

## Attachments

Attachments A and B illustrate the application of the formative assessment process by the teacher with the students in the second-grade classroom depicted in the **Portraits**.

**Attachment A** is the planning template that the teacher completed before teaching the lesson. It provides information on how the teacher planned the lesson, when the formative assessment process elements would be applied, and how the teacher planned to collect information on student understanding during the lesson so as to move instruction and student learning forward.

**Attachment B** shows how the formative assessment process was implemented in the lesson. It indicates when both the FAME components and elements and the *Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K to 3* (MAISA/GELN/ELTF, 2016) were used during the lesson illustrated in the vignette.



## Attachment A: Formative Assessment Planning Template



## Feedback Planning

DATE

**What am I teaching? [State Standard(s)]**

RL.2.3. Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.  
 SL.2.1b. Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.  
 SL.2.1c. Ask for clarification and further explanation as needed about the topics and texts under discussion.

How can I make this clear to students? [Student-Friendly Learning Target(s)]

RL.2.3

Use evidence from the text to prove what I know about my character.

**Provide a brief description of how students know that they've met the learning targets.**

Using evidence from the text, students will list on three sticky notes what they already know about their character. The first sticky note will be labeled Always (3 or more items), the second Sometimes 2 or more items) and the third OMG (1-2 items). I will model this for students

**How will I know if they understand the learning target? (Mode of Assessment & Student Evidence)**

- Product
  - Conference
  - Observation
- (Check all that apply.)

**What strategies will be used to gather evidence of student understanding?**

I will use self- assessment and goal setting through the use of conferring and student reading bookmarks. I'll use activating prior knowledge through strategic questioning and student turn and talks.

**How will I teach students? (Instruction)**

I will start with activating prior knowledge of common text. I'll model the new learning target with lots of student input.

**What curricular resources will I need?**

Common text for whole class model; sticky notes for my model to display on doc camera; reading goal bookmarks; book club books

**How will they practice before the assessment?**

During my whole class model, students will turn and talk with a partner and add ideas to our sticky notes. They will also check in with their book club partners and share two things they all know about their character that will go on their own sticky notes

**How much time should I plan for instruction and practice?**

Whole class with embedded practice: 15 min  
 Individual work time: 20 minutes  
 Small group book clubs: 15 minutes

Attachment A (side 2)



Feedback Planning

**How will I involve my students in the process of assessment? (Formative Strategy)**

- Self-Assessment     
  Activate Prior Knowledge     
  Goal Setting     
  Peer Assessment

**What tool(s) will I use?**

Student book marks, sticky notes, observation

**What feedback will I give as students are learning and being assessed?**

- Verbal     
  Written

**When will students have the opportunity to use the feedback?**

They will use the feedback right after the conferring time. Also, they can use feedback from their book club peers right in the moment.

**Possible Misconceptions:**

Students might describe their character’s physical appearance rather than their actions.  
 Students might summarize the whole story instead of focusing on specific character actions.

**How might I begin thinking about instructional revisions?**

Idea #1

After my first whole group demonstration, I will invite “confused” students to stay and work with me until they are ready to work independently.

Idea #2

I will point out and model in my demonstration model that it is about focusing on specific character actions. Then, during individual and small group time, I’ll invite students with correct models to share their work and thinking with students needing more assistance.

Idea #3

I’ll use the bookmark tool at the conclusion of the lesson along with the sticky note to gather evidence of student understanding. Then, I’ll use that to inform and adjust my teaching.

## Attachment B: FAME Formative Assessment Process Applied in the Grade 2 Portrait

What follows is a sample vignette showing the formative assessment process in a second-grade classroom. The left column addresses the Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators (FAME) Components and Elements of the lesson, and the right column addresses the relevant “essential instructional practice” developed by the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network (GELN) Early Literacy Task Force (ELTF). Michigan K-3 educators are charged with using these *Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K to 3* (MAISA/GELN/ELTF, 2016) and are supported in their use by a program of professional learning.

In the vignette, the teacher engages in instruction that aligns with the formative assessment process as well as the *Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K to 3* (MAISA/GELN/ELTF, 2016). In particular, during this lesson, the teacher engages in ongoing assessment and observation of children’s literacy development that informs their education (Essential 9). The teacher is attentive to goal setting and other approaches to foster children’s literacy motivation and engagement (Essential 1). In addition, during this lesson, the teacher engages students in a read-aloud (Essential 2), and the teacher provides small-group and individual literacy instruction (Essential 3). It is also clear that there are abundant reading opportunities for children in the classroom (Essential 8).

**KEY**  
E= Essential  
B= bullet list item

### Grade 2 Formative Assessment Process Vignette

Fame Components & Elements	Narrative	Literacy Essentials Practices
	It is mid-January and the second-grade team in Mr. Ahmed’s school is teaching a reading unit that makes use of book clubs.	
1.1 3.2 4.1	<p><b>Planning</b></p> <p>Along with the posted learning target from the lesson, Mr. Ahmed also considers the foundational reading skills his second-grade students are acquiring and how he can support these on a minute-to-minute instructional basis. While these skills may not live in the posted learning target, Mr. Ahmed is constantly observing and <b>eliciting evidence</b> of these skills in his data binder and in the students’ reading-goal bookmarks. Additionally, Mr. Ahmed offers in-the-minute actionable <b>feedback</b> for his students in the teaching and learning cycle</p>	E3; B2 E9; B4

Fame Components & Elements	Narrative	Literacy Essentials Practices									
1.1	<p>As Mr. Ahmed plans his upcoming lesson and considers his students’ needs, he makes decisions for both his direct instruction and small-group book clubs. The main comprehension focus in this lesson is for all students to use their growing knowledge of how characters act and how these actions influence the plot of the story. A common text has served as the model for his direct instruction time.</p> <p>This lesson has three main segments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole group instruction with a common class text</li> <li>• Independent reading and work time using book club books matched to students’ reading skill and interest</li> <li>• Small-group time with book club peers</li> </ul>										
1.1  3.1 3.2 3.3 3.4	<p><b>Whole Group Instruction:</b> The students are gathered and are seated close to their book club group members. Each student has their book club text and a pencil.</p> <p>Using the whole group common text, visible to all students, Mr. Ahmed activates <b>prior knowledge</b> by reviewing what students already know about the main character. This allows him to briefly revisit and assess former learning targets. Following his read-aloud of the text, Mr. Ahmed uses <b>questioning strategies</b> to encourage students to explain their thinking and to reinforce student-self directedness. As Mr. Ahmed listens in on partner conversations, he is able to <b>gather evidence</b> of students’ understanding of the previous <b>learning progressions</b>.</p>	E2; B1									
2.1  2.2	<p><b>Learning Progressions</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="256 1178 1179 1913"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="256 1178 509 1234">Building Block</th> <th data-bbox="509 1178 764 1234">Learning Target</th> <th data-bbox="764 1178 1179 1234">Success Criteria</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="256 1234 509 1524">                             Last Week                              Readers think about how a series flows; seeing patterns and predicting what will happen.                         </td> <td data-bbox="509 1234 764 1524">                             By reading and studying patterns, I can explain how these books fit together in a series.                         </td> <td data-bbox="764 1234 1179 1524">                             With my book club, I can share at least 3 ideas from my jot notes to help explain how these books are similar.                         </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="256 1524 509 1913">                             Today’s Lesson                              Readers expand their ideas and understanding of their main character in a series.                         </td> <td data-bbox="509 1524 764 1913">                             Use evidence from the text to prove what I know about my character. Then, share and learn more about this with my book club group.                         </td> <td data-bbox="764 1524 1179 1913">                             I can use sticky notes labeled “Always,” “Sometimes,” and “Oh my goodness! (OMG)” to show my understanding of my character                               3 or more items for Always                              2 or more items for Sometimes                              1 or more item for OMG                         </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Building Block	Learning Target	Success Criteria	Last Week Readers think about how a series flows; seeing patterns and predicting what will happen.	By reading and studying patterns, I can explain how these books fit together in a series.	With my book club, I can share at least 3 ideas from my jot notes to help explain how these books are similar.	Today’s Lesson Readers expand their ideas and understanding of their main character in a series.	Use evidence from the text to prove what I know about my character. Then, share and learn more about this with my book club group.	I can use sticky notes labeled “Always,” “Sometimes,” and “Oh my goodness! (OMG)” to show my understanding of my character  3 or more items for Always 2 or more items for Sometimes 1 or more item for OMG	
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Fame Components & Elements	Narrative	Literacy Essentials Practices
3.3 3.4	<p>“What are three things you know about the main character, and what is your evidence from our text?” Mr. Ahmed listens in to partner responses and then shares a few themes with the whole group.</p> <p>“Sara and Cassie realized...”</p> <p>“Emma and Sam thought about...”</p> <p>“A question I heard a few of you asking...”</p>	E9; B1 E2; B4
2.1	<p>Mr. Ahmed then introduces today's learning target. “Today, in your individual reading and then later in your book clubs, the focus will be on what you already know about your characters, and on showing your evidence from the text for that knowing.”</p> <p>The target is posted on the screen. Mr. Ahmed reads the target out loud to the students.</p> <p>“Target: Use evidence from the text to prove what I know about my character. Then, share and learn more about this with my book club group.</p> <p>Success Criteria: I can use sticky notes labeled “Always,” “Sometimes,” and “Oh my goodness! (OMG)” to show my understanding of my character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 or more items for Always</li> <li>2 or more items for Sometimes</li> <li>1 or more item for OMG</li> </ul>	E1; B5

Fame Components & Elements	Narrative	Literacy Essentials Practices
<p>2.3</p> <p>2.1</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p>Mr. Ahmed uses the class common text to model a “think-aloud” of what this looks like. He ensures all students can see and read his sticky notes by placing them on the document camera.</p> <p>Included in his think-aloud is the “why”: “Why is it important for readers to know about characters?” Mr. Ahmed also reinforces what <b>proficient achievement</b> looks like by listing three items on the Always sticky note, two items on the Sometimes sticky note, and one item on the OMG sticky note. To engage participation and practice during this model, he has students turn and talk about items that might go on the sticky notes. He uses some of their ideas for his own models.</p> <p>“Please think to yourself about your own character. What do you already know that you want to add to the Always sticky note?” 30-second pause. “Now, please turn to your book club friends and each share just one item you’ll add to your Always sticky note.”</p> <p>Mr. Ahmed again shares the whole group target and checks for clarity.</p> <p>“Please turn and talk to your partner about what you understand about the target and also what questions you or your partner might have about the target.”</p> <p>Mr. Ahmed listens in to the student talk and jots a few notes to address with the whole class. He then briefly offers <b>feedback</b> to clarify the target. Mr. Ahmed also takes a few notes about which students he’ll want to check in with first, based on their confusion/understanding.</p> <p>Example: “Emma and her partner want to review what ‘evidence from the text’ means, while a few other partnerships are curious about what they will do with their three sticky notes.”</p>	<p>E2; B2</p> <p>E2; B5</p>
<p>5.1</p> <p>2.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p>Mr. Ahmed <b>adjusts his teaching</b> to provide support about the sticky notes.</p> <p>With the whole class, he reviews the success criteria regarding how the sticky notes will be composed and organized while addressing the needs of students needing a bit more support.</p> <p>Again, <b>communication</b> and interaction with the <b>learning target</b> continues.</p> <p>“Please check in with your book club group and answer this question: ‘How will we know we have met the learning target?’”</p>	

Fame Components & Elements	Narrative	Literacy Essentials Practices										
3.2 4.3	<p>“As you add today’s target to your bookmark, I’ll check in with each group.”</p> <p>The students then take their reading-goal bookmarks out of their book club text and add today’s learning target to their book club goals as Mr. Ahmed visits each group. These bookmarks help students to <b>self-assess</b> while providing <b>evidence of their understanding</b>. (Mr. Ahmed differentiates his assistance by pre-filling some elements of the bookmark for specific students.)</p> <p>Ayesha’s Reading-Goal Bookmark</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="448 653 1370 1098"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="448 653 574 743">Date</th> <th data-bbox="574 653 743 743">My Reading Goal</th> <th data-bbox="743 653 951 743">Self-Assessment Reflection</th> <th data-bbox="951 653 1166 743">Book Club Target</th> <th data-bbox="1166 653 1370 743">Self-Assessment Reflection</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="448 743 574 1098">1-15-19</td> <td data-bbox="574 743 743 1098">Notice linking words and add them to my word list</td> <td data-bbox="743 743 951 1098">Copied the words also and together and used them in my story</td> <td data-bbox="951 743 1166 1098">Use evidence from the text to prove what I know about my character. Then, share and learn more about this with my book club group</td> <td data-bbox="1166 743 1370 1098"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Date	My Reading Goal	Self-Assessment Reflection	Book Club Target	Self-Assessment Reflection	1-15-19	Notice linking words and add them to my word list	Copied the words also and together and used them in my story	Use evidence from the text to prove what I know about my character. Then, share and learn more about this with my book club group		E3; B4
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5.1 3.2	<p>Mr. Ahmed continues to <b>adjust his teaching</b> by including additional support and <b>gathering evidence</b> of what students already understand. “For those of you wanting to review what ‘evidence from the text’ is all about, please remain here for a few minutes.” He directs a student to get the group started. “Ayesha, will you please record on this chart what this group already knows about using evidence from the text? I’ll check back with you in a few minutes.” Once the rest of the class has begun their reading, Mr. Ahmed returns to work with this group.</p>	E3; B4										



Fame Components & Elements	Narrative	Literacy Essentials Practices
<p>3.2</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>5.2</p>	<p><b>Individual Learning Time</b></p> <p>Students read for fifteen minutes and then work on the learning target as they jot on their sticky notes. Students are grouped near their book clubs during this time.</p> <p>Mr. Ahmed confers with students on both book club and individual reading goals. He names what he notices the students doing, asks questions, and gives actionable <b>feedback</b>. He ensures students use the feedback to <b>adjust their own learning</b>. He also encourages collaboration amongst students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you know to do that?</li> <li>• Look, you've used a word-wall word. Where might you look to make sure it's spelled correctly?</li> <li>• Oh, please check in with Brian. He had the same question.</li> <li>• So, next time, you can try...</li> <li>• How will you know you've...?</li> </ul>	<p>E1; B2</p> <p>E1; B3</p> <p>E2; B4</p> <p>E3; B2</p> <p>E9; B2</p>
<p>4.2</p> <p>4.1</p>	<p><b>Small-Group Book Clubs</b></p> <p>Mr. Ahmed invites students to meet with book clubs and share what they are learning. The sticky notes are used to help focus their conversations. Students know they are to “read their evidence from the text” out loud during their book club time. This helps to practice reading fluency. In previous lessons, students have learned how to have substantive conversations and offer <b>peer feedback</b>. Sentence and question stems and samples are posted in all the book club meeting areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you figure...?</li> <li>• Thank you for sharing...</li> <li>• Could you please say more?</li> <li>• As you think about today's target...</li> <li>• Here is another idea...</li> </ul> <p>Mr. Ahmed visits the small groups, listening in and offering instruction and feedback as needed.</p>	<p>E1; B3</p> <p>E3, B2</p> <p>E3; B3</p> <p>E3; B4</p> <p>E9; B2</p>
<p>1.1</p>	<p>During the initial planning for this unit, Mr. Ahmed organized the small-group book clubs based on students' interest and instructional needs.</p> <p>Malcolm's group of four includes more advanced readers. Each student is reading a different book from the same, advanced series.</p> <p>Emma's three group members have copies of the same book. It is from the same series as the common class text. The students in this group have a specific goal of noticing and recording linking words.</p> <p>Cassie's three group members have copies of the same book. It is also from the same series as the common class text. Two of the group members are Spanish speakers.</p>	<p>E1; B1</p> <p>E1; B2</p> <p>E8; B2</p>

Fame Components & Elements	Narrative	Literacy Essentials Practices										
3.2 4.3 4.2	<p>Mr. Ahmed concludes this lesson by having the students stand in an inside-outside circle and, with a partner, share their answers to these three questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do I know now about today's learning target?</li> <li>2. What question do I still have about the <b>learning target</b>?</li> <li>3. What <b>feedback</b> can you offer your partner?</li> </ol> <p>Again, this serves as a time for the teacher to <b>gather evidence</b> of student understanding while allowing the students to <b>self-assess their learning and offer peer feedback</b>.</p>	E1; B3 E9; B4										
3.2	<p>Mr. Ahmed collects the bookmarks from the students. Because he has been listening in and conferring throughout the independent and small-group time, he has offered feedback to many students and already has solid knowledge of what students know and what may be confusing them. He will continue to use the <b>evidenced gathered</b> on the bookmarks to record <b>evidence of understanding</b>.</p>	E9; B1										
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5.1 1.1	<p>As Mr. Ahmed <b>plans</b> for tomorrow's lesson, the bookmarks will be used as a tool to <b>adjust his teaching decisions</b> for tomorrow.</p> <p>In this daily, minute-to-minute formative assessment process, Mr. Ahmed is continually making changes to instruction in order to support his students' needs.</p>											



## SECTION III-5

### PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS: Features that support stakeholder groups in implementing and using an ELAS

This chapter includes the research and science that supports Principle #5 and related recommendations. It also offers a sampling of resources that schools and districts might find helpful as they support those who will be implementing and using the early literacy assessment system (ELAS), including district administrators, principals, teachers, policymakers, and students and their families. The content provides some of the relevant explanation and backing for **Principle #5** and associated **Phase III Supporting and Monitoring Recommendations**.

#### Phase III RECOMMENDATIONS (Principle #5)

**Principle #5:** The ELAS must be supported and monitored by a sustained program of collaborative, inquiry-based PROFESSIONAL LEARNING and FEEDBACK.

**3.1:** The **ELAS LEADERSHIP TEAM** should use the logic model and theory of action to develop plans for professional learning and formative evaluation of the ELAS.

To accomplish Recommendation 3.1, the **ELAS LEADERSHIP TEAM**, in collaboration with **PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS**, should:

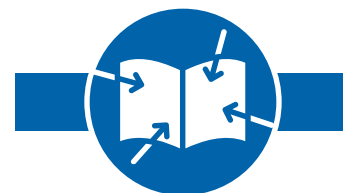
**3.2:** Gather information about the current level of knowledge and capacity related to literacy, assessment, and professional learning (strengths and gaps) among staff (teachers, administrators, coaches), students and their families, and local policymakers, and use these data to guide the implementation and support of an ELAS.

**3.3:** Create a cohesive master professional learning plan (aligned to Michigan's *Professional Learning Policy* and associated *Standards for Professional Learning*) to support all stakeholders responsible for early literacy development and assessment. The plan should address early literacy development and assessment and meet the learning needs of children and instructional needs of teachers based on evidence of need as well as research.

**3.4:** Budget for and plan to provide substantive resources and support for content-focused professional learning about early literacy development and assessment that is collaborative, intensive, sustained, and job-embedded.

**3.5:** Participate in statewide efforts to prepare, support, and generate teacher leaders and instructional coaches to promote effective early literacy development and assessment practices, with an emphasis on the use of classroom formative assessment practices.

**3.6:** Develop a plan for formative evaluation of the ELAS that includes ongoing monitoring and feedback from the field about the quality, utility, and effectiveness of the assessment system as it is implemented and becomes operational.



## Introduction

A primary and powerful lever for bolstering educators' successful implementation of the recommended early literacy assessment system (ELAS) is a sustained program of collaborative, inquiry-based professional learning that is adequately supported and monitored. Collaborative inquiry provides educators with the necessary structure and processes to refine and adapt their professional knowledge and practices to effectively use assessment information to inform decisions about student literacy needs and to achieve measurable student results (Colton, Langer, & Goff, 2015; Jensen Sonnemann, Roberts-Hull & Hunter, 2016; Timperley, & Halbert, 2014). Engagement in inquiry builds educators' capacity to diagnose, adapt, and solve daily challenges they face in their work. When such professional learning is planned, implemented, and evaluated effectively, it also is an essential strategy for advancing equity. Educators engaged in inquiry not only deepen their content knowledge and pedagogy, but also increase their understanding of students' culture, language, and background—and their impact on assessment—and how to use assessment information to guide their future actions.

Educators, however, are not the only stakeholder group who could benefit from a thoughtful approach to professional learning. Students and their families also play an active role in assessment and can benefit from the information (data) that derives from assessment. Policymakers at the local, regional, and state levels also influence assessment policies and resource allocation, and they use assessment data to inform their decisions. Consequently, it's important to include them in any review of the district's current knowledge and capacity regarding assessment tools and practices and the appropriate use of assessment data.

This review of the district's human capacity regarding literacy development and assessment tools and practices is not meant to be exhaustive, nor should it resemble either an evaluation or a simple checklist. Rather it is about developing shared understanding about where the district has assets and where growth will be needed in order to accomplish the goal of implementing and supporting an effective ELAS.

District leaders need to know where various groups of people are starting on the ELAS journey. Through surveys, anecdotes, and dialogue, they can discover what foundational knowledge, skills, and dispositions the learning community brings to this effort and where it will need additional guidance.

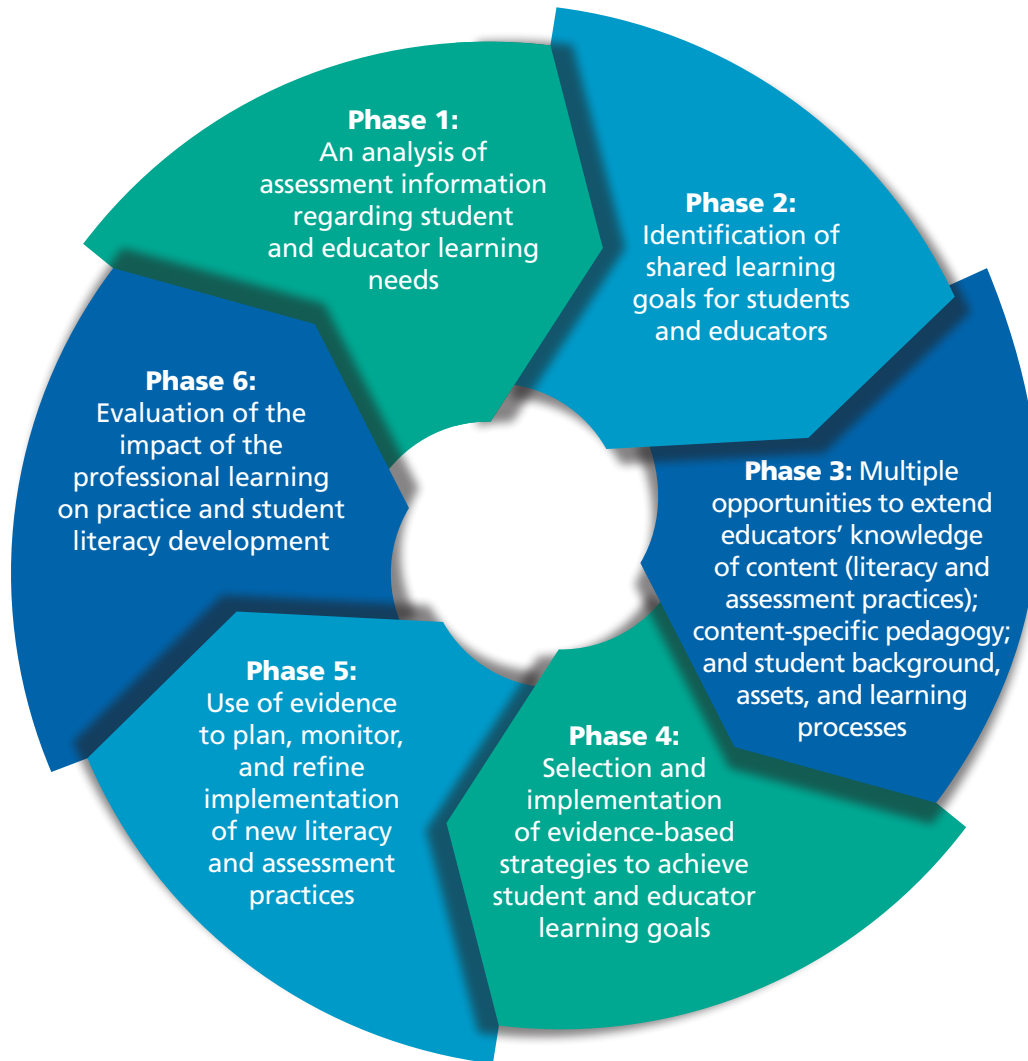
## Six phases of collaborative inquiry

The collaborative inquiry cycle is a systematic and recursive process for educators, as learners, to explore issues or wonderings about their practice and the literacy learning of those they teach or lead (principle/teacher, teacher/student, etc.). The process enables learners to determine evidence-based resolutions through dialogue, analysis of assessment, new learning, experimentation and reflection. Their inquiry is driven by the system's vision of assessment and literacy practice. The inquiry process aligns with assessment literacies—the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by educators to effectively use assessment tools and practices and create assessment systems that support their students' literacy development.

This continuous improvement approach to professional learning meets educators' learning needs while simultaneously cultivating a culture of collective responsibility for student success. The continuous application of collaborative inquiry cycles aligns educators' learning with student needs and expected literacy learning outcomes and standards.

Collaborative inquiry consists of six phases, each of which informs the next phase or raises questions that require going back to an earlier phase.

*“Collaborative inquiry consists of six phases, each of which informs the next phase or raises questions that require going back to an earlier phase.”*



● **FIGURE III.5.1**  
Collaborative inquiry consists of six phases.



An online learning module from the Michigan Assessment Consortium (MAC) entitled “Collaborative Inquiry” provides an overview of the collaborative inquiry process and how it ties to the Michigan Assessment Literacy Standards (see *Resources & Tools* at the end of this chapter).

### Six driving assumptions of collaborative inquiry

Collaborative inquiry as a powerful approach to professional learning for addressing early literacy development and assessment rests on **six driving assumptions**:

1. Professional learning is an active process.
2. Professional learning allows for educator agency.
3. Professional learning is relevant and content specific.
4. Professional learning is best situated in cultures of collaboration.
5. Professional learning is sustained.
6. Professional learning requires organizational systems and structures of support.

Each assumption is described in detail in the following text.

### Assumption 1: Professional learning is an active process

Learning is the process through which experience causes a permanent change in knowledge and behavior (Woolfolk, Winne, & Perry, 2012). *“Learning is constructed through a process of engagement, analysis and reflection...”* (Killion, 2019, p. 5). *“For lasting changes in behavior to occur, beliefs and assumptions must be brought to consciousness and the deep structures supporting behaviors must be addressed”* (Guerra & Nelson, 2009). Such transformative learning only happens when individuals experience dissonance between the beliefs they hold and what they are experiencing (Mezirow, 1995). Transformative learning is particularly critical in contexts where educators are supporting literacy learning of students whose cultural backgrounds, language, or gender identity are different from those of the educators. Since this kind of dissonance rarely occurs in the normal course of an educator’s day, educators need to engage in learning designs that intentionally interrupt their current ways of viewing their practice and student learning. Collaborative inquiry is such an intervention.

Collaborative inquiry integrates multiple active learning designs that assist the adult learner in *“moving beyond comprehension of the surface features of a new idea or [literacy or assessment] practice to developing a more complete understanding of its purposes, critical attributes, meaning, and connection to other approaches”* (Learning Forward, 2011). Darling-Hammond, Hyster, & Gardner (2017, p. 7) consider active learning an *“umbrella element that often incorporates the elements of collaboration, coaching, feedback, and reflection, and the use of models and modeling.”* Providing time for practice is also key to the implementation of new practices.

### Assumption 2: Professional learning allows for educator agency

Agency, or ownership, enables educators to drive the focus of their learning, the ways in which learning occurs, and how they evaluate the impact of their learning (Learning Forward, 2011). Agency requires clarity of purpose about expectations and a method for measuring progress toward those expectations. This is why it is important to monitor and assess the success of teachers and administrators in acquiring and applying literacy assessment practices. Agency empowers and intrinsically motivates educators to pursue continuous improvement and support colleagues. Educators are in the driver’s seat when engaged in collaborative inquiry around literacy and assessment knowledge and practice.

### Assumption 3: Professional learning is relevant and content-specific

When educators engage in professional learning that is guided by specific student learning needs, is content-specific, and involves cycles of inquiry into educators’ problems of practice, substantial positive influences on teachers’ practice and student achievement result. (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001; Jensen et al., 2016; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss & Shapley, 2007). The most effective professional learning for educators occurs when the focus is on the concrete, everyday challenges involved in the teaching and learning of *specific* curriculum content (e.g., literacy development, pedagogy, and assessment literacy). This makes the learning relevant to the learner. Halbert & Kaser (2016) write *“rather than relying on generalized solutions, [inquiry] places contextual evidence*

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and analysis at the center of focused change efforts” (p. 11). Scanlon, Gelzheiser, Vellutino, Schatschneider, & Sweeny, (2008) found that teachers who received professional learning focused on specific literacy content, tools, and instructional strategies significantly increased their effectiveness and improved performance levels of students’ literacy. This approach to professional learning is in stark contrast to a focus on general principles of teaching or generic teaching practices that are taken out of context (Aspen Institute, 2018; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Learning Forward, 2019). Timperley et al., (2014) describes the centrality of collaborative inquiry in the lives of educators:

*“Motivation and energy build, as educators together find compelling reasons to change what they are doing, and as they take joint responsibility for doing so. As they engage in deeper forms of inquiry, the process becomes central to their professional lives. They will not, in fact they cannot, go back to earlier, unquestioning ways of doing things” (p. 6).*

#### **Assumption 4: Professional learning is best situated in cultures of collaboration**

According to DuFour & Matton (2013) and Darling-Hammond et.al. (2009), *“the most productive environments seem to be those in which [educators] regularly interact and engage in positive and productive collegial conversations around meaningful and relevant issues* (as cited in Colton et al., 2015, p. 49). Love, Stiles, Mundry, & DiRanna, (2008) add that *“dialogue is a central process of the [inquiry cycle] because it invites multiple interpretations, helps teachers examine limiting assumptions, and unleashes teachers’ creativity and expertise”* (as cited in Colton et al., 2015). Effective communication becomes possible through intentional facilitation. Collaboration, however, does not happen automatically. It involves developing working agreements and communication skills. Teacher leaders often serve in this role. They ensure that working agreements are followed and that teachers develop the communication and analytical skills they need to stay focused while studying their practice and student learning.

As educators work together to solve problems of practice around literacy, they draw on the diverse understanding and expertise of group members and others within and outside of the district. Collaborative learning holds everyone accountable and builds collective responsibility for the literacy success of every student and educator within and across schools. This is especially possible when leaders learn side by side with their staff. The distribution of knowledge and skills also results in collective efficacy. Collective efficacy is defined as *“shared belief in [the group’s] conjoint capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment”* (Bandura, 1977). Rachel Eells’ (2011) meta-analysis of studies related to collective efficacy and achievement in education demonstrate that the beliefs teachers hold about the ability of the school as a whole are positively associated with student achievement across subject areas. On the basis of Eells’ research, John Hattie (2016) positioned collective efficacy at the top of the list of factors that influence student achievement.

*“As educators work together to solve problems of practice around literacy, they draw on the diverse understanding and expertise of group members and others within and outside of the district. Collaborative learning holds everyone accountable and builds collective responsibility for the literacy success of every student and educator within and across schools.”*



*“It could take upwards of 50 hours of intensive professional learning to realize results for students (Learning Forward, 2011). This is why it is important to engage educators in continuous cycles of inquiry.”*



Joellen Killion's workbook, *Establishing Time for Professional Learning* (2013), “guides districts and schools as they develop, vet, and implement recommendations for increasing collaborative learning time for educators, and then evaluate the effectiveness of the change” (p. 10). A second workbook, *Professional Learning Policy Review: A Workbook for States and Districts* (Killion, 2013), provides states and districts with guidance to conduct a review of existing policies related to professional learning. Killion & Hirsh (2012) discuss how districts can analyze their investments in professional learning.

### Assumption 5: Professional learning is sustained

Just as it takes time for students to learn complex curriculum, educators need time to acquire new knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behavior to effectively use assessment tools and practices that support their students' literacy development. Educators need time to learn, practice, be coached, analyze, and reflect on the results; have someone help them to understand the ideas more deeply; and then try it again, repeating as necessary. Research indicates that the intensity and duration of professional learning is related to the degree of teacher change (Desimone et al., 2002). The exact length of time to support teacher and student achievement has not been defined. It could take upwards of 50 hours of intensive professional learning to realize results for students (Learning Forward, 2011). This is why it is important to engage educators in continuous cycles of inquiry. It should be noted that “*the effectiveness and importance of duration is dependent upon the quality, design and focus of the content and activities that comprise the professional learning effort*” (Swayer & Stuke, 2019). Collaborative inquiry provides the necessary structures and processes for sustaining educators' learning around assessment use and literacy development.

### Assumption 6: Professional learning requires organizational systems and structures of support

It is impossible to reap the full benefit of collaborative inquiry without organizational systems and structures to support effective professional learning for continuous improvement. Leaders across the school district need to operate as a team to plan, implement, and manage a professional learning system with measures for success. Thus, the team needs to clarify expectations and goals regarding literacy and assessment knowledge, skills and practices and professional learning. In so doing, they communicate that there is an important link between professional and student learning.

Professional learning requires substantive support and resources to achieve its goals as stated in **Recommendation 3.4:** *Budget for and plan to provide substantive resources and support for content-focused professional learning about early literacy development and assessment that is collaborative, intensive, sustained, and job-embedded.*

A district's leadership team needs to increase the staff's capacity to engage collaboratively; provide adequate time for collaborative team learning; and establish ongoing support for implementation of new practice in the classroom (Jensen, 2016; Learning Forward, 2011). A major challenge to collaborative inquiry identified by educators is time. The district's school board needs to adopt policies related to district calendars and school schedules that support collaborative learning during the workday.

The notable change in language from professional development to professional learning used in this Guide is intentional. It represents a shift from learning that is done **to** educators, to learning that actually *transforms* how educators think and act. “*By making learning the focus, those who are responsible for professional learning will concentrate their efforts on assuring that learning for educators leads to learning for students*” (Learning Forward, 2011, p. 13).

The vision provided of sustained, collaborative inquiry-based professional learning is captured in various forms in the following documents:

- Michigan’s definition and standards for professional learning
- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) definition of professional development
- The *Essential Coaching Practices in Elementary Literacy; Essential School-Wide and Center-Wide Practices in Literacy; and Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K-3* (MAISA/GELN/ELTF, 2016)

## Portrait connection

The **Portraits** in Section II of this Guide depict three teachers’ intentional and effective application of shared knowledge about literacy assessment, curriculum, and instruction to effectively respond to the unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds, assets, and literacy needs of their students. Although the Portraits don’t explicitly describe the professional learning the teachers experienced, it is worthwhile to pause and consider the scenario described in the sidebar below of how the teachers might have developed their literacy and assessment expertise through collaborative inquiry.

A detailed account of Ms. Jones’ first-grade team as they engage in each phase of the inquiry cycle to increase their skills in assessing and developing students’ reading fluency is provided in the illustrative section **Collaborative Inquiry in Action** that begins on page 121. In that illustration, you’ll notice that each phase of the cycle presents a guiding question that drives the continuous learning process. Questions stimulate teachers’ curiosity, which is a powerful motivator for learning.

The primary goals for professional learning are changes in educator practice and increases in student learning. This is a process that occurs over time with substantive support for implementation, so educators consistently embed their new learning into practice. Full and effective implementation of new practices is possible when those responsible for professional learning follow **Recommendation 3.3:** *Create a cohesive master professional learning plan (aligned to Michigan’s Professional Learning Policy and associated Standards for Professional Learning) to support all stakeholders responsible for early literacy development and assessment. The plan should address early literacy development and assessment and meet the learning needs of children and instructional needs of teachers based on evidence of need as well as research.*

### ILLUSTRATIVE SCENARIO OF COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY EXPERIENCES OF PORTRAIT TEACHERS

The district leaders and community members, including families, establish early literacy as an improvement goal, clearly communicate the goal to all district educators and the community, implement essential professional learning conditions, and establish a procedure for monitoring and supporting application of assessment literacy practices. An altered calendar and school schedule are approved by the school board to provide every educator in the district time during the workday to engage in high-quality professional learning.

During the teachers’ designated daily planning time they engage in facilitated and systematic cycles of inquiry into the effectiveness of practice for student engagement for literacy learning. Teacher leaders, including instructional coaches build team members’ collaborative skills and support individual and team learning and the implementation of new practices in the teachers’ classrooms. District leaders support, monitor, and evaluate implementation of professional learning to ensure changes in educator practices.

## Conclusion

Professional learning is a strategy that “is available to almost every educator, and—when planned and implemented [and evaluated] correctly—ensures that educators acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to help more students meet standards” (Hirsh, 2018). Collaborative inquiry enables educators to drive the focus of their learning, the ways in which learning occurs, and how they evaluate the impact of their learning (Learning Forward, 2011). As educators engage in cycles of collaborative inquiry, they develop an inquiry stance—continuously wondering how they can make a difference for their learners’ literacy development using assessment and literacy practices.

As described by Anderson (1984), Berliner (1986), and Colton & Sparks-Langer (1993):

*“Maintaining an inquiry stance allows [educators] to make judgments based on thoughtful analysis, problem solving, experimentation, and assessment. Through the inquiry process, [educators] continually transform their beliefs, improve their analytical thinking skills, and develop a rich and well-organized knowledge base that allows them to think through situations and make difficult decisions in the heat of the moment”* (as cited in Colton et al., 2015, p. 33). Collaborative inquiry provides a professional learning approach with the power and a track record for permanently changing the literacy and assessment practices of teachers and leaders so they can create new solutions to complex problems to support literacy development of all students.



*Professional Learning Plans: A Workbook for States, Districts, and Schools* (Killion, 2013) provides educators with a step-by-step guide for completing a professional learning plan. The plan should be integrated into the logic model and the formative evaluation of the ELAS as indicated in **Recommendation 3.1: The ELAS LEADERSHIP TEAM should use the logic model and theory of action to develop plans for professional learning and formative evaluation of the ELAS.**