

THE PURPOSES OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Analyzing the current skill level of students in a classroom at any given time and determining the best course of action to ensure they all meet the target learning goals can be a challenge, even for seasoned teachers. The idea of using formative assessment to meet students' individual needs is not new. In fact, researchers as far back as Benjamin Bloom have shown that one-to-one tutoring is the most effective form of instruction because of the tutor's ability to pinpoint misconceptions and provide immediate feedback and correctives (William, 2011). Despite continued research that shows formative assessment can enhance student success, many teachers struggle to use the full array of formative assessment practices available.

According to Keeley (2016), "a rich repertoire of [assessment strategies] enables learners to interact with assessment in multiple ways—through writing, drawing, speaking, listening, physically moving, modeling, arguing, and designing and carrying out investigations." The list below contains 20 purposes for formative assessment strategies in the classroom.

1. Activate students' thinking and engage them in learning.
2. Make students' ideas explicit to themselves and you, the teacher.
3. Challenge students' existing ideas and encourage intellectual curiosity.
4. Encourage continuous reflection on teaching and learning.
5. Help students consider alternative viewpoints.
6. Provide a stimulus for discussion and argument.
7. Help students recognize when they have learned or not learned something.
8. Encourage students to ask better questions and provide thoughtful responses.
9. Provide starting points for student investigations.
10. Signal readiness to transition to formal concept development.
11. Determine if students can apply ideas and practices to new situations.
12. Differentiate instruction for individuals or groups of students.
13. Promote the use of academic language.
14. Evaluate the effectiveness of a lesson.
15. Help students develop self-assessment and peer assessment skills.
16. Give and use feedback (student-student, teacher-student, and student-teacher).
17. Encourage social construction of ideas.
18. Inform immediate or later adjustments to instruction.
19. Encourage and include participation of all learners.
20. Increase comfort in making one's own ideas public.



Adapted from:

Keeley, P. (2016). *Science formative assessment: 75 practical strategies for linking assessment, instruction, and learning* (Vol. 1). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

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