Classroom Assessment
for Student Learning
Jan Chappuis et al.
Second Edition

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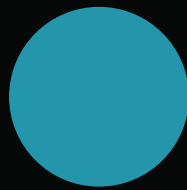# Pearson New International Edition

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# Classroom Assessment: Every Student a Learner

*Used with skill, assessment can motivate
the reluctant, revive the discouraged, and thereby
increase, not simply measure, achievement.*

For many of us, *assessment* is probably not at the top of the list of topics when we think about what we want to spend time learning. But we would guess that, in the last few years, you may have been called upon to do one or more of the following things, each of which may have left you wishing for a stronger understanding of why it is important to do or of how to do it well.

- Develop common assessments with other teachers in your subject area or grade level.
- Work with a team to "deconstruct" the new Common Core State Standards to help identify what should be the content of daily instruction and assessment.
- Attend a Response to Intervention (RTI) training and then make a presentation to the rest of the faculty on the benefits for students.
- Focus on differentiated instruction this year as a strategy to help more students master content standards.
- Use more formative assessment in the classroom because the research says it will work.
- Move to a grading system that centers more on communicating what students know and can achieve and removes from grades such nonachievement variables as attendance, effort, and behavior.

All of these actions, along with many other currently popular school improvement initiatives involving assessment, are aimed at raising student achievement in an era of high-pressure accountability testing. Each action requires classroom teachers to have classroom-level assessment expertise to carry them out effectively. And yet the

opportunity to develop that expertise may not have been available to you through preservice or inservice offerings.

Without a foundation of what we call *classroom assessment literacy*, few if any of these initiatives will lead to the improvements we want for our students. Assessment-literate educators understand that assessments can serve a variety of important *users* and fulfill *purposes* in both supporting and verifying learning. They know that quality assessments arise from *crystal-clear achievement targets* and are designed and built to satisfy specific *assessment quality control* criteria. Those steeped in the principles of sound assessment understand that assessment results must be *delivered into the hands of the intended user* in a timely and understandable form. Finally, they are keenly aware of the fact that assessment can no longer be seen merely as something adults do to students. Rather, students are constantly assessing their own achievement and acting on the inferences they draw about themselves. Assessment-literate educators know how to *engage students in productive self-assessments* that will support their learning success.

We have framed these components of assessment literacy, derived from the expertise of the measurement community, in terms of five keys to assessment quality. Each chapter will focus on one or more of these keys to quality. Each chapter includes activities you can complete individually, with a partner, or with a team to put the principles of assessment literacy into action in your classroom. By the end of your study, you will have the expertise needed to handle any classroom assessment challenge.

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**Chapter 1 Learning Targets**

At the end of this chapter, you will know the following:

- What the five keys to classroom assessment quality are

- Why they are important to assessment accuracy and effective use of assessment information

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## CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT LITERACY

We define *classroom assessment literacy* as the knowledge and skills needed to do two things: (1) gather *accurate* information about student achievement, and (2) use the assessment process and its results *effectively* to improve achievement (Figure 1.1).

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**FIGURE 1.1** Definition of *Classroom Assessment Literacy*

The knowledge and skills needed to

1. Gather accurate information about student achievement.
2. Use the assessment process and its results effectively to improve achievement.

When people think about assessment quality, they often focus on the accuracy of the instrument itself—the extent to which the assessment items, tasks, and scoring rubrics produce accurate information. This is a key feature of assessment quality, but it gives a far from complete picture of what we have to understand to use assessment well in the classroom.

You may be surprised to know that teachers can spend up to 30 percent or more of their classroom time in assessment-related functions. No wonder—consider all of the things that go into and make up the classroom assessment process:

- Planning and managing both formative and summative assessments in the classroom
- Identifying, clarifying, and teaching to valued learning targets
- Designing or selecting high-quality assessment items and tasks
- Devising high-quality scoring keys, guides, and rubrics
- Using assessment results to plan further instruction
- Offering descriptive feedback during learning
- Designing assessments so that students can self-assess and set goals
- Tracking student achievement along with other relevant data
- Setting up a system so students can track and share their progress
- Calculating grades that accurately represent student achievement at the time they are assigned

When viewed as a larger picture, we see that the accuracy of assessment items, tasks, and scoring rubrics is only one slice of the pie. Prerequisites must be in place to ensure accuracy of results. In addition, classroom assessment quality requires that we use the assessment process and its results effectively. If our assessment practices don't result in higher achievement, we would say a component of quality is missing. And, because accurate assessment skillfully used benefits learning, this expanded definition of classroom assessment literacy must become part of our understanding of what it means to teach well. Figure 1.2 shows the expanded definition as an "Assessment Literacy Pie."

## KEYS TO QUALITY CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

All of the pieces contributing to sound classroom assessment instruments and practices are built on a foundation of the following five keys to quality:

1. They are designed to serve the *specific information needs of intended user(s)*.
2. They are based on clearly articulated and appropriate *achievement targets*.
3. They *accurately measure* student achievement.
4. They yield results that are *effectively communicated* to their intended users.
5. They *involve students* in self-assessment, goal setting, tracking, reflecting on, and sharing their learning.

FIGURE 1.2 Components of Classroom Assessment Literacy



Figure 1.3 shows a graphic representation of the five keys to quality. We will use this figure as our "mall map" throughout the book to indicate which key or keys to quality each chapter addresses.

## Key 1: Clear Purpose

We assess, in part, to gather information about student learning that will inform instructional decisions. Teachers and students make decisions every day that drive learning—they need regular information about what each student has and has not yet learned. We make some decisions frequently, such as when we decide what comes next in student learning within lessons or when we diagnose problems. Typically, these decisions, made day to day in the classroom based on evidence gathered from classroom activities and assessments, are intended to support student learning—to help students learn more. These are known collectively as *formative assessment* practices: formal and informal processes teachers and students use to gather evidence for the purpose of improving learning.

We make other decisions periodically, such as when we assign report card grades or identify students for special services. In this case, we rely on classroom assessment evidence accumulated over time to determine how much learning has occurred. Other instructional decisions are made less frequently, such as when school districts assess to inform the community about the efficacy of school programs or to decide whether to continue or discontinue a particular program. Often these decisions are based on results of once-a-year standardized tests reported in broad categories of

**FIGURE 1.3** Keys to Quality Classroom Assessment

**Key 1: Clear Purpose**
Who will use the information?
How will they use it?
What information, in what detail,
is required?

**Key 2: Clear Targets**
Are learning targets clear to teachers?
What kinds of achievement are to be assessed?
Are these learning targets the focus of
instruction?

**Key 3: Sound Design**
Do assessment methods match learning targets?
Does the sample represent learning appropriately?
Are items, tasks, and scoring rubrics of high quality?
Does the assessment control for bias?

**Key 4: Effective Communication**
Can assessment results be used to guide instruction?
Do formative assessments function as effective feedback?
Is achievement tracked by learning target and reported
by standard?
Do grades communicate achievement accurately?

**Key 5: Student Involvement**
Do assessment practices meet students' information needs?
Are learning targets clear to students?
Will the assessment yield information that students can use to
self-assess and set goals?
Are students tracking and communicating their
evolving learning?

learning. These are all examples of *summative assessment*: assessments that provide evidence of student achievement for the purpose of making a judgment about student competence or program effectiveness.

Formative and summative assessment can be thought of as assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning respectively (Figure 1.4). The purpose of one is to improve achievement, to *support* learning, and the purpose of the other is to measure, to *verify*, learning.

As you can see, assessment information can serve a variety of users—such as students, teachers, administrators, parents—and uses—both formative and

FIGURE 1.4  Formative and Summative Assessment

**Formative Assessment**

Formal and informal processes teachers and students use to gather evidence for the purpose of improving learning

**Summative Assessment**

Assessment information used to provide evidence of student achievement for the purpose of making a judgment about student competence or program effectiveness

summative. In any assessment context, whether informing decisions along the way (assessment *for* learning) or measuring achievement after it has happened (assessment *of* learning), we must start by understanding the information needs of the intended users. Those needs will determine the form and frequency of assessment, as well as the level and type of detail required in the results.

Chapter 2 describes the key users of classroom assessment information and their information needs. It also explains differences between formative and summative assessment (assessment *for* and *of* learning), the reasons for engaging in assessment *for* learning, and when to use each.

## Key 2: Clear Targets

Besides beginning with intended use in mind, we must also start the assessment process with a clear sense of the learning to be assessed—the achievement expectations we hold for our students, the content standards at the focus of instruction. We call these *learning targets*. When our learning targets are clear to us as teachers, the next step is to ensure they are also clear to students. We know that students' chances of success improve when they start out with a vision of where they are headed.

Chapter 3 defines kinds of learning targets, explains how to turn broad statements of content standards into classroom-level targets, and shows ways to make them clear to students.

## From the Field 1.1

### Jim Lloyd

They say that "what gets measured gets done." While I believe there is some merit to this, I believe that a better way of phrasing this work is to say that "what is worthwhile, practical, and useful endures." Assessment *for* learning passes the worthwhile, practical, and usefulness tests.

In our district, we believe that all administrators play a vital role in helping classroom assessment for student learning gain traction. If our job is to educate all students up to high standards (a national education mission that is profoundly different from where it once started), then all the educators working within that system must have a clear focus and even clearer understanding as to what things make a profound impact on the achievement of the children. Clearly classroom assessments that are accurate and communicated appropriately are critical to our mission.

Our district leadership team set two goals that we wanted to be world-class at—clear learning intentions and high-quality feedback. We've had the good fortune of increasing our staffs' capacity in these areas through a partnership with Cleveland State University and have generated significant momentum, which in turn has impacted teachers' classroom practices and student learning. We have created local, cross-grade-level learning teams and are using our own teachers as a means to further our capacity and understanding of classroom assessment.

Classroom assessment *for* student learning isn't a simplistic instructional strategy. Rather, it is a way of being. It is a type of pedagogy that when used as a matter of practice makes a profound impact on the way the teacher engineers her learning environment and how the students work within it. We have witnessed firsthand how the learning environments in our school district have gone from great to greater as classroom assessment *for* student learning becomes more deeply embedded in our classrooms and in our students.

We believe that in order for systemic change to occur and endure it must be embraced by those it impacts most of all—teachers and students. Teachers who engage in quality classroom assessment *for* student learning as a matter of instructional practice have clearer student learning intentions, offer more regular and descriptive feedback, create more accurate assessments, communicate assessment results more effectively and involve students in the assessment process. All are ingredients for high levels of student engagement and learning. It has been our experience that Classroom Assessment *for* Student Learning impacts all learners—high, middle, and low achieving.

**Jim Lloyd, Ed.D., *Assistant Superintendent***
**Olmsted Falls City Schools, Olmsted, OH**
**January 2011**

## Key 3: Sound Assessment Design

Assessments can accurately or inaccurately reflect the current level of student learning. Obviously, our goal always is to generate accurate information. The previous two keys, *clear purpose* and *clear targets*, lay the foundation for quality assessment by telling us what needs to be assessed and what kind of results are needed. Next comes the challenge of creating an assessment that will deliver those results. This requires an assessment method capable of reflecting the intended target. Will it be selected response, written

response, performance assessment, or personal communication? These four assessment methods are not interchangeable: each has strengths and limitations and each works well in some contexts but not in others. Our task always is to choose a proper method for the intended purpose and learning targets—the quality of our assessments hinges on it.

Chapter 4 describes the four assessment methods and provides practice in matching methods to learning targets. It also offers guidance on assessment planning with the intended purpose in mind.

After we have chosen a method, we develop it with attention to three other quality criteria. We must sample well by including just enough exercises to lead to confident conclusions about student achievement. We must build the assessment of high-quality items, tasks, or exercises accompanied by proper scoring schemes. And finally, every assessment situation brings with it its own list of things that can go wrong and that can bias the results or cause them to be inaccurate. To prevent these problems we must recognize and know how to eliminate or control for sources of bias.

Chapters 5 through 8 expand on these accuracy requirements for each individual assessment method: selected response (Chapter 5), written response (Chapter 6), performance assessment (Chapter 7), and personal communication (Chapter 8).

## Key 4: Effective Communication

Once the information needs are clear, the learning targets are clear, and the information gathered is accurate, an assessment's results must be communicated to the intended user(s) in a timely and understandable way. When we do this well, we keep track of both formative and summative assessment results, and devise sharing options suited to the needs of whoever will act on the results. Communication of formative assessment information provides the kind of descriptive feedback learners need to grow. Communication in a summative assessment context leaves all recipients understanding the sufficiency of student learning such as when we convert summative assessment information into grades that accurately reflect achievement at a point in time.

Chapters 9 through 12 describe formative and summative record-keeping procedures, sound grading practices, and uses of portfolios and student-involved conferences to expand our communication options.

## Key 5: Student Involvement

Student involvement is the central shift needed in our traditional view of assessment's role in teaching and learning. The decisions that contribute the most to student learning success are made, not by adults working in the system, *but by students themselves. Students* decide whether the learning is worth the effort required to attain it. *Students* decide whether they believe they are capable of reaching the learning targets. *Students* decide whether to keep learning or to quit working. It is only when students make these decisions in the affirmative that our instruction can benefit their learning. So an essential part of our

classroom assessment job is to keep students in touch with their progress as learners in ways that keep them believing in themselves as learners so they will keep trying.

Techniques for involving students are woven throughout the chapters. Chapter 2 describes the research on the positive impact of student involvement on motivation and achievement. Chapter 3 provides specific ways to make learning targets clear to students. Chapters 5 through 8 include method-specific suggestions for involving students in self-assessment and goal setting. Chapters 9, 11, and 12 offer techniques for involving students in keeping track of and communicating about their own learning.

## From the Field 1.2

### Janna Smith

I used to think of assessment as an "ending" to a learning event. When preparing to teach a unit, my planning primarily consisted of looking at the objectives and crafting activities that would engage all students. The word *assessment* was a noun that referred only to a task generally used at the end to determine a grade. The things students were asked to do as part of an endpoint assessment task may—or may not—have been aligned to the key objectives. Items on an end-of-unit test were usually selected response or short-answer/essay, but for the most part that was just for variety's sake.

Now *assessment* is not a singular noun referring to an individual test or task, but refers to an ongoing process that is interwoven with instruction. The process no longer happens only at the end; in fact, it begins with pre-assessment. With my current group of 7th-grade mathematics students, I introduce a grid at the onset of each unit. The grid lists the learning targets for that unit, with space for students to record their analysis of the results of their pre-assessment, target by target.

Additional boxes are included for each target, where students list sources of evidence from daily work, quizzes, etc. Throughout the unit, we periodically pause for students to select which of the learning targets their evidence indicates they are doing well with and on which they need more support. I use their self-assessments along with my own records of their performance to determine mini-lessons, small-group instruction topics, and areas where we might move more quickly.

When I was first introduced to the principles of assessment *for* learning, I was a district-level administrator. My role consisted of providing professional development and supporting principals and teachers in implementing quality classroom assessment practices. I believed it could work and spoke passionately about how to integrate these strategies into instruction. I modeled lessons to demonstrate how learning targets could be turned into student-friendly language. I even taught a graduate-level course on classroom assessment in a school district, but I had never actually used assessment *for* learning in my own classroom! When I finally had that opportunity, I was determined to "walk my talk" with a group of 7th graders who have struggled with mathematics. I wanted to see my own "Inside the Black Box" (Black & Wiliam, 1998b) with my students, hoping it would result in increased achievement and motivation.

Making assessment *for* learning come to life in my own classroom has renewed my zeal for teaching. I am more focused on essential learning targets, and my students always know what we are learning, how they are doing, and what we can work on together to close any gaps. They have become fantastic self-assessors, using their "evidence files" to determine their own strengths and challenges. Most importantly, they are becoming more confident problem solvers who no longer avoid and complain about math. By going back to the classroom, I now know firsthand that using these strategies can have a significant positive impact on student learning.

**Janna Smith, *classroom teacher***
**Far Hills Country Day School, Far Hills, NJ**
**January 2011**

## CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT COMPETENCIES

Our mission with this book is to help improve the classroom assessment practices of all teachers wanting to do so. If we are successful, together we'll move assessment practices in the classroom from a collection of less-effective practices to a model that is grounded in the research of how to use classroom assessment to improve student learning. Figure 1.5 illustrates key shifts in thought and practice that are hallmarks of classroom assessment competency.

The teacher competencies listed in Figure 1.6 represent the big picture of what an assessment-literate teacher knows and can do within each of the five keys to quality.

**FIGURE 1.5** Classroom Assessment: From . . . to . . .

| From | To |
|---|---|
| Classroom tests disconnected from the focus of instruction | Classroom tests reflecting the written and taught curriculum |
| Assessments using only selected response formats | Assessment methods selected intentionally to reflect specific kinds of learning targets |
| "Mystery" assessments, where students don't know in advance what they are accountable for learning | Transparency in assessments, where students know in advance what they will be held accountable for learning |
| All assessments and assignments, including practice, "count" toward the grade | Some assessments and assignments "count" toward the grade; others are for practice or other formative use |
| Students as passive participants in the assessment process | Students as active users of assessments as learning experiences |
| Students not finding out until the graded event what they are good at and what they need to work on | Students being able to identify their strengths and areas for further study during learning |

**FIGURE 1.6**  Classroom Assessment Competencies

**1. *Clear Purpose***

Assessment processes and results serve clear and appropriate purposes.

**a.** Identify the key users of classroom assessment information and know what their information needs are.
**b.** Understand formative and summative assessment uses and know when to use each.

**2. *Clear Targets***

Assessments reflect clear student learning targets.

**a.** Know how to identify the five kinds of learning targets.
**b.** Know how to turn broad statements of content standards into classroom-level learning targets.
**c.** Begin instructional planning with clear learning targets.
**d.** Translate learning targets into student-friendly language.

**3. *Sound Design***

Learning targets are translated into assessments that yield accurate results.

**a.** Design assessments to serve intended formative and summative purposes.
**b.** Select assessment methods to match intended learning targets.
**c.** Understand and apply principles of sampling learning appropriately.
**d.** Write and/or select assessment items, tasks, scoring guides, and rubrics that meet standards of quality.
**e.** Know and avoid sources of bias that distort results.

**4. *Effective Communication***

Assessment results function to increase student achievement. Results are managed well, combined appropriately, and communicated effectively.

**a.** Use assessment information to plan instruction.
**b.** Offer effective feedback to students during the learning.
**c.** Record formative and summative assessment information accurately.
**d.** Combine and summarize information appropriately to accurately reflect current level of student learning.

**5. *Student Involvement***

Students are active participants in the assessment process.

**a.** Identify students as important users of assessment information.
**b.** Share learning targets and standards of quality with students.
**c.** Design assessments so students can self-assess and set goals on the basis of results.
**d.** Involve students in tracking, reflecting on, and sharing their own learning progress.

They can be thought of as the *content standards* for this program of study. Within each of these competencies are specific understandings and actions, taught in each of the following chapters.

We understand that these classroom assessment competencies are not entirely new. Effective teachers already know a considerable amount about assessment; these practices have always been a part of good teaching. We offer our standards of good assessment practice to provide a cognitive structure for defining the domain, and to permit you to determine where you want to deepen your own assessment expertise.

## Summary

Quality classroom assessment produces *accurate information* that is *used effectively* to increase student learning. This is the "do it right" and "use it well" of the book's title.

*Accurate information* comes from clearly identifying the purpose(s) for which information about student learning is being gathered, clearly defining learning targets for students, using the appropriate assessment method well, selecting a sample to accurately represent achievement of the intended learning, and avoiding circumstances that might bias results.

*Effective use* includes relying on accurate assessment results to plan instruction and interventions; using descriptive feedback and self-assessment tactics to help students understand their own progress; that is, their successes and areas for further study; and tracking and communicating achievement information clearly and in a way tailored to the user's needs.

These two overarching aspects of quality, *accuracy* and *effective use*, form the focus of the succeeding chapters of this book. Through the study and application of ideas in each chapter, you will learn to select, create, and use assessments that are of high quality and that engender student success.

## CHAPTER 1 ACTIVITIES

End-of-chapter activities are intended to help you master the chapter's learning targets. They are designed to deepen your understanding of the chapter content, provide discussion topics for learning team meetings, and guide implementation of the practices taught in the chapter.

Forms and materials for completing each activity appear in editable Microsoft Word format in the Chapter 1 CD file. Documents on the CD are marked with this symbol: 

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**Chapter 1 Learning Targets**

1. Know what the five keys to classroom assessment quality are
2. Know why they are important to assessment accuracy and effective use of assessment information

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Activity 1.1  Keep a Reflective Journal

Activity 1.2  Connect Your Own Experiences to the Keys to Quality

Activity 1.3  Complete the Assessment Practices Inventory

Activity 1.4  Survey Students

Activity 1.5  Gather Samples of Student Work

Activity 1.6  Reflect on Your Own Learning

Activity 1.7  Set up a Growth Portfolio

## Activity 1.1

### Keep a Reflective Journal

Keep a record of your thoughts, questions, and any implementation activities you tried while reading Chapter 1.

◉ Reflective Journal Form

## Activity 1.2

### Connect Your Own Experiences to the Keys to Quality

After reading Chapter 1, complete this activity independently, with a partner, or with your team to understand the impact on students of sound and unsound assessment practices.

1. Think of a time you yourself were assessed and it was a *negative* experience. What made it negative?
2. Now think of a time you yourself were assessed and it was a *positive* experience. What made it positive?
3. Which of the five keys to assessment quality were involved in your *negative* experience?
4. Which of the five keys to assessment quality were involved in your *positive* experience?
5. What impact did each experience have on you?

◉ Connect Own Experiences to Keys to Quality

## Activity 1.3

### Complete the Assessment Practices Inventory

In this independent activity, you conduct an ongoing self-assessment of your current understanding of classroom assessment practices.

1. Print the document "Assessment Practices Inventory" from the Chapter 1 file on the CD.
2. Answer the questions at the outset of your study of the text *Classroom Assessment* for *Student Learning: Doing It Right—Using It Well* (*CASL*). Use the 0–4 scale to fill in the column marked "Rating 1." Date the rating column. Then complete the reflection for Rating 1 at the end of the form.
3. Midway through your study of *CASL*, complete the survey again, filling in and dating the column marked "Rating 2." Complete the reflection for Rating 2 at the end of the form.
4. At the conclusion of your study, complete the survey for a third time, filling in and dating the column marked "Rating 3." Complete the reflection for Rating 3 at the end of the form.

This will provide you with an opportunity to look back and reflect on changes in your understanding and classroom practices that have resulted from your study. Consider using this as one of your first entries in a professional growth portfolio (described in Activity 1.7).

Assessment Practices Inventory

## Activity 1.4

### Survey Students

On the CD in the Chapter 1 file, you will find two sets of surveys—an elementary version and a secondary version—designed to elicit students' responses to important aspects of assessment. Each set has a pre-survey and a post-survey. The only difference between the pre- and post-surveys is the instructions; otherwise they are the same instrument. The surveys are anonymous—the information is intended to be examined and compared as a classroom set of data.

1. Select either the elementary or the secondary survey and print out the pre-survey form. Administer it to students at the start of your study of *CASL*.
2. Print out the post-survey. Administer it to students at the end of the school year (or semester).
3. Combine the class data and compare the results of the pre- and post-surveys. Use this information as one indicator of the impact of the practices you are using on students' attitudes about and understanding of assessment.

◉ Elementary Student Pre-survey                ◉ Secondary Student Pre-survey

◉ Elementary Student Post-survey               ◉ Secondary Student Post-survey

## Activity 1.5

### Collect Samples of Student Work

1. To document students' changes in achievement throughout the course of your study, collect samples of their work from the beginning. If you teach a large number of students or a number of subjects, you may want to focus on a handful of students—one or more typical strong learners, midrange learners, and struggling learners.
2. Collect samples periodically throughout the year.
3. Look for changes that are different from what you would normally expect to see.
4. Save these samples and include them in your own personal growth portfolio. These artifacts can be a powerful testament to your learning, as increased student growth is an important goal of your work.

◉ None

## Activity 1.6

### Reflect on Your Own Learning

Review the Chapter 1 learning targets and select one or more that represented new learning for you or struck you as most significant from this chapter. Write a short reflection that captures your current understanding. If you are working with a partner or a team, either discuss what you have written or use this as a discussion prompt for a team meeting.

Reflect on Chapter 1 Learning

## Activity 1.7

## Set Up a Growth Portfolio

### Part A: Growth Portfolio Option

We encourage you to collect evidence of your progress throughout the course of your study and recommend that you assemble the evidence in a growth portfolio—a collection of work selected to show growth over time—focused on classroom assessment literacy.

You may not want to include evidence of everything you have learned—you may want to narrow your focus somewhat. Each *CASL* chapter begins with a list of learning targets for that chapter. If one or more of those learning targets is an area of improvement for you, you may wish to complete the corresponding chapter activity or activities and use them as portfolio entries, along with anything else you develop along the way.

Many people find it helpful to keep a record of their thoughts and questions as they read each chapter and try out activities, both for their own learning and to prepare for learning team discussions. One of the activities for each chapter is to create a reflective journal entry that documents your thoughts, questions, and activities. This can also become part of a growth portfolio.

### Part B: Portfolio Artifacts from Chapter 1

Any of the activities from this chapter can be used as portfolio entries for your own growth portfolio. Select activities you have completed or artifacts you have created that will illustrate your competence at the Chapter 1 learning targets:

1. Know what the five keys to classroom assessment quality are.
2. Know why they are important to assessment accuracy and effective use of assessment information.

If you are keeping a reflective journal, you may want to include Chapter 1's entry in your portfolio.

The portfolio entry cover sheet provided on the CD will prompt you to think about how each item you select reflects your learning with respect to one or more of these learning targets.

Chapter 1 Portfolio Entry Cover Sheet

## CD RESOURCES

1. Activity 1.1 Reflective Journal Form
2. Activity 1.2 Connect Own Experiences to the Keys to Quality
3. Activity 1.3 Assessment Practices Inventory
4. Activity 1.4 Elementary Student Pre-survey
5. Activity 1.4 Elementary Student Post-survey
6. Activity 1.4 Secondary Student Pre-survey
7. Activity 1.4 Secondary Student Post-survey
8. Activity 1.6 Reflect on Chapter 1 Learning
9. Activity 1.7 Chapter 1 Portfolio Entry Cover Sheet

# Clear Purpose: Assessment *for* and *of* Learning

*If we can do something with assessment information beyond using it to figure grades, we can improve learning.*

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, much was written about formative assessment—its impact on achievement, what it is and isn't, how to create formative assessments, how to use formative assessments, and how to use formative assessment teaching strategies in the classroom. In short, formative assessment has garnered the lion's share of assessment attention and established a pretty good name for itself.

Yet the reality is that most assessments in school remain summative—most "count" toward the grade. And, even though they only occur periodically, large-scale accountability assessments continue to dominate our thinking about what is most important.

This chapter begins our focus on the five keys to quality with Key 1: Clear Purpose (Figure 2.1). The questions of how to balance formative and summative assessments, when to use each, and why formative assessment is so important to student learning all trace back to the purpose for the assessment—who is going to use the information and how they intend to use it. This is the crux of Key 1.

## Chapter 2 Learning Targets

At the end of this chapter you will know the following:

- How formative and summative assessment fit into a balanced assessment system
- The impact of formative assessment on student achievement
- Major differences between formative and summative assessment

- How formative and summative assessment relate to assessment quality
- What the Seven Strategies of Assessment *for* Learning are and how they connect to research on formative assessment

**FIGURE 2.1** Keys to Quality Classroom Assessment

**Key 1: Clear Purpose**
Who will use the information?
How will they use it?
What information, in what detail,
is required?

**Key 2: Clear Targets**
Are learning targets clear to teachers?
What kinds of achievement are to be assessed?
Are these learning targets the focus of
instruction?

**Key 3: Sound Design**
Do assessment methods match learning targets?
Does the sample represent learning appropriately?
Are items, tasks, and scoring rubrics of high quality?
Does the assessment control for bias?

**Key 4: Effective Communication**
Can assessment results be used to guide instruction?
Do formative assessments function as effective feedback?
Is achievement tracked by learning target and reported
by standard?
Do grades communicate achievement accurately?

**Key 5: Student Involvement**
Do assessment practices meet students' information needs?
Are learning targets clear to students?
Will the assessment yield information that students can use to
self-assess and set goals?
Are students tracking and communicating their
evolving learning?

## A BALANCED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Who uses assessment information? The first answer that may come to mind is "the teacher," followed perhaps by parents, students, administrators, and the public. They all need assessment information to make decisions, but they make different kinds of decisions. No one assessment can fill everyone's information needs; different assessments are required. In a *balanced assessment system,* the key players' formative and summative information needs are identified and assessments are planned to meet

their needs. Local district assessment systems serve to promote student success when they serve both formative and summative information needs across all three levels of assessment use: classroom assessment, interim or benchmark assessment, and annual testing (Chappuis, Commodore, & Stiggins, 2010). Figure 2.2 identifies the purposes a balanced assessment system serves. Note in this figure that the different users at each level face different decisions and therefore need different kinds of information to do their jobs of (1) supporting and (2) certifying student learning.

**FIGURE 2.2** A Balanced Assessment System

| Level: Classroom Assessment | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Key Issues** | **Formative Context** | **Summative Context** |
| *Key decision(s)* | What comes next in the student's learning? | What standards has each student mastered? What grade does each student receive? |
| *Decision makers* | Students and teachers; parents | Teacher |
| *Information needed* | Evidence of where the student is now on learning progression leading to each standard | Evidence of each student's mastery of each relevant standard |
| Level: Interim/benchmark Assessment | | |
| **Key Issues** | **Formative Context** | **Summative Context** |
| *Key decision(s)* | Which standards are our students consistently not mastering; that is, where can we improve instruction right away? Which students need specific help? | Did the program of instruction deliver as promised? Should we continue to use it? |
| *Decision makers* | Instructional leaders and teachers | Instructional leaders |
| *Information needed* | Standards our students are struggling to master; identification of who is struggling | Evidence of each student's mastery of each relevant standards |
| Level: Annual Testing | | |
| **Key Issues** | **Formative Context** | **Summative Context** |
| *Key decision(s)* | What standards are our students consistently not mastering? Where and how can we improve instruction next year? | Are enough students meeting standards? |
| *Decision makers* | Curriculum and instructional leaders | School and community leaders |
| *Information needed* | Standards our students are struggling to master | Percent of students meeting each relevant standard |

*Source:* Adapted with permission from Chappuis, S., C. Commodore, & R. Stiggins, *Assessment Balance and Quality: An Action Guide for School Leaders, 3rd ed.* (Portland, OR: Pearson Assessment Training Institute, 2010), pp. 14–15.

## IMPACT OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT ON ACHIEVEMENT

Although Figure 2.2 balances information needs among the levels, of particular importance is how assessment information is used. Establishing a balance between formative and summative uses at the classroom and interim/benchmark levels is the most significant contributor to increased student achievement. In traditional classroom practice, most, if not all, of the assessments given have served summative purposes. And at the interim/benchmark level, even those assessments labeled as formative are often used only summatively, leading us to ask formative assessment expert Dylan Wiliam's question: "What's formative about it?"

We know now that formative assessment is reported to cause gains in student achievement, but we have to dig deeper into its many variations to learn what gains to expect and which practices are likely to lead to them. For this information, we look to the research.

The most well-known body of evidence was assembled and summarized by two British researchers, Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam. They conducted a comprehensive review of studies on formative assessment practices that collectively encompassed kindergarteners to college students; represented a range of subject areas, including reading, writing, social studies, mathematics, and science; and were carried out in numerous countries throughout the world, including the United States (Black & Wiliam, 1998a).

The gains they found were among the largest reported for any educational intervention. Typical effect sizes were between 0.4 and 0.7 (Black & Wiliam, 1998b). In some studies they reviewed, certain formative assessment practices increased the achievement of low-performing students to the point of approaching that of high-achieving students. To put the standard deviation numbers into perspective, a 0.4 to 0.7 achievement gain translates to 15 to 25 percentile points on commonly used standardized test score scales. For example, a student scoring at the 45th percentile on a standardized test such as the ITBS, who then attained a 0.7 standard deviation gain, would score at the 70th percentile. These are whopping achievement gains—we don't accomplish them with a good night's sleep the night before the test, snacks on the day of the test, or a pep rally. As one might guess, these formative assessment practices were not a matter of ingenious test preparation.

These are the reported gains that have launched a thousand "formative assessment" products. But the size of the achievement gains is only half of the story. The other half is what occurred to cause the gains. In reviewing the interventions featured in the highest-impact studies, Black and William (1998b) make the following observations:

- "Opportunities for students to express their understanding should be designed into any piece of teaching, for this will initiate the interaction through which formative assessment aids learning" (p. 143).

- "The dialogue between pupils and teachers should be thoughtful, reflective, focused to evoke and explore understanding, and conducted so that all pupils have an opportunity to think and to express their ideas" (p. 144).
- "Feedback to any pupil should be about the particular qualities of his or her work, with advice on what he or she can do to improve, and should avoid comparisons to other pupils" (p. 143).
- "If formative assessment is to be productive, pupils should be trained in self-assessment so that they can understand the main purposes of their learning and thereby grasp what they need to do to achieve" (p. 143).

Therefore, they suggest, the following practices are necessary to achieve the gains promised by formative assessment:

- Use of classroom discussions, classroom tasks, and homework to determine the current state of student learning/understanding, with action taken to improve learning/correct misunderstandings
- Provision of descriptive feedback, with guidance on how to improve, during the learning
- Development of student self- and peer-assessment skills

Unfortunately, none of these can be purchased as formative items or tests. They are all *practices*, not *instruments*. There is no magic test or tool—we cannot buy our way to achievement-through-assessment nirvana. Fortunately, the practices can all be learned. Even more fortunately, they are not new. Good teaching has included these components all along. However, in our accountability-saturated environment, we may have left more than children behind—we may have also left a few good teaching and assessment practices behind.

## My Classroom Then and Now 2.1

### Kristen Gillespie

**I used to . . .**

At the end of a class I would ask if there were any questions. I left it up to the individual to raise his or her hand to signal the level of understanding and ask questions.

**Now I . . .**

Each student is assigned a sticky note with his or her name on it. When prompted, students move their names to one of three boards. One board states that the child is on track and feels comfortable with the information

from class. The second board signals to me that the child still has some questions and needs more practice. The third board lets me know that the child needs individual attention to understand the material. Students are asked to move their sticky notes approximately 3–5 times per week.

**Why I changed. . .**

I noticed that it was simply easier and less embarrassing for the student to not raise his or her hand when asked if anyone needed clarification. I realized that each student had to take more responsibility for his or her own learning. Student self-evaluation is priceless, not only to the student but also the teacher. I wanted to create an environment where students practiced self-monitoring and made deliberate decisions about their comprehension levels.

**What I notice as a result . . .**

The students look forward to moving their sticky notes. Those on the first board feel satisfied and proud of themselves. On the other hand, the students on the other two boards get the extra help they need, ultimately leading to a feeling of success.

Over the course of the school year, students realize that placing their sticky notes in the accurate location has rewards. My students are able to self-assess and get additional help thereby avoiding a poor test grade.

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*Source:* Used with permission from 6th-grade mathematics, reading, and English teacher Kristen Gillespie, Olmsted Falls City Schools, Olmsted Falls, OH, January 2011.

## Distinguishing Between Formative and Summative Assessment

To further understand the distinction between formative and summative assessment, we come back to our definitions:

*Formative assessment:* Formal and informal processes teachers and students use to gather evidence for the purpose of improving learning

*Summative assessment:* Assessment information used to provide evidence of student achievement for the purpose of making a judgment about student competence or program effectiveness

When engaged in formative assessment practices, teachers use assessment information during the learning to diagnose student needs, plan next steps in instruction, provide students with targeted practice, and offer effective feedback. Students use assessment information to offer each other effective feedback, to self-assess, and to set goals for improvement. They can also use it to track, reflect on, and share their

progress. When engaged in summative assessment, teachers use assessment information after learning has taken place to determine the level of student achievement at a given point in time in order to determine a student's report card grade from chapter and unit tests, final exams, and term projects, for example. One form of assessment *supports* learning, the other *verifies* it.

We also call formative assessment by another term, *assessment* for *learning*. We do that in part because formative assessment has taken on a number of different meanings and is commonly interpreted as assessing frequently and using the results to plan the next steps in instruction. However, the research on formative assessment includes practices beyond those, as we have seen, so assessment *for* learning is the term we prefer to indicate the collection of practices necessary to realize significant achievement gains.

By the same token, we call summative assessment *assessment* of *learning*. If you prefer the terms "formative" and "summative," feel free to use them. We will use them throughout the book interchangeably with assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning. Just remember to include *descriptive feedback to students* and *student involvement in the assessment process* on the formative side. See Figure 2.3 for a summary of key differences.

**FIGURE 2.3**  Assessment *of* and *for* Learning: Summary of Key Differences

|  | **Assessment *for* Learning** | **Assessment *of* Learning** |
|---|---|---|
| **Reasons for Assessing** | Promote increases in achievement to help students meet more standards<br>Support ongoing student growth and improvement | Document individual or group achievement or mastery of standards<br>Measure achievement status at a point in time for purposes of reporting or accountability |
| **Audience** | Students about themselves | Others about students |
| **Focus of Assessment** | Specific achievement targets selected by teachers that enable students to build toward standards | Achievement standards for which schools, teachers, and students are held accountable |
| **Place in Time** | A process during learning | An event after learning |
| **Primary Users** | Students, teachers, parents | Policy makers, program planners, supervisors, teachers, students, parents |
| **Typical Uses** | Provide students with insight to improve achievement<br>Help teachers diagnose and respond to student needs<br>Help parents see progress over time<br>Help parents support learning | Grading decisions<br>Promotion and graduation decisions<br>Certify student competence Sort students according to achievement |

## Why the Distinction Is Important

Understanding the distinction between assessment *for* learning (formative assessment) and assessment *of* learning (summative assessment) is pivotal to realizing gains in student achievement. The larger gains attributable to formative assessment practices will not materialize unless certain conditions are met:

1. The assessment instrument or event is designed so that it aligns directly with the content standards to be learned.
2. All of the instrument or event's items or tasks match what has been or will be taught.
3. The instrument or event provides information of sufficient detail to pinpoint specific problems, such as misunderstandings, so that teachers can make good decisions about what actions to take, and with whom.
4. The results are available in time to take action with the students who generated them.
5. Teachers and students do indeed take action based on the results. (Chappuis, 2009, p. 6)

If one or more of these conditions is missing, the assessment will not cause increased learning, no matter what it is called.

## What This Has to Do with Clear Purpose

Establishing the purpose for an assessment is the first key to assessment quality. To ensure that our assessments and assessment practices are of high quality, we ask three questions at the planning stage:

1. Who is going to use the information?
2. How will they use it?
3. What information, in what detail, do they need?

Answers to the first question, at the classroom level, as we have seen in Figure 2.2, are generally *the student, the teacher,* or *the parent*. Answers to the second question follow one of two paths, formative or summative. What are the decisions to be made? Formative—intended to inform instruction (for teacher and student) during the learning? Or summative—used to report about learning that has already occurred?

The answer to the third question is directly dependent on answers to questions one and two—who needs the information and what they will do with it. As a matter of fact, all assessment design decisions flow from those two initial questions and so we will be revisiting them continuously throughout the book. As soon as we have identified who is going to use the information and what decisions the information will be used to make, we know which path, formative or summative, to take.

**WHAT CLEAR PURPOSE HAS TO DO WITH ACHIEVEMENT.** Let's think about the student for a moment. From a student's point of view, most every assignment is an assessment. Students complete assessments to meet teachers' needs, their district's

needs, their state's needs, and their country's needs. How often do they experience assessments that meet *their* needs—not indirectly through the decisions that others make on their behalf, but directly? How long are we going to hammer away at increased achievement through changing teacher actions alone? Until we acknowledge the student's crucial role—if they would only show up/try/do their work—we will continue to change everything but the student. Formative assessment practices work to increase achievement because they change *the student's* interaction with assessment.

## SEVEN STRATEGIES OF ASSESSMENT *FOR* LEARNING

Effective formative assessment practices all lead to action on the part of the teacher *and the student* that improves learning. As Chappuis (2009, p. 4) states, "Well-known educational researchers emphasize this point when they describe what is at the heart of formative assessment:"

> Formative assessment, therefore, is essentially feedback (Ramaprasad, 1983) both to the teachers and to the pupil about present understanding and skill development in order to determine the way forward. (Harlen & James, 1997, p. 369)
> [Formative assessment] refers to assessment that is specifically intended to provide feedback on performance to improve and accelerate learning. (Sadler, 1998, p. 77)
> Formative assessment is defined as assessment carried out during the instructional process for the purpose of improving teaching or learning . . . What makes formative assessment formative is that it is immediately used to make adjustments so as to form new learning. (Shepard, 2008, p. 281) [all items cited in Chappuis, 2009, p. 4]

In an often-cited article describing how formative assessment improves achievement, Australian researcher Royce Sadler (1989) concludes that it hinges on developing students' capacity to monitor and adjust the quality of their own work during production:

> The indispensable conditions for improvement are that the *student* comes to hold a concept of quality roughly similar to that held by the teacher, is able to monitor continuously the quality of what is being produced *during the act of production itself*, and has a repertoire of alternative moves or strategies from which to draw at any given point. (p. 121, emphasis in original)

Many teachers offer feedback regularly, as suggested by the research. Many teachers have engaged students in self-assessment and goal setting. These are good ideas that have been a part of effective teaching all along. Yet sometimes these practices work and sometimes they don't. Some students are more willing and able to

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**FIGURE 2.4  Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning**

**Where am I going?**

**1.** Provide a clear and understandable vision of the learning target.
**2.** Use examples and models of strong and weak work.

**Where am I now?**

**3.** Offer regular descriptive feedback.
**4.** Teach students to self-assess and set goals.

**How can I close the gap?**

**5.** Design lessons to focus on one learning target or aspect of quality at a time.
**6.** Teach students focused revision.
**7.** Engage students in self-reflection, and let them keep track of and share their learning.

*Source:* Reprinted from *Seven Strategies of Assessment* for *Learning* (p. 12), by J. Chappuis, 2009, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education. Reprinted by permission.

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take advantage of them than others. One contributing factor to success is how we set up the learning and assessment environment. Another is how we prepare students. Through careful reading of studies on formative assessment as well as on goal orientations (Ames, 1992; Butler & Neuman, 1995; Schunk, 1996; Shepard, 2008), we have organized these research-based recommendations into an instructional framework, the Seven Strategies of Assessment *for* Learning, which builds in the prerequisites to success.

The seven strategies, shown in Figure 2.4, are structured around three formative assessment questions, drawn from the work of Sadler and others:

- Where am I going?
- Where am I now?
- How can I close the gap?

## Where Am I Going?

**STRATEGY 1: PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH A CLEAR AND UNDERSTANDABLE VISION OF THE LEARNING TARGET.**  Share with your students the learning target(s), objective(s), or goal(s), either at the outset of instruction or before they begin an independent practice activity. Use language students understand, and check to make sure they do understand. Ask, "Why are we doing this activity? What are we learning?"

Convert learning targets into student-friendly language by defining key words in terms students understand. Ask students what they think constitutes quality in a product or performance learning target, then show how their thoughts match with the scoring guide or rubric you will use to define quality. Provide students with scoring guides written so they can understand them. For some learning targets, you can develop scoring criteria with them.

**STRATEGY 2: USE EXAMPLES AND MODELS OF STRONG AND WEAK WORK.** Use models of strong and weak work—anonymous student work, work from life beyond school, and your own work. Begin with work that demonstrates strengths and weaknesses related to problems students commonly experience, especially the problems that most concern you. Ask students to analyze these samples for quality and then to justify their judgments. Use *only* anonymous work. If you have been engaging students in analyzing examples or models, they will be developing a vision of what the product or performance looks like when it's done well.

Model creating a product or performance yourself. Show students the true beginnings, the problems you run into, and how you think through decisions along the way. Don't hide the development and revision part, or students will think they are doing it wrong when it is messy for them at the beginning, and they won't know how to work through the rough patches.

## My Classroom Then and Now 2.2

### Jessica Barylski, Audrey Eckert, & Robyn Eidam

**We used to . . .**

When concluding a writing lesson, we used to have students conduct a peer review of their work with a partner. We would provide them with checklists and tell them to use these checklists, assuming that they would know what to do. While students were giving each other feedback, we would monitor their conversations. We noticed that students simply read their writing pieces to each other and gave very few suggestions to improve their writing because they believed that was what peer review was.

**Now we . . .**

We have begun providing strong and weak examples in many of our lessons. To introduce peer review now, we list the criteria for quality peer feedback. Then we show the students a videotape of ourselves modeling weak and strong examples of peer feedback. Including this component adds a visual model to help the students engage. As students watch the clips, they are looking for the criteria that

will help them identify the strong example. After thoroughly discussing each video clip, the students apply the peer feedback criteria to their own writing pieces.

### Why we changed . . .

Peer feedback was often an area of difficulty for students due to its higher level of thinking. Students never really understood how to participate in the peer review process beyond reading the paragraph and we, as teachers, knew we needed to find a better way to teach them. When we began using formative assessment practices in our classrooms, we became more aware of how using strong and weak examples can impact student learning.

### What we notice as a result . . .

First and foremost, the skills the students acquired from this activity were above and beyond our expectations. The students were engaged and focused throughout not only the videos but also during their peer feedback conferences. It was more meaningful for them to see their teachers engaged in a video that was outside of their normal routine. They took ownership of their peer review process, they followed the peer feedback model and criteria, and they took their time and allowed for corrections. They used constructive criticism and their conversations were more meaningful than in the past. We saw growth and improvement in our students' final writing pieces as well.

*Source:* Used with permission from 4th-grade language arts team teachers Jessica Barylski, Audrey Eckert, and Robyn Eidam, Olmsted Falls Intermediate School, Olmsted Falls, OH, January 2011.

## Where Am I Now?

**STRATEGY 3: OFFER REGULAR DESCRIPTIVE FEEDBACK.**  *Effective feedback* can be defined as information provided to students that causes an improvement in learning as a result. In our current system, most of the work students do is graded and often, these grades are the only formal feedback they receive. However, grades do not function as effective feedback. They deliver a coded evaluation without specific information about what students did well or what their next steps in learning might be.

Researchers and those interpreting their work have examined what causes assessment information to function as effective feedback to students—what kind of feedback will cause the most improvement in student (Ames, 1992; Butler, 1988; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shepard, 2001). Their major findings include the following:

- It isn't enough to be descriptive—a major contributor to effectiveness is *what* is described.

**FIGURE 2.5**  Characteristics of Effective Feedback

**Effective Feedback**

1. Directs attention to the intended learning, pointing out strengths and offering specific information to guide improvement
2. Occurs during learning, while there is still time to act on it
3. Addresses partial understanding
4. Does not do the thinking for the student
5. Limits corrective information to the amount of advice the student can act on

*Source:* Reprinted from *Seven Strategies of Assessment* for *Learning* (p. 57), by J. Chappuis, 2009, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education. Reprinted by permission.

- Feedback directing attention to the learning leads to greater achievement than feedback directing attention to characteristics of the learner.
- Feedback is most effective when it points out strengths in the work as well as areas needing improvement.

We have translated feedback research findings into five characteristics of effective feedback, shown in Figure 2.5.

With that in mind, offer descriptive feedback instead of grades on work that is for practice. Descriptive feedback should reflect student strengths and weaknesses with respect to the specific learning target(s) they are trying to hit in a given assignment. Feedback is most effective when it identifies what students are doing right, as well as what they need to work on next. All learners, especially struggling ones, need to know that they did something right, and our job as teachers is to find it and label it for them, before launching into what they need to improve.

Remember that learners don't need to know everything that needs correcting all at once. Narrow your comments to the specific knowledge and skills emphasized in the current assignment and pay attention to how much feedback learners can act on at one time. Don't worry that students will be harmed if you don't point out all of their problems. Identify as many issues as students can successfully act on at one time, independently, and then figure out what to teach next based on the other problems in their work.

Providing students with descriptive feedback is a crucial part of increasing achievement. Feedback helps students answer the question, "Where am I now?" with respect to "Where do I need to be?" You are also modeling the kind of thinking you want students to engage in when they self-assess.

**STRATEGY 4: TEACH STUDENTS TO SELF-ASSESS AND SET GOALS.**  Teaching students to self-assess and set goals for learning is the second half of helping students answer the question, "Where am I now?" Self-assessment is a necessary part of learning,

not an add-on that we do if we have the time or the "right" students. Struggling students are the right students, as much as any others. The research described previously tells us it is they who gain the most (cf. White & Frederiksen, 1998).

Self-assessment includes having students do the following:

- Identify their own strengths and areas for improvement. You can ask them to do this before they show their work to you for feedback, giving them prior thoughts of their own to "hang" it on—your feedback will be more meaningful and will make more sense.
- Write in a response log at the end of class, recording key points they have learned and questions they still have.
- Using established criteria, select a work sample for their portfolio that proves a certain level of proficiency, explaining why the piece qualifies.
- Offer descriptive feedback to classmates.
- Use your feedback, feedback from other students, or their own self-assessment to identify what they need to work on and set goals for future learning.

## How Can I Close the Gap?

**STRATEGY 5: DESIGN LESSONS TO FOCUS ON ONE LEARNING TARGET OR ASPECT OF QUALITY AT A TIME.**   When assessment information identifies a need, adjust instruction to target that need. This strategy scaffolds learning by narrowing the focus of a lesson to help students master a specific learning goal or to address specific misconceptions or problems. If you are working on a learning target having more than one aspect of quality, build competence one block at a time.

For example, mathematics problem solving requires choosing a workable strategy as one component. A science experiment lab report requires a statement of the hypothesis as one component. Writing requires an introduction as one component. Look at the components of quality and then teach them one part at a time, making sure that students understand that all of the parts ultimately must come together.

## My Classroom Then and Now 2.3

### Jeff Overbay

**I used to . . .**

I used a CD-ROM to generate a topic match pre-test. The test would be mostly multiple-choice questions and a few short answer questions. These assessments would be administered at the beginning of the year and before each unit.

**Now I . . .**

I use the agree–disagree format to design a 10–12 question pre-assessment.

| Example Topic: | Agree | Disagree | Depends | Don't Know |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. A *Mixture* cannot be separated using physical properties. | | | | |
| 2. A *Compound* is a pure substance composed of two or more elements. | | | | |

**Why I changed . . .**

The old pre-assessments had little value. I could never grade them all in a timely manner and as a result very little data could be gained or used in an effective way. The new agree–disagree format allows me to quickly check the students' prior knowledge about any given topic.

**What I notice as a result . . .**

This method serves several purposes for the classroom teacher. First, it helps me narrow the focus on where to begin teaching any given unit. Secondly, I could grade the assessment in a timely manner and use the data to drive my instruction. It gives me a starting point. Thirdly, it helps me to decide whether to review quickly or slowly depending on the students' answers to the questions. This *formative assessment* has great value in beginning a new unit of study.

This assessment is not given a score. This allows students to self-assess and takes some of the fear out of "getting a grade." Once they realize that they can be honest without the fear of failure, the information gathered will be more accurate. As a result, the data can be used in an effective way and the stage is set for learning for the individual student.

_____

*Source:* Used with permission from 7th & 8th grade science teacher Jeff Overbay, Bell County School District, Pineville, KY, 2011.

**STRATEGY 6: TEACH STUDENTS FOCUSED REVISION.**   This is a companion to Strategy 5. After focusing on an area of need, instead of retesting and grading, let students practice it in small segments and offer feedback focused just on that segment. This narrows the volume of feedback students need to act on at a given time and raises their chances of success in doing so, again especially for struggling learners—a time saver for you, and more instructionally powerful for students.

Some ways to help students practice revision include the following:

- Have students work in pairs to critique an anonymous sample and revise it using their own advice.
- Ask students to write a letter to the creator of an anonymous sample they have just critiqued, suggesting how to make it stronger for the aspect of quality discussed.
- Ask students to analyze your own work for quality and make suggestions for improvement. Revise your work using their advice. Ask them to again review it for quality.

These exercises will prepare students to work on a current product or performance of their own, revising for the aspect of quality being studied. You can then give feedback on just that aspect.

**STRATEGY 7: ENGAGE STUDENTS IN SELF-REFLECTION, AND LET THEM KEEP TRACK OF AND SHARE THEIR LEARNING.**   Engage students in tracking, reflecting on, and communicating about their own progress. Any activity that requires students to reflect on what they are learning and to share their progress both reinforces the learning and helps them develop insights into themselves as learners. These kinds of activities give students the opportunity to notice their own strengths, to see how far they have come, and to feel in control of the conditions of their success. By reflecting on their learning, they deepen their understanding, and will remember it longer. In addition, it is the learner, not the teacher, who is doing the work.

Here are some examples of Strategy 7 activities:

- Students write a process paper, detailing how they solved a problem or created a product or performance. This analysis encourages them to think like professionals in your discipline.
- Students write a letter to their parents about a piece of work, explaining where they are now with it and what they are trying to do next.
- Students track their own progress toward mastery of learning targets.
- Students reflect on their growth. "I have become a better reader this year. I used to . . . , but now I . . . "
- Students help plan and participate in conferences with parents and/or teachers to share their learning.

## The Seven Strategies as a Progression

These seven strategies reflect a progression that unfolds in the classroom over time. Students have trouble engaging in later steps (such as self-assessment) if they have not had experience with earlier steps (understanding learning targets and reliably assessing work). Likewise, it is much harder for students to communicate their progress if the learning targets are not clear, if they are not adept at assessing their work, and if they don't know what they need to do to improve.

Assessment *for* learning can have a powerful impact on student achievement if carried out thoughtfully. It enables students to take control of their own learning by providing a clear vision of the learning targets they are to attain, teaching them to assess where they are with respect to the target, and offering strategies they can use to close the gap between where they are and where they need to be. The research on goal orientations, feedback, and self-assessment comes together to support assessment for learning as the best use of assessment in the service of student learning and well-being.

We give suggestions throughout this book for how to implement each of the seven strategies. For a more in-depth treatment, see Chappuis, 2009.

## Summary

In this chapter we have described the characteristics of a balanced assessment system—one that is designed to meet the information needs of all key instructional decision makers. All levels of the system—district, school, and classroom—have a role to play; however, the foundation of a truly effective assessment system is in the classroom—the one level that has shown that it can deliver improved achievement. We reviewed the impact of formative assessment noted by researchers, looking at the achievement gains and the high-impact practices associated with the gains.

We equated formative assessment with assessment *for* learning and summative assessment with assessment *of* learning. Assessment *for* learning occurs to regularly inform teachers and students about the progress of learning while that learning is taking place. Its purpose is to improve learning while there is still time to act—before the graded event. Assessment *of* learning occurs to sum up achievement at a particular point in time. It occurs after learning has happened.

We drew a clear distinction between assessment *for* and *of* learning to make the point that if we want to attain significant gains through formative assessment practices, certain conditions must be in place. Finally we provided an overview of the Seven Strategies of Assessment *for* Learning, a framework of practices structured to implement assessment *for* learning on a day-to-day basis in the classroom.

## CHAPTER 2 ACTIVITIES

End-of-chapter activities are intended to help you master the chapter's learning targets. They are designed to deepen your understanding of the chapter content, provide discussion topics for learning team meetings, and guide implementation of the practices taught in the chapter.

Forms and materials for completing each activity appear in editable Microsoft Word format in the Chapter 2 CD file. Documents on the CD are marked with this symbol:

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**Chapter 2 Learning Targets**

1. Know how formative and summative assessment fit into a balanced assessment system.
2. Understand the impact of formative assessment on student achievement.
3. Describe major differences between formative and summative assessment.
4. Understand how formative and summative assessment relate to the five keys of assessment quality.
5. Know what the Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning are and how they connect to research on formative assessment.

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Activity 2.1 Keep a Reflective Journal

Activity 2.2 Audit Your Assessments for Balance

Activity 2.3 Conduct a Team Self-evaluation

Activity 2.4 Assess Your Feedback Practices

Activity 2.5 Assess Prerequisites for Self-assessment and Goal Setting

Activity 2.6 Reflect on Your Own Learning

Activity 2.7 Select Portfolio Artifacts

## Activity 2.1

### Keep a Reflective Journal

Keep a record of your thoughts, questions, and any implementation activities you tried while reading Chapter 2.

◎ Reflective Journal Form

## Activity 2.2

### Audit Your Assessments for Balance

Use your grade book, a printout of one student's assessment data to date, or any other records you keep for assessment results to complete this activity.

1. Look over your record of assessments you have given in the past several months. Select an instructional unit or module of study spanning several weeks. If you don't have any that long, select several so that your data covers at least three weeks.
2. Make a photocopy of your assessment records for the instructional unit(s) or module(s) of study you have selected.
3. Mark on the photocopy whether each assessment's results were used formatively or summatively.
4. Reflect on the following questions:

   • What is the ratio of formative to summative use of assessment results for this instructional unit or module of study?
   • After having read Chapter 2, what do you think the ideal ratio of formative to summative use for this instructional unit or module of study might be?
   • What, if any, changes to the ratio would you make?
   • What would you do to make those changes?

5. If you are working with a partner or a team, discuss your results, your conclusions, and your questions.

◎ Audit Your Assessments for Balance

## Activity 2.3

### Conduct a Team Self-evaluation

This group activity offers you and your team or school staff an opportunity to assess where you are now with respect to key assessment *for* learning practices.

For this activity, you will need the following:

- A copy of the self-evaluation survey for each person
- An open space with the numbers 1 through 5 posted about six feet high on a wall, spaced a few feet apart
- The graphing chart reproduced poster size
- A fat-tip marker

1. Have everyone individually evaluate their own classroom practice for each of the six statements on the self-evaluation survey, using the 1–5 scale described on the form. Don't put your name on your form.
2. After all have finished, crumple the surveys into snowball-sized wads, move to an open area, form a circle, and throw them at each other. Throw a few times until you are certain you have an anonymous snowball.
3. Open up the snowball you have now and become that person. Line up in front of the number on the wall that represents the rating you have on your paper for the rating for the first statement (e.g., if your paper ranks the first statement as a "4," line up in front of the number 4 on the wall).
4. Ask the person at the head of the line to count the people. Have one person graph the number of people standing in each line on the graphing chart, using a fat-tip marker. Then have that person read the corresponding statement aloud. Do the same for each of the remaining statements.
5. Debrief by finding partners and commenting on the results you see charted and implications for further learning. Then conduct a large-group discussion of your observations.

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*Source:* Adapted with permission from *Assessment Balance and Quality: An Action Guide for School Leaders,* 3d ed. (pp. 138–139), by S. Chappuis, C. Commodore, and R. Stiggins, 2010, Portland, OR: Pearson Assessment Training Institute, 2010. Adapted by permission.

◉ Self-evaluation Survey            ◉ Survey Data Graphing Chart