THE FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK

Resources to Improve Learning Outcomes for All Students

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Introduction: The *Why* for Our Book

If you are reading this book and you have worked in education for some time now, you know that education in our country sometimes can feel a little bipolar. As educators and teachers in the classroom, we constantly feel like shifts are happening, new training is taking place, and those once coveted "best practices" are being replaced by newer and better practices. It is no wonder teachers in America are suffering from initiative fatigue; they are feeling worn out, and they are completely overwhelmed by the expectations being placed on them every day in classrooms across this country. Once we add to that plate, the global pandemic of 2020 and the challenges across America's classroom as we begin to recover and rebuild, it is no wonder teachers are tired.

The role of the teacher has grown exponentially in the last 25 years, and those of us who started in education many years ago barely recognize the profession as the one we entered as bright-eyed youths.

When many current veteran teachers began in the profession, teaching still had a myriad of elements of its traditional roots. At its inception, the education system was designed to churn out excellent factory workers who could sit still for hours and respond to bells for the breaks during their nine-hour shifts.

Teachers who taught the youngsters of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were often told what to teach and how to teach. There was also an expectation that the most remarkable success could be garnered when every student was taught similarly. Those nineteenth- and twentieth-century teachers also did not face criticism or sanctions if and when their students failed to achieve academic success. Concepts of creative instruction and innovation were discouraged, and the sage on the stage was born in education circles across this country.

Moreover, we would like to *assume* that because we now know better, we do better, yet the remnants of this era still permeate more classes across our nation than we may like to admit. The challenge therein lies in the changing need of our student populations. We no longer train our youth to work in factories and respond to bells.

In addition, as the face of our nation and our classrooms become increasingly pluralistic, it is incumbent upon our teachers to understand, recognize, and honor the backgrounds of each individual in the classroom. While education could once be described as a one-size-fits-all model, current classrooms require teachers to know and understand the unique learning styles of various students. Teachers must adjust their instruction, often mid-lesson, to meet their student populations' ever-changing and ever-growing needs.

This is not the only way that the face of education has changed. Teachers in classrooms across America are now expected to counsel students on social, emotional, and intellectual growth and to seek, understand, and utilize students' unique backgrounds to meet their learning needs more effectively.

Today's teachers must understand and recognize when learning is not happening and be able and ready to intervene immediately and differentiate their instruction. While we still expect teachers to have mastery of their content, we have added much to the ever-growing workload of the teacher. The sage on the stage can no longer meet the needs of our current educational landscape.

In addition to the shifts already shared, current classroom teachers face the following additional challenges:

- An increased system of school-wide accountability for teachers and students based on performance metrics.
- An expectation of higher levels of knowledge for classroom teachers of the content they teach, as well as of pedagogy, including knowledge of deeper learning, project-based learning, and the ability to help students develop the ability to apply content to novel problems.
- Understanding of the adoption of and shifts in national and state standards.
- Added inclusion movements promoting that general education teachers have a more significant role in educating students from neurodiverse backgrounds.
- Increased use of performance-based evaluation systems.
- The expectation that teachers serve as a bridge between the school and families and communities, with the expectation of frequent and immediate communication with parents.
- Increased responsibility for ensuring student safety in the classrooms.

Teaching was once viewed as a profession where the job ended at 3:00 p.m., and the job promised our teachers the ultimate work-life balance.

More often than not these days, our teachers can be found at school late into the evenings and often on their weekends. Most teachers spend a large part of their summers working alongside their grade level or department teams, attending professional development on the new book adoption, or training on the amendments or additions to current standards.

Gone are the days of the 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. educator. The teacher role in 2023 and beyond is complex, multifaceted, and dynamic.

With that in mind, the *why* behind *The Formative Assessment Handbook: Resources to Improve Learning Outcomes for All Students* is to offer teachers an easy-to-implement, practical, data-driven, and research-based handbook that will *not* be "one more thing."

Our goal is to provide educators across America with easy-to-implement, formative assessments that they can select from, matching their current instructional standards and goals.

We believe teachers who use (with fidelity) these pre-made tools alongside the data and strategies shared in this book can significantly impact student achievement. It is our goal and sincere hope that this book can take one burden off the shoulders of the twenty-first-century educator while simultaneously honoring the teaching professional in best serving the needs of their learners.

As educators, we believe teachers are the lifeblood of education and they have a direct hand in the future of our nation. We hope this handbook provides value to those entering the profession and those who have positively impacted the lives of children for many years.

How to Use This Book

We know all of the work that is on a teacher's plate in the current education landscape, so our goal with this book is that it serves as both a guide and a resource. While you can read it cover to cover to get all the details of implementing formative assessment, you can also dog-ear, highlight, tab, and mark up the pages and resources within the book that serve a specific practical function for you in your classroom. Our goal is to create a resource that, in the end, will serve to save the classroom teacher from expending undo time, energy, and resources on unnecessary elements of the role. We want this book to be something a teacher can open up, determine a specific need or want, and flip to the section most closely correlated to addressing that need. We have kept

things simple for this book by focusing on three main areas of formative assessment, outlined by the parts within this book.

Part I: Before Instruction: Setting Up Your Classroom for Success

In Part I, we dive into a general overview of all of the things that you need to know, do, and prepare *before* you begin your instruction to create the ideal environment to implement the formative assessment. We begin in Chapter 1 by giving an overview of the research behind formative assessment to develop a compelling reason why formative assessment is an essential component of high-quality academic instructional delivery. In Chapter 2, we present information and tips on setting up systems for the successful implementation of formative assessment. Finally, Chapters 3 and 4 provide teachers with support in selecting learning targets and developing success criteria as well as utilizing pre-assessments.

We hope that the combination of this background information serves to provide a solid basis of knowledge of all of the practices that will make your classroom successful as you begin to implement formative assessments.

Part II: During Instruction: Effective "In-the-Moment" Formative Assessment Instructional Practices and Resources

In Part II, we focus on "in-the-moment" formative assessment. This means the formative assessment you complete as a teacher in real-time while instruction is happening. In this section, you will find specific and actionable plans for implementing formative assessment and grab-and-go resources to utilize formative assessment across various content areas effectively. Chapter 5 introduces graphic organizers,

picture notes, think-pair-share, Jigsaws, doodle it, and running records. Chapter 6 dives into collaborative routines. Chapter 7 explores the concepts of Dialogic Teaching and Dialectic Synergy as a way to enhance formative assessment. Finally, in Chapter 8 we explore the role of CFA's and your PLC.

Part III: Formative Assessment After Instruction

In Part III, we focus on what formative assessment looks like after instruction. Chapter 9 provides formative assessments such as exit tickets, muddiest points, and summaries you can utilize after you have completed instruction and need to check for understanding and/or re-teaching prior to a summative assessment or moving on to the next unit. In Chapter 10 we share what formative assessments can look like after instruction. It is our sincere hope that these resources and chapters assist you in meeting your classroom and yearlong goals and are able to provide you with the insight needed to successfully create many opportunities to engage your students in their learning, develop meaningful connections, determine the levels of student learning throughout your instructional sequence, and better assist you in creating opportunities to re-teach to mastery.

Acknowledgments

The writing of this book was an amalgamation of inspiration from the many amazing teachers who have allowed us to serve as their leader and mentor. To the teachers of Bridgeport Elementary School, North Park Elementary School, Hawaii Technology Academy, and Switzerland Point Middle School, you all are truly what is great about education. Your continued dedication to serving children and your love and passion for meeting student needs are the hallmark of our amazing profession. To every teacher out there, working daily far beyond your contract hours, your hard work does not go unnoticed. Thank you for giving all you have and all you are for the kids! There is no greater profession!

About the Authors

Sandra Brunet is a seasoned school administrator and Executive Coach with over 15 years' of experience leading schools in California, Hawaii, and Florida. She has distinguished herself by following her passion for putting students first and has been recognized for her efforts to transform school culture by building positive relationships and increasing school achievement. Most recently, Sandy has moved into an executive coaching role where she works and coaches principals and superintendents across the United States on data-driven instruction, improving instructional outcomes, meeting the needs of multilingual learners, and best practices in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Sandra holds a Master's in Educational Administration and a Bachelor's in Communication Studies from UCLA. She is also the co-author of *Leading with Administrator Clarity*. Sandy currently calls the Gulf Coast of Florida home, and if you can't find her at home, she is surely out at a beach or riding her paddleboard in the nearby Gulf of Mexico.

Marine Freibrun, MEd, began her career as an elementary school teacher in Southern California, teaching grades 2, 3, and 5.

Throughout her career, she also had the opportunity to support and serve teachers as an instructional coach, English Language Development (ELD) coach, and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) coach.

Marine also served as the English Language Arts and Literacy Assessment Coordinator for the Idaho State Department of Education. As the assessment coordinator, she supported teachers and district leaders in the implementation of the Idaho Literacy Achievement and Accountability Act, legislation designed to establish an extended-time literacy intervention program to support students' literacy achievement. In doing so, Marine worked with teachers and district leadership to evaluate assessment data from the state's literacy assessment and define the next steps for effective instructional practices.

Most recently, Marine is a Manager of Educational Partnerships for the Center for the Collaborative Classroom and supports schools in Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming with curriculum implementations.

Marine is also the author of *Getting Started with Teacher Clarity* and co-author of *Leading with Administrator Clarity*. Marine received her Bachelor's in Elementary Education from the University of California, Irvine, and her Master's in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from California State University, Northridge.

She lives in the Boise area with her husband and two sons.

List of Resources in the Book

Number	Title
Resource 3.1	SAMPLE Deconstructing the Standards: Teacher Template
Resource 3.2	BLANK Deconstructing the Standards: Teacher Template
Resource 3.3	Steps to Co-Creating Success Criteria
Resource 4.1	How to Create a Pre-Assessment in Google Forms
Resource 4.2	4 Corners
Resource 4.3	Chat Log Sample Card Secondary
Resource 4.4	Chat Log Sample Card Primary
Resource 4.5	Show What You Know—Gallery Walk
Resource 4.6	Show What You Know—ABC Brainstorm
Resource 4.7	Show What You Know—ABC Brainstorm (Sample Completed)
Resource 4.8	Sample Entrance Ticket
Resource 4.9	Blank, Editable Sample Entrance Tickets
Resource 4.10	Animal Adaptations Anticipation Guide
Resource 4.11	Blank, Editable Anticipation Guide
Resource 5.1	KWL Chart

(*Continued*)

Resource 5.2	One-Minute Essay
Resource 5.3	Light Bulb Moments
Resource 5.4	Formative Classroom Mastery Deck Cards
Resource 5.5	Student Mastery Tracker
Resource 5.6	Clarify This!
Resource 5.7	Think-Pair-Share
Resource 5.8	Questions for My Teacher
Resource 5.9	Learning Logs
Resource 5.10	Anonymous No
Resource 5.11	Sheet Protector Boards
Resource 5.12	What Are Your Wonderings?
Resource 5.13	Learning Target Tickets
Resource 5.14	Quick Writes
Resource 5.15	Doodle It!
Resource 5.16	Red, Yellow, Green
Resource 5.17	Parking Lot
Resource 5.18	Levels of Questioning
Resource 5.19	Anchor Charts
Resource 5.20	Fist to Five
Resource 5.21	3-2-1
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Resource 6.1	Jigsaw
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Resource 6.4	Pass It On!
Resource 6.5	Think-Aloud
Resource 6.6	Collaboration Board

Resource 6.7	Goals and Steps
Resource 6.8	One-Minute Shares
Resource 6.9	Lingering Questions
Resource 6.10	Give One, Get One
Resource 7.1	Developing Conversation Ground Rules
Resource 7.2	Classroom Stems Poster
Resource 7.3	Dialogic Classroom Stems Bookmarks (Grades 3–10)
Resource 7.4	Analysis of Classroom Rules for Discussion
Resource 7.5	Peer Thinking Analysis/Observational Tool
Resource 8.1	Developing Team Commitments
Resource 8.2	Team Norm Development Activity
Resource 8.3	Formative Assessment in the PLC
Resource 8.4	PLC Common Formative Protocol, Shortened Protocol
Resource 8.5	PLC Common Formative Protocol, Detailed Protocol
Resource 9.1a	Student Self-Assessment Checklist (Primary)
Resource 9.1b	Student Self-Assessment Checklist (Upper Elementary)
Resource 10.1	Formative Post-Instruction, Basic Exit Tickets 3-2-1
Resource 10.2	Formative Post-Instruction, Procedural Exit Tickets, Strategy
Resource 10.3	Formative Post-Instruction, Declarative Exit Ticket, Message in a Bottle
Resource 10.4	Formative Post-Instruction, Metacognitive Exit Ticket, Thinking Head
Resource 10.5	Formative Post-Instruction, Reflection
Resource 10.6	Formative Post-Instruction—3 Times Summary

PART
I

Before Instruction: Setting Up Your Classroom for Success

CHAPTER 1

Formative Assessment Overview: What the Research Says

If you have been in education for any period of time, you may have noticed the buzz around formative assessment getting louder with each passing school year. There are many reasons why formative assessment is considered critical in student learning and practical instruction. This chapter will spend some time diving into the research behind formative assessment to lay the groundwork for the rest of this book.

Like all good practitioners, we believe that the more time we spend on high-yield, research-based strategies, the better off our students will be as a result of our efforts. We spent a great deal of time reviewing the large body of research on the most effective educational practices and firmly believe that spending time and energy on formative assessment and feedback is time well spent.

Creating a Common Language

Before diving into all the types and forms of formative assessment, we must develop a shared understanding of what formative assessment is and a common language around this critical educational practice. Once we have completed that, we will dive into what the research tells us about why formative assessment matters.

This handbook defines formative assessment as

> Any assessment task designed to promote students' learning. The purpose of these tasks is to provide feedback for teachers and students so that in-the-moment adjustments can be made to teaching and learning opportunities to more effectively enable students to reach proficiency.

It is important to note that for this conversation, there are two critical components of formative feedback:

- Formative feedback is an in-the-moment assessment that can provide immediate information to students and educators about the learning taking place in the classroom.
- This information must be used to make adjustments to and drive future instruction within the school.

If either of these elements is missing, an authentic formative assessment has yet to occur.

While we imagine the vast majority of readers have a highly developed understanding of assessment, it is crucial to take a moment and make sure we are all speaking the same language when we talk about assessment.

- Summative assessment—or ***assessment of learning***—is exactly as it sounds. When teachers provide an assessment to the students at the end of a defined learning cycle, after which the material has been taught, re-taught, and mastery is expected, they engage in summative assessment. Common summative assessment examples include end-of-course exams, district benchmark testing, standard end-of-unit tests, and end-of-the-school-year statewide exams, which help create school grades and ratings.
- Formative assessment—or ***assessment for learning***—is focused on identifying students' needs *and* responding to those learning needs. Formative assessment requires teachers to make frequent,

interactive, and feedback-driven assessments to better adjust their instruction to help *all* students reach high standards. The most effective formative assessments work to involve the students in the process actively and to take ownership of their learning.

One main reason that formative assessment has become an education "go-to" is that it can produce more significant results than many other current strategies. It is often more time and cost-effective than many other options to boost student achievement. Suppose a school leader on a tight budget has the option to reduce class size or provide solid professional development (PD) on formative assessment and work toward fidelity of implementation. In that case, I can tell you which one their budget would probably dictate needs to be selected.

A Brief Overview of the Research Supporting Formative Assessment

While the purpose of this book is not to complete an exhaustive research review, we feel that any time teaching methods are discussed, that conversation should be squarely framed around what the research tells us is best for student learning and performance. To that end, we will dive into a brief but essential overview of the research behind the formative assessment.

One of the main reasons that education has felt, at times, like a pendulum, shifting from one new idea to initiative to the next, is because the most recent "new idea" was just that—one person's idea of what would work best with kids.

If John Hattie taught us anything in his work on effect sizes, it is that, by and large, what we are doing in education works. Over 95% of the 256 influences related to student achievement that he analyzed in his meta-analysis had a positive impact on student achievement, and those that did not were pretty obvious. No one is surprised by the idea that

bullying or moving harms student learning (Hattie, 2015). So *if* it can be said that, by and large, most of what we are doing in education works, it is incumbent upon us, the practitioners, to utilize data to determine what works *best*.

In his review of meta-analyses on classroom feedback, Hattie (2015) found that formative feedback can significantly contribute to students' achievements, averaging an effect size of .73 (or nearly two years' growth in one year). As a classroom teacher, you know that you cannot focus your time everywhere, so it makes sense to look at those strategies that have the most significant overall impact on student achievement. Formative assessment and feedback are two areas where student growth exceeds the expected annual growth of "one year's growth in one year" and instead falls into "the zone of desired effects," where influences significantly exceed anticipated annual growth expectations.

In addition to Hattie's work, many other researchers, educational organizations, and institutions have studied the impact of formative assessment on student learning outcomes. There is also a large body of past and present research that has served to remind all educators that education is both an art and a science.

According to a policy brief from the OECD Observer and the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), *achievement gains* associated with formative assessment have been described as "among the largest ever reported for educational interventions" (OECD, 2005).

Furthermore, the study concluded that using formative assessments positively impacts equity. According to CERI, "formative assessment also improves equity of student outcomes. Schools that use formative assessment show not only general gains in academic achievement but also exceptionally high gains for previously underachieving students. Attendance and retention of learning are also improved, as well as the quality of students' work" (OECD, 2005).

In their article "Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment," Black and Wiliam conducted a thorough research

review. They determined that practical formative assessment includes teachers adjusting theory teaching in response to student learning and students receiving feedback with specific information about how they can improve their academic outcomes, including the integration of self-assessment. Their research review concluded that formative assessment can account for the largest ever reported gains as an educational intervention for lower-achieving students (Black and Wiliam, 1998).

Goertz, Olah, and Riggan, in their 2009 policy brief titled "Can Interim Assessments be Used for Instructional Change?" dove into a study of 45 elementary school teachers across nine schools and two districts. Their goal was to determine how well formalized formative assessments (specifically, interim assessments in math) impacted teachers' use of data in a cycle of instructional improvement. The goal was to determine how teachers gathered or accessed evidence about student learning; next, how they analyzed and interpreted that evidence, and how they used evidence to plan instruction and carry out improved instruction. While they found interim assessments to be effective in guiding instruction, their main conclusion was that interim assessments designed for instructional purposes are helpful but insufficient to inform instructional change. Essentially, those quarterly assessments are not happening often enough, and the data is not utilized widely enough to guide classroom practices. This truly speaks to the need for real-time, moment formative assessment as the most effective way to meet the needs of all students and impact instructional practice.

Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2005) reflect heavily on the importance of "beginning with the end in mind" and the critical role of both backward planning and authentic, timely, and specific feedback as key components of meaningful learning. In *Understanding by Design*, Wiggins and McTighe argue that backward design is focused primarily on student learning and understanding. When teachers are designing lessons, units, or courses, they often focus on the activities and instruction rather than the outputs of the instruction. They suggest instead that beginning

with the *know* and *show* output from the instruction allows for teachers to develop formative assessment, which helps build the level of student understanding and assists teachers in developing appropriate formative assessments throughout the learning sequence.

Renowned education researcher Robert Marzano dives deep into citing the significant impact that instructional feedback has on formative and summative assessment scores. Throughout this book, we will be referring to their work, as appropriate, to point out the places that it ties into the instructional practices that we present. In his 2010 work *Formative Assessment & Standards-Based Grading*, Marzano details specific benefits of formative assessment. He dives into the true importance of formative assessment as it relates to student performance, growth, and grading. He spends a large amount of time reminding his readers that formative scores are not an accurate way to determine student grades. Specifically, he shares that when a teacher tracks a student's formative scores for one unit, the student's scores will generally show a progression of learning and therefore a student's scores likely will be lower at the beginning of a unit than at the end. If a teacher averages a student's formative scores to calculate a summative score, the resulting summative score would be lower than the student's actual current level of skill, as it would give early scores the same weight as later scores. Marzano suggests instead that teachers should give more weight to scores at the end of the unit, which generally best reflect students' level of mastery. He also puts a lot of emphasis on the importance of oral responses and teachers' discussions as a form of formative assessment, a concept we dive into in our chapter on dialogic teaching and dialectic synergy.

While most of our educational research review was focused on the United States, it is essential to note that formative assessment is widely embraced nationally. While formative assessment has become so commonplace that it is used at schools in 25 U.S. states as an official policy (Altman et al., 2010), it is not simply a U.S. education phenomenon. Nations across the globe, including Scotland, England,