



## *CCSSO Definition of Formative Assessment<sup>1</sup>*

**Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes.**

Teachers should evoke evidence about learning during instruction using a variety of methods that result in adjustments to teaching and learning. These methods can include, but are not limited to, tasks and activities. The tasks and activities alone are not formative assessments but are used as part of the formative assessment process. The following five attributes have been identified from the literature as critical features of effective formative assessment.

### *Attributes*

#### Learning Progressions

- The formative assessment process should be based on learning progressions that provide a clear understanding of the inter-relationships between and among major concepts and principles in a discipline and how they develop.
  - Learning progressions should clearly articulate the subgoals of the ultimate learning goal.
  - Learning progressions enable teachers and students to use formative assessment to locate the students' current learning on the continuum and to identify the next steps.

#### Learning Goals and Criteria for Success

- Learning goals and criteria for success should be clearly identified and communicated to students.
  - This involves discussing the goals and criteria for success with students using terms they can understand and providing examples of how the criteria for success can be met.

#### Descriptive Feedback

- Evidence-based descriptive feedback should be a component of formative assessment.
  - Students should be provided with specific feedback that is linked to the intended instructional outcomes and criteria for success.

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<sup>1</sup> Developed and approved by the CCSSO Formative Assessment Advisory Group (see page 3) and the Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers (FAST) SCASS in October 2006.

- This feedback identifies the gap between current learning status and desired goals at a level of detail to stimulate action by teachers and students for improvements in learning.
- Descriptive feedback should focus on enhancing student learning without assigning grades or scores.

### Self- and Peer-Assessment

- Substantial self- and peer-assessment should be an integral component of formative assessment.
  - Both self- and peer-assessment are important for providing students an opportunity to think metacognitively about their learning.
  - In self-assessment, students monitor their own learning using established criteria that indicate what a successful performance looks like, and they adapt their learning in order to achieve success.
  - In peer-assessment, students analyze each other's performance using established criteria and provide descriptive feedback to each other for continued improvement.

### Collaboration

- A classroom culture in which teachers and students are partners in learning should be established.
  - This involves ongoing interactions between teachers and students regarding learning goals, outcomes, achievements, and adjustments in learning activities.
  - Students engage in self-assessment about how their learning is progressing toward desired goals. They are active agents in learning, working with teachers to close the gap between current learning status and desired goals.

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<sup>2</sup> The CCSSO Formative Assessment Advisory Group was formed in March 2006. This is a list of the original members who were responsible for developing and approving the definition and attributes of effective formative assessments.