

## **What is Formative Reading Assessment?**

Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides explicit feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes. Formative assessment is a method of continually evaluating students' academic needs and development within the classroom and precedes local benchmark assessments and state-mandated [summative assessments](#).

Teachers who engage in formative assessments give continual, explicit feedback to students and assist them in answering the following questions:

1. Where am I going?
2. Where am I now?
3. How can I close the gap between the two?

In order to show students how to close the gap between where they are academically and where they want to be, teachers must help students evaluate their progress in the learning process and give them explicit, descriptive feedback specific to the learning task.

### **Two major goals of Formative Assessment:**

- Provide evidence that is used by teachers and students to inform instruction and learning during the teaching/learning process.
- Collect evidence about how student learning is progressing during the course of instruction so that necessary instructional adjustments can be made to close the gap between students' current understanding and the desired goals.

### **The Teacher's Role in Formative Assessment**

The teacher in a classroom that uses formative assessment must give up some control and encourage students to participate in developing learning goals and outcomes. Black and William also contend that formative assessment is effective in virtually all educational settings: content areas, knowledge and skill types, and levels of education.

Black and William make several suggestions for effective implementation of formative assessments:

- There is a need for teachers to pay close attention to the nature, contextualization, and timing of formative assessments. If implemented incorrectly, they can have negative outcomes.
- If paired with a more summative model of assessment, they can be ineffective.

- Formative assessments should not include too many recall/rote activities.
- Teachers involved in formative assessment models should not emphasize grading over learning.
- In the formative assessment model, there should be more of a cooperative and less of a competitive classroom atmosphere.
- Teachers must make sure to focus on quality rather than quantity.
- To be truly helpful to students, feedback in the formative assessment model should be focused on the task, not the student, and the student must understand the feedback so as to make use of it. Teachers must guide students through the process of learning to self-assess and understand both peer and teacher feedback.
  - Teachers should provide opportunities for students to express their understanding, classroom dialogue that focuses on exploring understanding and feedback which includes opportunities to improve and guidance on how to improve.

### **What are the types of Reading Assessment?**

Assessment is an essential element of education used to inform instruction (Wren, 2004). The first step in implementing good reading instruction is to determine student baseline performance. Students enter the classroom with diverse backgrounds and skills in literacy. Some students may enter the classroom with special needs that require review of basic skills in reading, while other students may have mastered the content a teacher intends to cover. Due to these various student levels, it is necessary to design literacy instruction to meet the individual needs of each student. Individual needs can be determined by initial and ongoing reading assessments. These assessments provide teachers with the information needed to develop appropriate lessons and improve instruction for all students, including students with disabilities (Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993). The information gained from appropriate assessment enables teachers to provide exceptional students with improved access to the general education curriculum.

### **Screening:**

The purpose of a screening assessment is to identify students who are at-risk for reading difficulties. Identifying the students early on who are likely to struggle with learning to read is important as we can then develop intervention plans that, hopefully, PREVENT a life-long reading deficit.

## **Progress Monitoring:**

The purpose of progress monitoring is to track student performance during an instructional period. Once a student is identified as at-risk for reading difficulties, an intervention plan is developed. The purpose of the assessment is to determine if the student is making progress when provided with the additional support.

## **Diagnostic:**

Diagnostic assessments provide the teacher with more in-depth information about the student's skills. Diagnostic assessments can range from standardized assessments to teacher-made classroom assessments.

## **Outcomes:**

Outcome assessments are typically administered once a year. These assessments are usually referred to as "high stakes" assessments and the data is used to assess curriculum design, implementation and teachers' efforts over the course of a school year. Outcome assessments provide standard scores and percentiles so that the problem solving team (and parents) can compare a particular student's performance to peers across the nation as well as peers within the district. Although these assessments provide valuable information, they are costly and time consuming to administer.

## **Formal assessment**

Formal assessments are generally tests that are designed to be given at a particular time of the school year or at the end of a unit or series of lessons. The intent is to have a comprehensive or summative measure. Formal assessments can be purchased from various publishers or be developed by teachers, districts, or schools. Formal assessments are not usually individualized but are given to the total population. The results are used to compare the achievement of one student against another.

## **Standardized tests**

Standardized tests are one of the most formal types of assessment and serve multiple educational purposes. They usually sample students' reading in a systematic and controlled fashion. Schools use **two types** of commercially published standardized reading tests:

## **Norm-referenced tests:**

These are used to compare a student's performance with that of a norming group. Norm-referenced tests may not be closely aligned with the curriculum taught in the school or district.

This means that the tasks are designed so that within a given population of test takers (same age/grade/time of year) approximately 50% of the students will be able to answer the question correctly and 50% will not be able to do that. They are designed to separate the achievement of students and to give teachers comparative information regarding the ranking of individual students within the larger pool of test takers.

### **Criterion-referenced tests:**

These tests are closely aligned to the curriculum taught and measure students against a standard, not each other. Criterion-referenced tests allow the teacher to identify specific areas for pre and post testing. These pre and post tests provide data that can be used to measure individual student growth over the course of a grade level or semester.

### **Informal assessment:**

Informal assessments, such as teacher made criterion—referenced assessments/performance/authentic assessments are often viewed as an integral part of instruction. They are viewed as a natural part of the learning process using a variety of tools to involve students in interactions with the teacher or with the students' peers. Informal assessments occur throughout the lesson and are not restricted to an "end of unit" test. Examples would be observation, self assessments, portfolios, rubrics, projects, and "real-life" problem solving.

- Informal assessments, such as performance/ authentic assessments may be developed by the teacher or by the teacher in consort with the students. The test is viewed as formative in nature and is designed to assess how well individual students are doing in comparison to a standard.
- Informal assessments, such as performance/ authentic assessments are closely aligned with the curriculum taught and are not designed to separate achievement but rather to give feedback to the students and to the teacher regarding the progress of each individual student in meeting a commonly understood goal or standard. The intent of these assessments is to provide needed assistance to individual students so that 100% of the population meets the goal or standard.