions of Critical Elements of Formative Assessment Lesson Planning

### Big ideas

A big idea highlights an essential concept or insight that resides at the heart of the discipline. It is a theme or issue that brings meaning and connection to discrete facts and skills, and enables students to link important skills into a more coherent “mental map”. It may not be immediately obvious, and may need to be “uncovered” through learning. But, it has lasting value, and is the basis for transferring learning beyond the classroom and to other disciplines.

### Learning goals

Learning goals specify the learning that is intended for a lesson or a sequence of lessons. Learning goals focus students on what new understandings they will have from the lesson, not the tasks they will complete. They enable students to know what they are learning and why. Research has consistently pointed out the value of student review of learning goals. Students focused on learning goals develop greater intrinsic motivation (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1999) as long as those goals are manageable, and as long as students understand both the learning goal and the success criteria.

### Success criteria

Success criteria specify how students can demonstrate that they have met the learning goal. The success criteria help students understand what they will be able to do differently as a result of the lesson. Success criteria help students monitor their own learning. The use of exemplars and model products can be very helpful to show students evidence about the criteria that teachers will use to look for evidence of their learning.

### Learning progressions

Learning progressions describe the pathways along which students are expected to progress. A learning progression provides the teacher with additional clarity regarding how student learning develops in a particular domain, or on a particular standard or topic. This progression is often not linear, and may not look the same for each student. Learning progressions help teachers locate students’ current status along a continuum and help teachers decide on the most useful instructional actions that will move students’ learning forward.

## Key Criteria for Developing Learning Progressions

The NAEP 2009 Science Framework describes learning progressions as “a sequence of successively more complex ways of reasoning about a set of ideas; not developmentally inevitable but dependent on instruction and interacting with students’ prior knowledge and new knowledge construction.”

While there is quite some disagreement in the field about the use of learning progressions (Shavelson, 2009; Corcoran, Mosher, and Rogat, 2009), there is growing agreement that learning progressions can help teachers articulate how learning progresses in a particular domain. It can provide “a big picture of what is to be learned, support effective instructional planning, and act as a touchstone for formative assessment” (Heritage, 2008, p. 2). By helping teachers articulate a pathway of learning, learning progressions provide a framework from which to organize formative assessment strategies. More importantly, they help guide both teachers and students to more quickly and effectively consider next steps in learning.

For formative assessment purposes, learning progressions should:

- Provide a description of learning in each category that will support instructional planning.
- Provide sufficient detail to map formative assessment opportunities that will elicit evidence at key points along the progression.
- Support teachers to quickly identify where students are along the learning progression, in other words, to help define what the gap in learning is in relation to the learning goal.
- Support students to take next steps in learning.

Heritage (2008) describes two types of learning progressions: top down and bottom up. Top down progressions have been developed by research teams in a variety of disciplines, and are best known in science. These progressions often review long-term learning processes, by developing, for example, a K-12 progression. Their goal is to frame the key building blocks within a domain, and to address critical considerations related to how students learn specific concepts and skills. They generally begin with the big ideas in a domain and how these big ideas connect together.

Bottom-up progressions are those developed by teachers, teacher teams, or organizations of teachers. These progressions come from more of an action research approach. Teachers work to establish how learning progresses in a particular topic area or domain through their existing knowledge and observations of classroom practice. These learning progressions must be “constantly checked, updated and enriched” (Masters and Forster, 1996, p. 13). One well-documented bottom-up strategy for developing learning progressions is for teachers to collaboratively de-construct an academic content standard to determine key knowledge and skills required for students to attain proficiency on that standard.

If teachers have already developed formative assessment planning documents, and have worked to establish the big idea, learning goals, and success criteria for a unit, then developing a learning progression is relatively straightforward.

# FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

To complete a learning progression template for a specific unit (a bottom-up approach), consider the following steps:

1. Start with level 3.  
Describe what you see proficient students doing when they demonstrate the knowledge and skills expected for this set of unit goals.
2. Go to level 2.  
Describe what you would expect to see as knowledge and understanding emerging or developing in this area. Describe what you see happening when students have simpler, more basic knowledge and understandings in this area.
3. Go to level 4.  
Describe what you would expect to see when students have gone beyond what you expect in this unit. What are those more advanced concepts and skills that will be stepping stones for students' future understanding in this area?
4. Skip back down to level 1.  
Describe what you see when students have simple or partial understanding in this goal area.
5. Write typical student misconceptions you have seen in this goal area. Check back to levels 1-4 and clarify how and when these misconceptions might manifest. Discuss if there is a way to elicit potential misconceptions prior to the unit, or address them early in the unit.

Once teachers have implemented a learning progression, it is critical to revisit and refine, as these are not as simple as they first appear. The following questions can be helpful **action research** questions during collaborative planning:

- Were all the major building blocks addressed in the learning progression? Were any key skills/knowledge sets missing? If so, where would these be added?
- Did the learning progression help make links to the big idea? Did the learning progression support students' conceptual understanding of the big idea?
- Were there teachers who were not involved in creating the learning progression who might have been asked to use it? What was their experience of the learning progression?
- Has anyone cross-checked to find out if there is research available on this progression? If so, does it align with the way you have articulated the development of knowledge and skills in this area?
- Consider doing a vertical check on the learning progression, to see what teachers in grade levels above and below might think about emergent and advanced knowledge (level 4)?

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## Revise an Upcoming Unit Plan to Include Key Formative Assessment Planning Elements

### Learning task:

Revise an upcoming unit plan to include key formative assessment planning elements, including the big idea, learning goals, success criteria, and a learning progression.

### Purpose of learning task:

- Apply skills and knowledge learned during Module 2.
- Deepen understanding of how the formative assessment planning elements align with current lesson/unit planning.
- Dialogue with your “team” to review essential content of an upcoming unit, and explore how to make the learning goals and success criteria more accessible to students.

### Decisions to make before you begin the work:

- This work is best done through dialogue with colleagues. Which colleagues you choose to work with to revise your unit plan is up to you. You may choose to work with the team who is attending the CoP with you, or you may choose to work with a team at your building who shares your students or teaches in the same discipline.
- Select an upcoming “unit” to review/revise. This unit should be one that is well-known to those of you doing the review (not a new unit or new piece of content).
- Beyond revising this unit plan, you will continue work on this unit to develop formative strategies to implement. In other words, you will continue work on this unit after the third CoP meeting. Given this, it will be best if the unit is taught in \_\_\_\_\_.

### Process for task completion:

1. Discuss what you want students to learn in this unit. Have this discussion before you look at various teacher lesson/unit plans.
2. Review the standards that are taught in the current unit plan. Discuss what the standards mean to you, and, in particular, what level of understanding students are meant to attain on this standard.
3. Review the Formative Assessment Lesson Planning Template (Part 1). Sketch out some initial thoughts your group has about big ideas and learning goals.

# FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

4. Discuss the success criteria you each have for this unit. What does it look like when students are successful (on this unit) in your class?
5. Review your existing unit/lesson plans for this unit. Is what you have documented consistent with what you have talked about to this point? Come to agreement on the following:
  - a. Which elements of our plan align with the criteria to develop formative assessment lesson plans (the big idea, learning goals, success criteria)? If you agree these meet the criteria, these can be transferred to the formative assessment lesson plan template.
  - b. Which elements of our plan don't align with the criteria to develop formative assessment lesson plans? Those elements will need to be re-crafted to meet the new criteria.
6. Develop a learning progression using the "bottom up" approach discussed in class.
  - a. Begin by outlining what you see happening in class when students are proficient (level 3). This will be tightly aligned with the success criteria in your unit plan.
  - b. Go down a level (to level 2), and explore what kinds of things you see as students have emergent or developing knowledge on this topic.
  - c. Recall some examples of students who exceeded expectations in this work in the past. What did you see these students doing that went beyond the standard? Include these ideas at level 4.
  - d. Explore what you are likely to see at level 1, where students have only the simplest aspects of knowledge, understanding, or skill in this area. Write down what you are likely to see happening at this level.
  - e. Ask yourselves, does what we have written represent the full range of student learning in my class? If no, revisit to see where you can clarify your expectations.
7. Congratulations! You have created a formative assessment lesson plan.

# FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

## Formative Assessment Lesson Planning Template Part 1 – Clarifying and communicating the focus of the lesson

<b>Academic content standard(s)</b>	
<b>Big idea</b>	
<b>Learning goal(s)</b> <i>Students will know and be able to:</i>	<b>Success criteria</b> <i>Students can:</i>
<b>Student-friendly learning goals</b> <i>Students are able to:</i>	<b>Student-friendly success criteria</b> <i>I can:</i>
<b>Misconceptions students are likely to have as they work on the unit learning goals</b>	
<b>Strategies to share learning goals and success criteria with students</b>	

# FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Module 2

\_\_\_\_\_ Unit/Grade \_\_\_\_\_  
**Formative Assessment Lesson Planning**  
**Learning Progression**

Big Idea	
Unit Learning Goal(s):	
Level 4	<i>At level 4, the student demonstrates knowledge and application that goes beyond what was explicitly taught in this unit.</i>
Level 3 <u>Proficient level</u>	<i>At level 3, the student demonstrates the knowledge and skills expected for the unit learning goals.</i>
Level 2	<i>At level 2, the student has mastered simpler knowledge, skills, and processes that serve as building blocks for the unit learning goals.</i>
Level 1	<i>At level 1, the student shows partial understanding of some simpler knowledge, skills, and processes, but may require more structure, scaffolding, and support to do independent work.</i>
Possible misconceptions	<i>List typical misconceptions students might have about this unit learning goal.</i>

Template inspired by Robert Marzano, *Handbook for the Art and Science of Teaching*, 2009

**Rhode Island Department of Education  
Formative Assessment Community of Practice  
Module 2 Evaluation**

Consider the following **before and after** questions, which help us better understand your background knowledge:

	Mostly unfamiliar	Somewhat unfamiliar	Somewhat knowledgeable	Very knowledgeable
<b>Before</b> this CoP meeting, my knowledge of planning for formative assessment was...				
<b>After</b> this CoP meeting, I would characterize my knowledge of planning for formative assessment as...				
<b>Before</b> this CoP meeting, my knowledge of using strategies to engage students in understanding learning goals and success criteria was...				
<b>After</b> this CoP meeting, I would characterize my knowledge of using strategies to engage students in understanding learning goals and success criteria as....				
<b>Before</b> this CoP meeting, my knowledge of how to use learning progressions as a tool to develop appropriate formative assessment strategies was...				
<b>After</b> this CoP meeting, I would characterize my knowledge of how to use learning progressions as a tool to develop appropriate formative assessment strategies as...				

Please clarify what you would change about today's meeting or where you are seeking additional support:

1. To move my own learning forward in formative assessment, I could use continued support in the following:
  
2. What didn't work for me (or what I would change) from today's meeting:

## Appendix D: Extended Learning Opportunities

If teachers are having difficulty understanding the importance of learning goals and success criteria, they might discuss the following with another colleague or their grade-level or content-area team:

- Why are learning goals and success criteria essential prerequisites for students to become independent learners?
- How can identifying, sharing, and clarifying learning goals and success criteria nurture collaborative learning between teachers and students?

If secondary school teachers are having difficulty understanding the importance of learning goals, they might read the following article and discuss its themes and implications for teaching and assessing in their classroom with their team members or sharing partner in the CoP.

- Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B., & Wiliam, D. (2004). Working inside the black box: Assessment for learning in the classroom. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86(1), 8-21.

If individual teachers or a team are overwhelmed by the challenges of creating learning goals and success criteria, ask them to complete the self-reflection tool, “Where Am I Now,” on the next page. It may help them identify what they are already doing well (or what individual team members can share with others) and an area of practice that a teacher or team would like to implement or improve.

## Where Am I Now?

Consider each of the following statements, and indicate R (rarely), S (sometimes), or U (usually).			
<b>A. Developing, Sharing, and Clarifying Learning Goals</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>U</b>
I/We ensure that students know what they are expected to know, understand, and do by:			
• Identifying learning goals based on overall and specific expectations			
• Writing clear, concise learning goals in student-friendly/grade-appropriate language			
• Stating learning goals from the students' perspective (e.g., "We are learning to...")			
• Designing the learning in incremental steps to build student knowledge and skills			
• Developing learning goals that identify a progression of incremental, scaffolded knowledge and skills			
• Sharing the learning goals at appropriate times in each cycle of learning, usually at the beginning			
• Posting the learning goals visibly in the classroom			
• Having students record the learning goals in their notebooks			
• Making connections to the learning goals during instruction and when students are engaged in learning activities			
• Clarifying learning goals with students to ensure that students and teacher share the same understanding of what is to be learned			
• Providing students time and opportunity to reflect on and discuss the learning goals			
• Asking students to monitor their progress in relation to the learning goals			
<b>B. Success Criteria</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>U</b>
I/We ensure that students understand what successful learning looks like by:			
• Identifying the criteria for success on the learning goals and the assessment tasks when planning assessment and instruction			
• Sharing and clarifying success criteria with students			
• Co-constructing the success criteria with students for significant tasks and learning goals			
• Describing the success criteria in student-friendly language and observable behaviors			
• Using samples, models, and exemplars to identify and clarify success criteria			
• Providing opportunities for students to discuss, review, revise, and come to agreement on the success criteria			
• Modeling applying criteria to concrete samples of strong and weak work			
• Having students practice applying criteria to anonymous work samples			
• Using success criteria as the basis for teacher feedback and for self- and peer-assessment			

Source: Ontario Ministry of Education. (2010). *Learning Goals & Success Criteria Viewing Guide*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada, p. 39.

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