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/)*

When the cook tastes the soup, that’s formative;

when the guests taste the soup, that’s summative.

- R. Stake
Academic Vocabulary and the Common Core State Standards

The Common Core Standards for English Language Arts emphasize academic vocabulary (Tier Two 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 about which they already know (conceptual understanding)

Consider the following questions when determining which Tier Two 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?

Robert Marzano’s (Marzano & Pickering, 2005) vocabulary research recognizes playing games, writing student friendly definitions and drawing pictures of the word as important steps in teaching vocabulary. In this strategy, students fold their papers into rows of 4 sections each. The number of rows can relate to the number of words to be studied. In the first section, the student writes the word. In the 2nd section, the student writes a definition of the word in his/her own words. In the 3rd section, the student draws a picture or symbol to represent the word. In the 4th section, the student writes a sentence with the word based on his/her definition. After completing the page, the students cut apart the sections and put them in an envelope. The words are reviewed by having the student reassemble the word rows. Students can trade rows/envelopes with others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Def.</th>
<th>Picture</th>
<th>Sent.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


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/
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 carefully define variables for algebraic word problems in order to be successful.

PARCC Update

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 parconline.org/. The many resources available include the Model Content Frameworks, Item Prototypes, Performance Level Descriptors, Assessment Reference Sheet, Calculator Policy and Technology Guidelines. In eighth grade an online scientific calculator will be provided on specific questions. Not all math questions will allow a calculator. The Model Content Frameworks for 8th grade provides Examples of Key Advances, Fluency Expectations or Examples of Culminating Standards, Examples of Major Within-Grade Dependencies, Examples of Opportunities for Connections among Standards, Clusters or Domains, Examples of Opportunities for In-Depth Focus, Examples of Opportunities for Connecting Mathematical Content and Mathematical Practices, and Content Emphasis by Cluster.

PARCC Fluency Expectations for 8th Grade

**8.EE.7** Students have worked informally with one-variable linear equations since kindergarten. This culminates in grade 8 with students finding solution of general one-variable linear equations, including cases with infinitely many solutions or no solutions, as well as cases requiring algebraic manipulation using properties of operations.

**8.G.9** When students learn to solve problems using volumes of cones, cylinders, and spheres, together with their previous grade 7 work in angle measure, area, surface area and volume they will have developed geometric measurement skills. These skills, along with proportional reasoning and multistep numerical problem solving can be combined and used in flexible ways as part of modeling in high school, as well as for college and careers.

For more information: http://www.parconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCCMCFMathematicsGRADE8_Nov2012V3_FINAL.pdf

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

William Butler Yeats
**Comprehensive System of Learning Supports**

**Every Moment is Instructional**

A wise teacher once said “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 acknowledgments 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/dtbq** - 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.parcconline.org/** - for the most up to date information on the PARCC Assessments
- **https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AjIqyKM9d7ZYdEhtIR3BJmJmvdBWm2YWaWyVM1UW0wT8F#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](http://www.isbe.net) to download this newsletter.