

Formative Assessment Topics for November 13, 2009

Topic 1: Sharing learning targets and criteria for success

The first step in formative assessment is being clear about learning goals. The research shows that motivation and achievement both increase when clearly defined targets guide instruction. This involves the teachers and students being clear about the learning targets. The second part to this involves the students understanding what good work on an assignment looks like.

Examples:

- ✓ Post and refer to learning targets that are in student friendly language.
- ✓ Share a test plan at the beginning of a unit.
- ✓ Students identify wrong multiple-choice and fill-in answers and say why they are wrong.
- ✓ Students identify flaws in patterns of reasoning.
- ✓ Teach students to use the rubric to evaluate strong and weak work samples. *For example:*
 - Show the model on the board.
 - Have students decide on a score independently.
 - Have students talk in small groups to determine a score.
 - Take a class vote and have volunteers share their rationales for the score.
- ✓ Use checklists and rubrics that involve students. *For example:*
 - Ask students what is important in good writing and record responses.
 - Read aloud a strong work sample.
 - Have students add to the list based on the model.
 - Share the rubric and go through each trait. Ask students to identify similarities between their list and those in the rubric.

Topic 2: Feedback that feeds forward (descriptive feedback)

Feedback is one of the most important components of formative assessment. Effective feedback is descriptive. This means the feedback points out strengths, areas for improvement, and tells the student what to do next in order to be successful.

Examples:

- ✓ Arrange items on a test by learning target so that the corrected test itself provides feedback by learning target.
- ✓ Confer with individual students to offer feedback.
- ✓ Use a template, such as stars and stairs to provide written feedback.
- ✓ Teach students to give peer feedback.

Topic 3: Student self-assessment

Students need opportunities to reflect on their understanding as they work in the classroom. They also need opportunities to learn how to do this. If you ask “Do you understand?” many will either say “yes” or “no.” This topic area is about teaching students to be able to articulate their level of understanding.

Examples:

- ✓ Students keep a list of the learning targets and regularly mark the ones they have mastered.
- ✓ Use pre-tests to determine strengths, weaknesses, and set goals.
- ✓ Students review and analyze the results of a test.
- ✓ Students use the rubric or a checklist to identify strengths and weaknesses.
- ✓ Students “traffic light” their work.
- ✓ Students complete an exit slip that assesses their level of understanding.
- ✓ Use a KWL chart.