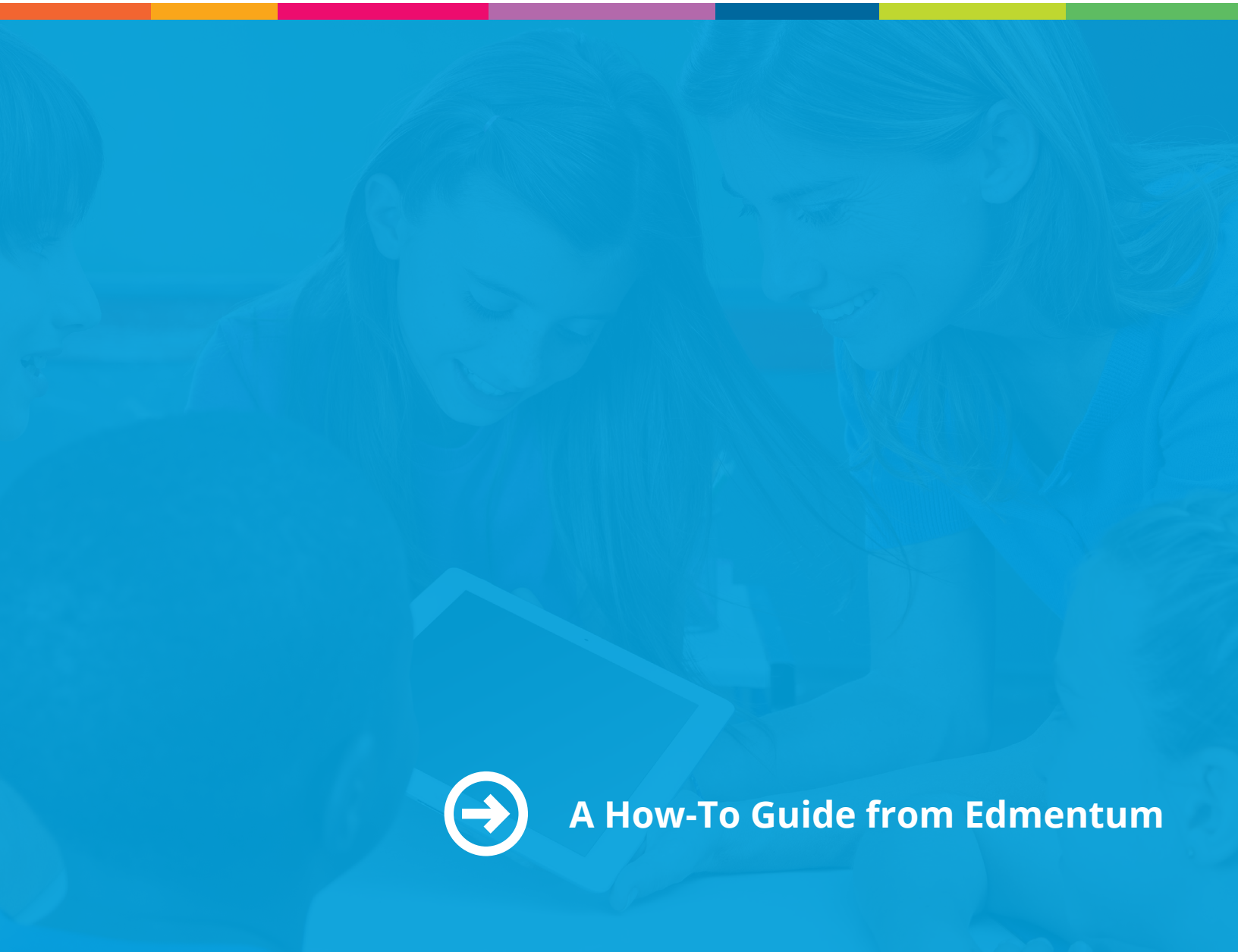
Assessment *for* Learning



A How-To Guide from Edmentum

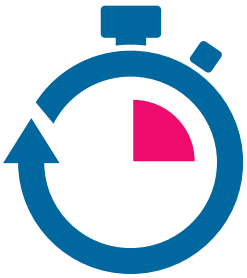
Your formative assessment partner

District administrators, principals, and teachers are responsible for making instructional decisions based on multiple forms of student evaluation, but how do you ensure that students are making progress in their learning toward end-of-year goals and objectives? This workbook will help you distinguish between various assessment types, build goals, identify best practices around your assessments, and continuously analyze your data in an effort to make instructional decisions throughout the school year.

Distinguishing among different types of assessments

To better understand where and how formative assessments fit into an assessment system, it is important to first draw a clear line of distinction among the types of assessments.

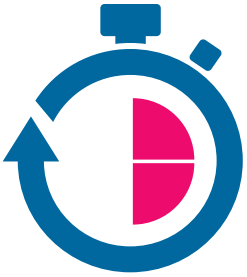
Formative, short-cycle assessments:



Formative assessments provide crucial information about ongoing student learning. They are a continuous process and a fluid measure of student progress that help you determine if and when you need to provide supports or interventions to your students. Formative assessments provide quick and immediate data so that teachers can adjust instruction and provide timely feedback.

Also called: *real-time assessments; diagnostic testlets; quick, informal assessments; and continuous assessments*

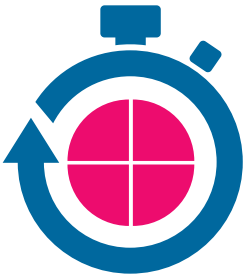
Interim, medium-cycle assessments:



Interim assessments guide learning based on performance relative to a set of very specific academic goals. Interim assessments help assess mastery over a longer period of time. These assessments often inform tiered intervention planning and resourcing.

Also called: *benchmark assessments, cumulative assessments, diagnostic assessments, unit or quarter assessments, and interval assessments*

Summative, long-cycle assessments:



Summative, or long-cycle, assessments measure achievement at the end of instruction. Typically referred to as an assessment of learning, and unlike the other assessment types, summative assessments are often referred to as “high-stakes” due to their relationship to accountability requirements.

Also called: *end-of-semester/end-of-course/end-of-year assessments and high-stakes assessments*

Assessment goals and best practices

Your goal is to create a culture of formative assessment in your classroom. To do this, you will gather data, analyze it, and decide in the moment whether or not to change your instruction. Often, short-cycle, formative assessments are more informal in nature. For medium- and long-cycle assessments, however, evidence of student achievement will be collected relative to a longer period of instruction. Ultimately, you must identify what to improve upon for future lessons, or what you should come back to or reteach based on results.

	Short-Cycle Assessments	Medium- and Long-Cycle Assessments
Timing	Continuously throughout the year, in the moment during a session.	3–4 times per year, immediately following a larger instructional unit.
Examples	■ Self-Assessment ■ Low-stakes quizzes or polls ■ Entry and Exit slips/tickets ■ Observations	■ Chapter tests ■ Cumulative presentations ■ Common assessments ■ Benchmark assessments
Best Practices	1. Reteach the skills in real time using new methods. 2. Use your data to create small groups. Then, reteach or reinforce the corresponding lessons or skills during group time. 3. Assign select students additional practice (both digital and print-based) to help fill identified gaps. 4. Create small groups that can focus on specific skills or lessons.	1. Adjust your longer-range instruction based on interim assessment results. 2. Identify which content you can spiral review in your daily lessons. 3. Backfill larger content gaps using a multidisciplinary approach to instruction. 4. Encourage self-regulated learning by involving them or partnering with them in scoring, criteria setting, goal setting, and progress monitoring.

How do you incorporate formative assessments in your classroom?

Formative assessment is not just about gathering numerical data that can be recorded or scored. Many times, formative assessment data is based on informal data like observations and interview-style discussion.

Questions to ask yourself

When good formative assessment practices are in place, frequent, relevant data is at your fingertips to power good classroom instruction. Before, during, and after instruction, focus on asking yourself these essential questions to guide your data analysis.

Before Teaching

- ☑ What are my students' individual learning goals?
- ☑ What background knowledge do my students bring to this specific topic?
- ☑ What common misconceptions should I prepare for before we get started on this topic?

During Teaching

- ☑ How effective was my instruction today or over the instructional unit?
- ☑ What portion of my class is on track and understanding the lesson?

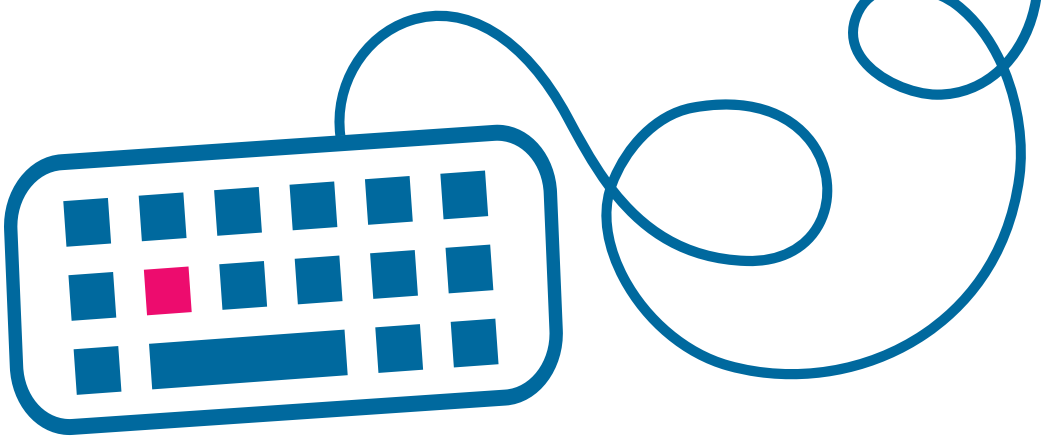
After Teaching

- ☑ Do I need to adjust my teaching approach for the whole class or prepare a whole group reteach?
- ☑ Are there portions of my class that I need to pull together and provide extra support?
- ☑ Are my students continuing to stay on track and make progress relative to a specific set of goals?
- ☑ Are there any patterns of student progress that I notice?

Now that you have a clear definition of the different types of assessments and how those assessments will provide the data you need to meet your goals, you can begin to reflect on the type of activities that will fit in your classroom with your teaching style and engage your learners.

Formative assessment has a specific goal:

Capture data to inform instruction.



Five attributes to ensure success

According to research by the **Council of Chief State School Officers** (CCSSO), there are five attributes that render formative assessment activities most effective.

1. **Learning progressions:** Your students' learning progress should align to the ultimate goal of your lessons.
2. **Goals and criteria for success:** Communicate clearly defined goals for success with your students.
3. **Descriptive feedback:** Provide evidenced-based feedback linked to instructional outcomes for success.
4. **Self- and peer-assessment:** Engage students in feedback and review by asking them for higher-order thinking and reflection of their own learning.
5. **Collaboration:** Create a classroom culture of partnership for learning between teachers and students.

Formative assessment strategies in practice

Knowing what you can do to adjust instruction following a formative assessment is different from being confident that you leveraged tools, activities, and your own expertise in the most effective manner. Use these examples to expore your knowledge of formative assessment in action. Then, complete the self-reflection as you consider activities you have done in the past or want to deliver in the future.

Thumbs Up and Down

An elementary teacher is not sure the class understands the lesson on the difference between fiction and nonfiction stories. The teacher asks students to give a "thumbs up" if the story could be identified as a nonfiction story or give a "thumbs down" if the story is a fiction tale. The teacher does a quick tally of the group and notices there is a nearly even division. The teacher decides to engage in a discussion with the students presenting arguments for both sides. How does this help students?

TIP

This teacher is using a formative assessment approach to collect evidence of learning and adjust instruction. This teacher integrates techniques like an informal tally, hand raising, and a thumbs up or down to quickly gauge understanding by the students.

Classroom Quizzes

A science teacher administers a weekly quiz addressing all the material covered for the week. The quizzes are intended to motivate students to study for the summative unit as well as provide them with a sample of the question types they may encounter on the unit test. The teacher uses the results of the quiz to determine if any skills need to be retaught to the whole class or small groups. The teacher also uses the quiz as an opportunity to conference with students about their progress. How does this help students?

TIP

This teacher is using a formative assessment approach to understand what students understand and how to best adjust instruction. Additionally, the teacher uses the quiz results as an opportunity to create a partnership with students to increase student achievement.

Structured Pair Work

Following a whole-class math lesson, students are asked to reflect on the information and answer specific questions individually. Then, the students divide into the first of three partner groups and spend approximately 15 minutes sharing their thinking as it relates to one or two of the posed questions. They analyze each other's responses and come to a consensus. As the students work with their partners, the teacher walks around and notes common misconceptions and gaps in understanding. At the conclusion of the first pairing, the teacher uses the information gained during the informal observations to help redirect thinking, reinforce ideas, and to provide cues that would help advance student learning. How does this help students?

TIP

This is an example of formative assessment where the posed questions and the peer conversations are used to elicit evidence of the students' understandings. The students can self-reflect and get feedback from their peers. The teacher can listen to the conversations between students to note the current level of understanding for the class and for individual students. The teacher uses the information immediately to assist students in their learning by redirecting thinking, reinforcing ideas, or providing cues.

Hands Up

A social studies teacher has just completed a section on the topography of Spain and wants to assess whether students understand the content. The teacher asks a prepared question and has students answer anonymously on their devices. The teachers sees that most students answered correctly, so is confident the class understands the lesson and is ready to move on. How does this help students?

TIP

When students answer digitally, there can be 100% participation with no pressure to get the answer right and no shame for getting it wrong. While the students don't know who provided which answers, the teacher can see at a glance if the class is ready to move on to the next topic or if the content needs to be taught in a new way.

A look at your progress

Based on what you have learned so far in this workbook, use the worksheet below to identify what you'd like to start, stop, and continue doing to improve data collection and inform instruction.

START	STOP	CONTINUE

What formative assessment activities have you implemented in the past? Think about the focused questions you were trying to answer. How did you use the data to adjust instruction? Did you share that data with your students? Did your assessment meet the attributes of an effective formative assessment?

Make your data actionable

Once the assessments have been given and the data have been analyzed, you are faced with the challenge of making use of the data in front of you. Many studies have attempted to tap into the reasoning behind this difficult phase in the formative assessment cycle. Often, more than half of teachers report feeling overwhelmed by the amount of data coming in. Many remain unsure of how to effectively adapt their instructional practices in their classroom to act on what the data suggest. Putting a protocol into place for data analysis can really help maximize the process of implementing data-driven instruction in the classroom.

When applied to the classroom, many factors can be responsible for skill gaps. These include any dynamics from challenging content or ineffective teaching methods to the learning processes and learning environments utilized that could influence student achievement and learning. To accurately determine what the problem is, integrate an inquiry-based, problem-solving approach using what you have learned so far in this workbook.

? Questions to Ask

Do your assessments align with your overarching instructional goals and how have your goals been communicated?

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO

What types of data have you collected? Are they all actionable?

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO

What standards need improvement and why?

What types of interventions can you implement using the student data that you have collected?

How are you using your data to support learning challenges continuously over time?

Organizing your data to identify gaps

As the inquiry-approach model showed, you can collect data all day long, but those data points are of no use to you or your students if you do not know how to uncover the potential causes of achievement gaps. First, you need to be able to organize the data you have; then, you can begin the more important stage of interpretation.

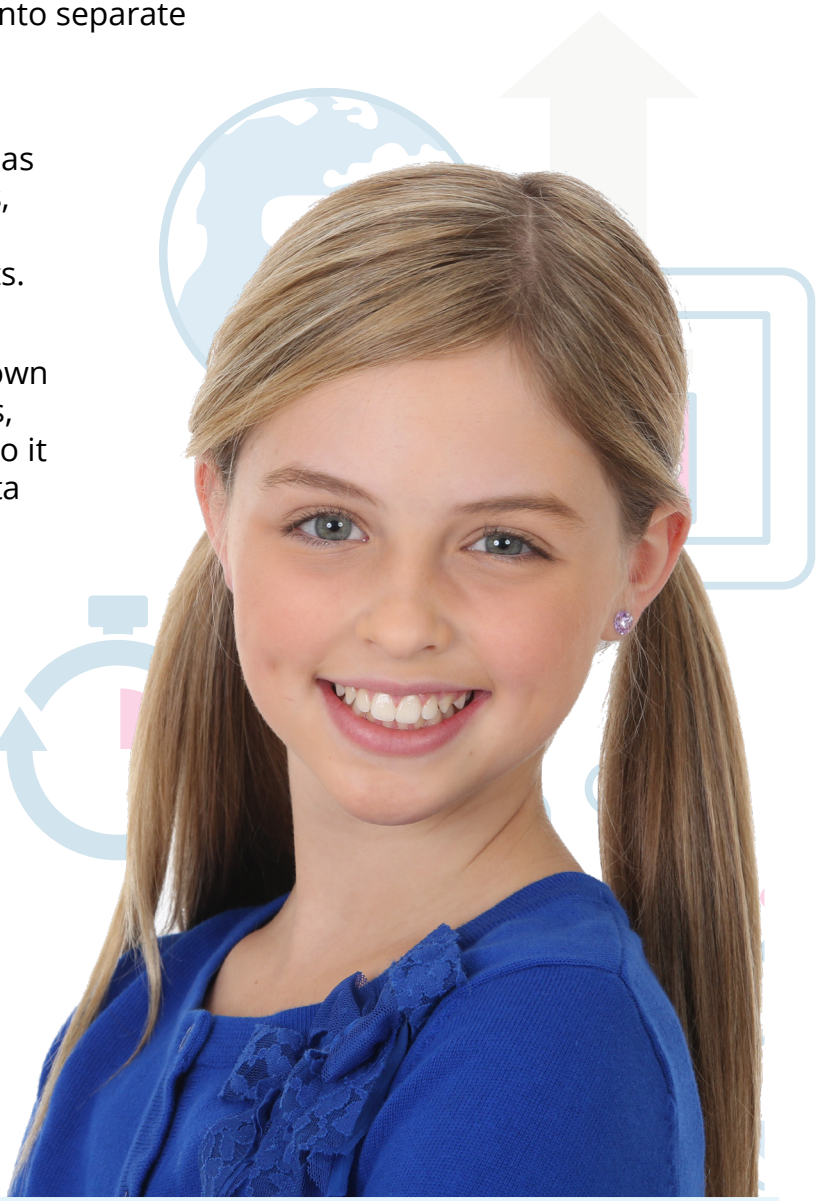
1. Try removing data from the raw form into separate tables and charts.

2. Incorporate color-coding. Highlight areas of need, groups of students, standards, and mastery all in different color combinations to allow for quick insights.

3. Layer different forms of data. Break down data into separate tables for standards, student groupings, and missed items so it will be much easier to focus on key data sets without getting too overwhelmed.

4. Consider using digital tools to make data analysis instantaneous. Many digital tools provide technology that can do the sorting and analysis for you, saving you time and energy better spent on planning and instruction. Look for data dashboards that quickly break down data in real time and provide useful color-coded, graphic depictions of data.

For additional support, take a look at the Tracking Your Data worksheet on page 14.



TIP

What can analyzing data help you learn about your students?

Tip: Effective interpretation of data begins with analyzing student data patterns in both student groups and individual student work.

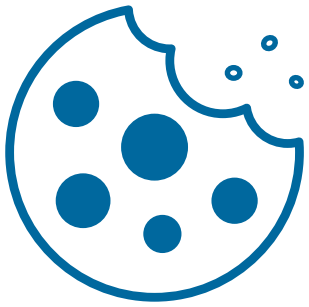
Once data trends and skill gaps have been identified, brainstorm potential causes for varied skill gaps. This process, known as a root cause analysis, is often the most difficult because it requires several attempts at trial and error. Root cause analysis is a common methodology often used to describe the process of identifying an underlying problem to be addressed in order to remediate an issue. Below is a real-world example of root cause analysis:

Problem:

You just baked a new batch of cookies, and they did not turn out well.

Possible cause:

1. The oven temperature was incorrect.
   (Test: Adjust your oven temperature)
2. You missed an ingredient.
   (Test: Adjust your ingredients one by one until you find the culprit.)



Problem:	
Possible Causes	Tests
1.	
2.	
3.	

Tracking your data

Data analysis is both a powerful driver and crucial element of formative assessment practices in the classroom. The appropriate collection of and use of data can help make lasting impacts on student achievement over the course of a school year. This worksheet will help you collect and organize your data so you can build out a meaningful action plan for your students.

Assessment Name:

Administration Date:

Assessment Tool:

Subject Area/Grade Level:

Reporting Category Area of Focus	Reporting Category Areas of Strength

Standards Proficiency:

Standards Needing Improvement - High Priority	Correct/Total	Correct %
Standards Needing Improvement - High Priority	**Correct/Total**	**Correct %**
Standards Needing Improvement - High Priority	**Correct/Total**	**Correct %**
Standards Needing Improvement - High Priority	**Correct/Total**	**Correct %**

Student Performance:

Developing	Approaching	Mastery	Strong Mastery
Percentage:	Percentage:	Percentage:	Percentage:
Student Names:	Student Names:	Student Names:	Student Names:

Action Plan:

How Edmentum can help

Ace your formative assessment strategy with Study Island

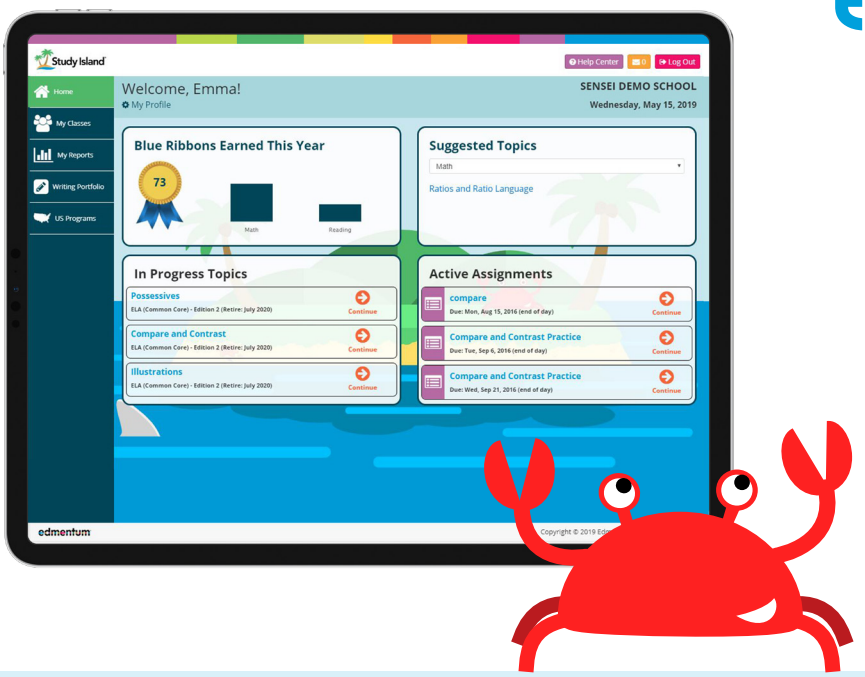
We are committed to making it easier for educators to individualize learning for every student by providing online programs built on pedagogical best practices and valid research. Our K–12 practice and formative assessment program, Study Island, has a positive, statistically significant effect on student achievement, and gives educators the tools they need to perfect their formative assessment strategies.

Boost student achievement through embedded state assessment preparation with practice items built from your state standards

Save time by letting us handle the question writing, assessment grading, and test preparation

Improve mastery and retention through ongoing practice with built-in games

Make instruction more effective with high-quality formative assessments



> There was a direct correlation to the growth of those schools that used [Study Island] with fidelity and used it often. . . . it is one of the keys to our success.

— Russell Hughes
Superintendent
Walton County School District, FL

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