

What is formative assessment?

Formative assessment is any assessment task designed to promote students' learning. These tasks give both teachers and students feedback, so that teaching and learning activities can be altered according to the results. Formative assessment is different from summative assessment, the goal of which is to measure mastery. Research indicates the following conclusions:

- Formative assessment produces greater increases in student achievement and is cheaper than other efforts to boost achievement, including reducing class sizes and increasing teachers' content knowledge.
- Formative assessment that occurs within and between instructional units (medium-cycle assessment) as well as within and between lessons (short-cycle assessment) has been shown to improve students' achievement. Formative assessment across marking periods, quarters, semesters, or years (intervals of four weeks to one year) has not been shown to improve students' achievement.
- In classrooms where medium- and short-cycle formative assessment was used, teachers reported greater professional satisfaction and increased student engagement in learning.

What strategies contribute to effective formative assessment?

Looking separately at the roles of the teacher, the students, and the students' peers, we find that research suggests that effective assessment can be based on the following five "key strategies":

- Clarifying, sharing, and understanding what students are expected to know
- Creating effective classroom discussions, questions, activities, and tasks that offer the right type of evidence of how students are progressing to the espoused learning goals
- Providing feedback that moves learning forward
- Encouraging students to take ownership of their own learning
- Using students as learning resources for one another

Based on What Does Research Say the Benefits of Formative Assessment Are?

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