

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING



JUZAILAH AMIN

Senior Educational Therapist &
Curriculum Developer
DAS Main Literacy Programme



A big misconception about formative assessment is that most teachers tend to see it as an event, rather than a process. In fact, formative assessment happens every day as teachers engage with students in the classroom. They need to realise that an effective formative assessment helps students work towards their expected achievement targets and most importantly, encourages them to believe that they can succeed. Therefore, teachers should see formative assessment more of good teaching practice and less of a test.

Basically, the aim of formative assessment helps teachers keep track of their student learning for purposes of making instructional decisions and providing ongoing feedback. That way, students can better identify their strengths as well as learning gaps to be improved on.

EFFECTIVE FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Generally, an effective formative assessment not only helps students become more aware of their learning goals, but it also helps teachers better prepare learning tasks that cater to their students' learning needs. Additionally, timely and constructive feedback helps develop students' capacity to self-reflect on their learning and understanding.

Below are some useful tips on how formative assessments can be conducted effectively:

ANALYSE STUDENTS' WORK

Teachers can gather relevant information about their students' learning through analysing their work. With that information, teachers will be able to:

- ◆ better understand students' current knowledge and attitude towards a certain concept or topic
- ◆ identify students' strengths/weaknesses and learning styles
- ◆ modify their teaching instructions accordingly to cater to the learning needs of the students



FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING

For instance, one of the ways teachers could evaluate their students' progress and learning needs is through the use of online quizzes such as Kahoot! to review the concepts taught. This is a powerful tool for formative assessment as teachers and students would receive immediate feedback in a fun, engaging and less intimidating way since the students would be less likely to notice they are being evaluated.

STRATEGIC QUESTIONING

Asking higher-order questions would require in-depth thinking from the students. During pre-reading comprehension or writing discussions, teachers could get their students to answer the 'why' and 'how' questions in order to evaluate their level of understanding on a certain topic or concept.

One example of how teachers could use strategic questioning as a form of formative assessment is by having carousel brainstorming activities. They could create a few stations in the classroom that contains a paper chart with writing prompts to discuss various topics. Students would then go from station to station to provide information and answer for each prompt. This is one way of helping teachers determine students' level of engagement and understanding.

THINK-PAIR-SHARE

In a big class of 5-8 students, teachers could carry out a simple formative assessment by asking a question and getting the students to share their answers with their peers (in pairs / small groups). This is also a way to gain insight into what the students know and do not know by going around and listening in to their discussions, making mental notes on what needs to be addressed and covered in the subsequent lessons.

THE EXIT TICKET

Exit tickets could be used as a closure activity to check students' understanding by getting them to summarize the main points learnt from that lesson. Teachers could also have their students write down questions they still have for the day's lesson. This is especially useful for students who are shy to speak up during class. The responses would help teachers plan a more effective lesson subsequently, such as reviewing previously taught concepts to reinforce learning. A fun way to conduct this activity is to have students line up at the end of the lesson and pass the completed exit tickets to their teachers before exiting the classroom.

In summary, formative assessment is an ongoing process. It not only helps teachers understand their students' profiles better to plan their lessons more effectively, but it also guides students to recognise and harness their strengths while working on bridging their learning gaps.

Resources

Marzano, R. J. (2012). Art and science of teaching: The many uses of exit slips. *Educational Leadership* 70(2): 80-81.
Silver, H. F., Strong, R. W., & Perini, M. J. (2001). *Tools for Promoting Active, In-Depth Learning*. NJ: Thoughtful Education Press.
Lyman, F. (1981). *The responsive classroom discussion: The inclusion of ALL students*. College Park, MD: Mainstreaming Digest, University of Maryland
Wabisabi Learning. www.wabisabilearning.com/blogs/assessment/formative-assessment-examples
Teach Thought. www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/20-simple-assessment-strategies-can-use-every-day/

