edmentum™

A HOW-TO GUIDE FROM EDMENTUM

Assessment for Learning

How-To Guide

Your Formative Assessment Partner

School managers, 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 towards 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 analyze your data in an effort to make lasting instructional decisions over the school year.

Distinguishing Between Different Types of Assessments

To better understand where and how formative assessments fit into an assessment system, it is important to be able to differentiate between the different types of assessments.

Formative, Short-Term Assessments

Formative assessments provide crucial information about student learning. They are a fluid measure of student progress that help you determine if and when you need to provide timely support or interventions to your students. 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-Term 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 can, however, be used in a formative manner if the data is used over time to guide instruction and learning.

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

Summative, Long-Term Assessments

Summative, or long-term, assessments help you determine content mastery over an even longer period of time. Typically referred to as an assessment of learning, and unlike the other two assessment types, summative assessments are often referred to as “high-stakes” due to the large amount of content covered.

Also called: *end-of-semester/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-term, formative assessments are more informal in nature. For medium- and long-term 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-Term Assessments	Medium- and Long-Term Assessments
Timing	In the moment, during a session.	3-4 times per year, immediately following a larger instructional unit.
Examples	• Thumbs-up/thumbs-down activity • Hand thermometers • Individual whiteboard activity • Traffic lights	• Unit tests • Running records/learning journals • Projects - in pairs or individual • 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 online and print-based) to help fill knowledge gaps. 4. Create small groups that can focus on specific skills or lessons.	1. Adjust your longer-term 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. Give students ownership over their learning by getting them to mark their own work or peer assess the work of others in the class.
Warnings	Formative assessment is not just about numbers. Often, formative assessment data is based on informal data like observations and conversations.	

Formative assessments are not always formal, pen-and-paper assessments. Don't be afraid to try new informal tactics like those listed above.

Questions to Ask Yourself

You have so much data, where do you start analyzing without feeling overwhelmed? To have the greatest impact on your class instruction, you should have a good idea of what types of information you want to learn from your students and what are the best questions to ask in order to get the right response.

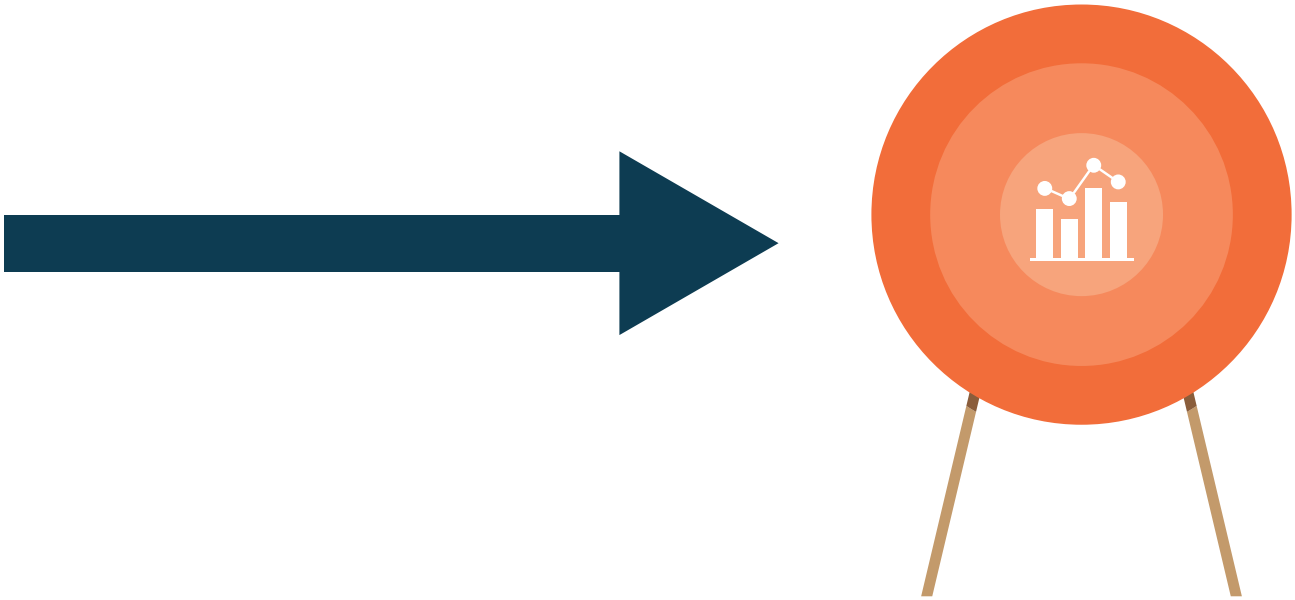
The following checklist will help you get started:

- ☑ What are my students' individual learning goals?
- ☑ What do my students know/want to know about a specific topic?
- ☑ Which groups of students have a good handle on a specific concept, and which do I need to pull together and provide extra support to?
- ☑ What misconceptions do my students have about a specific concept before we get started?
- ☑ Are my students understanding this lesson, or do I need to adjust my teaching approach?
- ☑ How effective was my instruction today and over the unit as a whole?
- ☑ What challenges do I need to address before my student or group of students are able to continue making progress?
- ☑ Are my students still on track and making progress relative to a specific set of goals? Are there any patterns?

EducationCity's assessments can help keep you on track! Explore the assessments we offer per subject and experiment with them. You don't have to use the full assessment, but could instead pull out a specific question of interest for a lesson starter or plenary.

Informing Instruction Through Data

Now that we have gone over 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 with your teaching style and engage your learners.



Formative assessment has a specific goal:

Capture data to inform instruction.

Five Tips for Success

According to research, effective assessment activities must have:

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 evidence-based feedback linked to instructional outcomes for success.
4. Peer and self-assessment: Engage students in feedback and review by asking them for higher-order thinking and reflection of their own learning.
5. Collaboration: Create a culture of partnership for learning between teachers and students, so you're working together towards the ultimate goal.

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. Many of the schools we work with use a variety of formative assessment tools to guide their teaching and learning. Take a look at some of them below:

Thumbs Up and Down

A teacher is not sure the class is understanding the lesson on the difference between fiction and non-fiction stories. The teacher asks students to hold their hands under their chins and give a “thumbs up” if the story could be identified as a non-fiction 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 pretty even split. The teacher decides to open the classroom to a discussion with the students presenting arguments for both sides.

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 students' understanding.

Classroom Quizzes

A teacher administers a weekly quiz addressing all of the material covered for the week. The quizzes are supposed 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. Following the quiz, the teacher moves on to the next lesson as planned.

TIP

This is not an example of formative assessment because the teacher does not use the evidence from the quizzes to adjust instruction, or provide direction to students for them to think about their own learning. The only information the students receive is a score for the number of correct answers.

Structured Pair Work

Following a whole-class lesson, students split into pairs to discuss specific questions. They analyze each other's responses and come to a consensus between themselves. As the students work with their partners, the teacher walks around and notes common misunderstandings and gaps in understanding. At the end, the teacher uses the information to help redirect thinking and reinforce ideas.

TIP

This is an example of formative assessment where the questions asked and the peer conversations had are used to elicit evidence of the students' understanding. The students are able to self-reflect and get feedback from their peers. The teacher is able to listen to the conversations between students to note the current level of understanding of 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 teacher has just completed a unit on fractions and wants to assess whether students have an understanding of the content. The teacher asks a prepared question and sees how many students raise their hands and volunteer an answer. After calling on one of the volunteers, who gets the answer correct, the teacher is confident the class understands the lesson and is ready to move on.

TIP

While an informal poll, like a hand raise, can give you some information, it might not give you the full picture. The students who volunteer are typically the students who understand the content clearly; the ones who need help may or may not ever ask for help. The limited data received from this exercise makes it difficult to determine how to adjust lesson planning to meet the needs of individual students. Therefore, this is not a strong example of formative assessment.

Reflection Exercise

A Look at Your Progress

Based on what you have read so far, why not take some time to identify what you'd like to start, stop, and continue doing to improve data collection and inform your lesson planning?

☑ START	☑ STOP	☑ CONTINUE

What formative assessment activities have you implemented in the past? Think about the focused questions you were trying to answer. Did you use the data to adjust instruction, and 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 has 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 and still remain unsure of how to effectively adapt their instructional practices in their classroom to better reflect what the data suggests. 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 and 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 to 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

To uncover the root cause of achievement gaps, you'll need to collect actionable data, which is shown by the inquiry-approach model. First, you need to be able to organize the data you have; then, you can begin the more important stage of interpretation.

1. Try turning your data into separate tables and charts.

2. Incorporate color-coding. Highlight areas of need, groups of students, standards or learning objectives, 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 learning objectives, student groupings, and missed items so that it's 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.

Effective interpretation of data begins with analyzing student data for commonly missed items, common mistakes, and patterns in both student groups and individual student work.

Root cause analysis is a great tool to use for this. Here's an example of what it might look like in the real world:

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 out an ingredient. (Test: Adjust your ingredients one by one until you find the culprit.)

Problem:	
Possible Causes	Tests
1. 2. 3.	

EducationCity can really help here. Firstly, because its new Assessment Report is a great tool to help you group students that are struggling with a particular concept. Secondly, as many of its assessments generate personalized Revision Journals by analyzing the questions the students have answered incorrectly. These collections of Activities and Learn Screens address the problem learning objectives - perfect for independent remediation or revision at home!

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 a lasting impact on student achievement over the course of a school year. This worksheet will help you collect and organize your data in an effort to 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 %

Tracking Your Data

Student Performance:

Below	Approaching	Meeting	Exceeding
Percentage	*Percentage*	*Percentage*	*Percentage*
Student Names	*Student Names*	*Student Names*	*Student Names*

Action Plan:

About Edmentum

A world-class partner you can trust

Edmentum is founded in innovation and committed to being a trusted partner to create successful student outcomes everywhere learning occurs. We can give you the resources – and the expertise – to leverage the power of effective learning solutions.

- Grades K-12
- US, UK & International Curricula
- Supports Various Learning Models
- Subject Coverage

Growth

We know that not every student learns in the same way and at the same pace. Edmentum puts individual student growth first - giving students the tools to take control of their own academic journey while providing educators insight to facilitate targeted support.

Assessment

Our products come with rigorous assessment options including diagnostic assessments, online tests, high-stakes test preparation, and more. The testing options can help you pinpoint exactly where students are at in their learning.

Research

All of the product developments we make are fuelled by your opinions, feedback, and research. Our research papers and case studies will help you gain a deeper insight into our success in supporting schools around the world.

Curriculum

Edmentum programs are aligned to globally recognized standard. Our products encompass and address a vast array of courses and subjects (over 600) and are fully aligned to curriculum standards.

EducationCity | **Exact Path** | **Courseware** | **Study Island** | **Academy**

Contact us today for more information.
www.edmentuminternational.com | +44 (0)1572 492576

edmentuminternational.com
+44 (0)1572 492576
international@edmentum.com

Edmentum International
c/o EducationCity Ltd
8/9 Saddlers Court
Oakham, Rutland
LE15 7GH, UK

edmentum™