The 5 Formative Assessment Strategies to Improve Student Learning

In Dylan Wiliam’s new book, *Embedded Formative Assessment*, he provides the 5 strategies that he has come to believe are core to successful formative assessment practice in the classroom:

1. **Clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions and criteria for success** – getting the students to really understand what their classroom experience will be and how their success will be measured.

2. **Engineering effective classroom discussions, activities, and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning** – developing effective classroom instructional strategies that allow for the measurement of success.

3. **Providing feedback that moves learning forward** – working with students to provide them the information they need to better understand problems and solutions.

4. **Activating learners as instructional resources for one another** – getting students involved with each other in discussions and working groups can help improve student learning.

5. **Activating learners as owners of their own learning** – getting students to become owners of their own learning can not only help students take responsibility for their own learning, but can lead directly to improved student performance.

A free webinar by Dylan Wiliam emphasizing the clear understanding of formative assessment and giving some practical strategies is available at: [http://info.nwea.org/FY2012WinterCampaignKLTWebinar2On-demandRegistration.html](http://info.nwea.org/FY2012WinterCampaignKLTWebinar2On-demandRegistration.html)

*Information from this article is from the Northwest Evaluation Association website: [http://www.nwea.org/](http://www.nwea.org/)*

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When the cook tastes the soup, that’s formative; when the guests taste the soup, that’s summative.

- R. Stake

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**Academic Vocabulary and the Common Core State Standards**

The Common Core Standards for English Language Arts emphasize the teaching of academic vocabulary (Tier 2 Words). As defined by Isabel Beck in *Bringing Words to Life*, academic vocabulary includes:

- Words likely to appear frequently in a wide variety of texts/disciplines (utility and importance)
- Words necessary for understanding a text and which allow for rich representation (instructional potential)
- Words that relate to other words and offer students more precise ways of referring to ideas they already know about (conceptual understanding)

Consider the following questions when determining which Tier 2 Words to choose for instruction:

- How generally useful is the word? Is it a word that students are likely to see often in other texts? Will it be of use to students in their own writing?
- How does the word relate to other words that the students know or have been learning?
- What does the word choice bring to the text? What role does the word play in communicating the meaning of the context in which it is used?


**Use Context Clues to Predict Meanings**

Students can use the words surrounding an unknown word to predict its meaning. These words are usually found in one of the following types of sentences:

- Definition/Description: words are directly defined by the sentence.
- Appositive Phrase: the definition of the unknown word is in a phrase set off by commas. (The flute, a musical instrument, was played by her).
- Comparisons and Contrasts: The word can be defined by its opposite in the sentence.
- Linked Synonyms: the unknown word is in a series of known words. Her inclination, goal, and aim was to finish the book.
- Classification: The words can be defined by relationships to known words. (The water molecule is comprised of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen.)
- Examples: The word can be defined by examples in the sentence.

Unlike the dowdy customer, the salesman was neat and clean.

- Experience: The word can be defined by applying previous experience to the unknown word. He looked deliriously happy. As he held his new son in his arms, his eyes glowed and he smiled the widest grin of his life.

Teaching students to look for the structure of these clues can assist them in predicting the meaning of unknown words.


**Coming Soon...**

New ISBE Winter/Spring Series: ELA Common Core Shift Training Sponsored by the Illinois State Board of Education

The ELA Content Area Specialists will be hosting another professional development opportunity with several one day stops around the state. The cost will be minimal and registration is now open.

Content will be geared towards the CCSS shifts in English/Language Arts. Breakout sessions will be offered along with lunch.

**Dates and Locations**

Mar 21st: Rockford
Mar 22nd: Moline
Apr 9th: Gurnee
May 1st: Peoria
May 2nd: Urbana
May 3rd: Chicago/Midway

Registration details can be found at the following link: [http://conferences.illinoisstate.edu/ela/](http://conferences.illinoisstate.edu/ela/)
Focus on Mathematical Practice 6

The sixth Math Practice Standard, **Attend to Precision**, means mathematically proficient students use clear definitions in discussions with others and in their own reasoning. Students state the meaning of symbols they choose, including using the equal sign consistently and appropriately. They carefully specify units of measure, and label axes to clarify the correspondence with quantities in a problem. They calculate accurately and efficiently, express numerical answers with a degree of precision appropriate for the problem context. This practice standard is much more about precision in language and communication than it is about accurate calculations. Students should be sharing ideas using grade appropriate concise language and descriptions. Tasks may require the student to present solutions to multi-step problems in the form of valid chains of reasoning, using symbols such as equal signs appropriately.

Fluency Expectations in 2nd Grade

2. OA. 2 Fluently add and subtract within 20 using mental strategies such as counting on; making ten; decomposing a number leading to a ten; using the relationship between addition & subtraction; and creating equivalent but easier or known sums. By end of Grade 2, know from memory all sums of two one-digit numbers.

Second graders internalize facts and develop fluency by repeatedly using strategies that make sense to them. When students are able to demonstrate fluency, they are accurate, efficient, and flexible. It is no accident that the standard says “know from memory” rather than memorize. The first describes an outcome, the second might be seen as describing a method of achieving that outcome...the standards are not dictating timed tests. (McCallum, October 2011)


PARCC Updates

PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) is actively working on producing computer-innovative assessments for 21 states and the District of Columbia. If you have not already had an opportunity to explore their website, check it out at [parcconline.org/](http://parcconline.org/). The many resources available include the Model Content Frameworks, Item Prototypes, Performance Level Descriptors, Assessment Reference Sheet, Calculator Policy and Technology Guidelines. PARCC’s assessments and the PARCC Model Content Frameworks begin in Grade 3. However, Student Achievement Partners [achievethecore.org](http://achievethecore.org) worked closely in the creation of these materials and has published a document including K-2 that describes key fluencies and cluster emphasis. See page 6 of the document where it discusses the major, supporting and additional clusters in Second Grade.

[http://www.achievethecore.org/steal-these-tools/focus-in-math](http://www.achievethecore.org/steal-these-tools/focus-in-math)

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”  

—William Butler Yeats
Every Moment is Instructional

A wise teacher once said that “every moment with a child should be an instructional moment.” The adage is simple, yet true. In the classroom, a teacher’s behavior is observed, interpreted and even repeated by students. The importance of a positive example is intuitive, and also proven by research. Studies show that, when teachers act negatively toward students, misbehavior, delinquency, disengagement, and academic failure increases (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

Further research indicates that positive modeling and explicit instruction are the best ways to decrease student misbehavior (Jonassen, 1999), thus increasing learning and (re)-engagement of students. Effective modeling includes exhibiting competencies in social, emotional, behavioral, physical and cognitive learning development while explicit instruction can focus on teaching students healthy coping strategies, behaviors, and academic skills. Teacher-student relationship building also supports an emotionally safe classroom environment. These supportive interactions and modeling directly impact learning.

Some questions teachers may consider when modeling appropriate behaviors:

- Is my tone quiet and calm when I interact with students?
- Do I use appropriate and understandable language?
- Do I model classroom rules?
- What are the strengths of each student in my class?
- Do I react with a respectful tone of voice?
- Does my body language reflect non-confrontation?

Response Systems

As part of the instructional planning process, teachers should consider how students will know when they have acted appropriately or inappropriately. Studies show that acknowledgement by teachers is “related to both initial and long-term academic engagement and social success” (Akin-Little et al, 2004). Methods of acknowledgement/correction need not be elaborate. In fact, social recognition tends to be most effective in reinforcing intrinsic motivation. When using a tangible reward system initially to increase buy-in for some students, teachers should:

- Deliver them quickly after the desired behavior is exhibited;
- Connect them to the behavior, not the individual;
- Vary the type (praise, incentives, approval, recognition, points), number, and frequency;
- Consider the appropriateness of the reward; and
- Gradually reduce to eventually eliminate

Research has shown that younger students positively respond initially to tangible rewards (such as stickers) while older students respond best to social/verbal acknowledgements. Ultimately, planning for effective acknowledgements within the school-wide and classroom systems can increase and maintain positive behaviors.

Conditions for Learning Indicators discussed here (CL 19 & 22) and others are included in the Rising Star on IIRC online school improvement system and accessible via the Learning Supports Web Page.

Helpful Resources

- www.edteck.com/dbq - this site is a creative approach to reaching students through images when presenting Content Area Literacy involving teaching with documents
- www.isbe.net/learningsupports – Learning Supports site including Conditions for Learning indicators and an A-Z index of resources for helping students
- http://www.parconline.org/ - for the most up to date information on the PARCC Assessments
- https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AjIqyKM9d7ZYdEhR3BJMzdBWmM2YWxVYVM1UWo wTEE#gid=0 - Dan Meyer has created a spreadsheet of CCSSM aligned Math tasks for middle and high school teachers. He also shares his Algebra and Geometry curriculum. His blog is full of great classroom ideas and allows teachers a place to interact with other educators.

Visit www.isbe.net to download this newsletter.