## May 8, 2018- Assessment Learning Network (ALN)

### Highlights of presentation with Dr. Margaret Heritage

# Supporting Teachers’ Successful Implementation of Formative Assessment

Dr. Heritage began her presentation by saying she points to Michigan first when asked to identify exemplars in implementing formative assessment practices statewide.

## Overview of topics covered:

* What is formative assessment?
* Changing thinking and practice
* Teacher knowledge, skills, and habits of mind
* Preservice and a continuing system of support

## What is formative assessment (FA)?

Other countries refer to it simply as “assessment *for* learning.” This describes a broader conception of integrated practice in the classroom for attending to feedback. Within this description, there is a much greater space for students to play an active role in the learning and feedback process. This broader conception is gradually being embraced in the U.S.

Formative assessment is:

* The term used to describe a type of assessment where the focus is on *informing* learning, rather than measuring it or summing it up
* Assessment that focuses on the learning *as it is taking place*
* Whose purpose is to *move learning forward* from its *current status*

Note: any assessment can (and should) be used for formative purposes…to make decisions that will improve conditions for and advance learning. However, this is not the same as the assessment that happens *during* the learning process.

“Good teaching is forever being on the cutting edge of a child’s competence.”   
–Jerome Bruner

The point of formative assessment is to figure out where that edge is.

Formative assessment promotes the goals of lifelong learning, including higher levels of student achievement, greater equity of student outcomes, and improved learning to learn skills   
(From [Synergies for Better Learning AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT](http://www.oecd.org/education/school/Synergies%20for%20Better%20Learning_Summary.pdf), OECD, 2008)

### Dr. Heritage described two big shifts in understanding about FA:

1. Acknowledgement of the role that students play within the process
2. Critical need for teachers to have strong disciplinary knowledge and understanding of the learning progressions on the way to learning content standards   
   (Dr. Heritage now believes this is the “game changer.”)

Really accomplished teachers *nudge* learning along a known path using evidence gathered through formative assessment practices. Formative assessment answers the questions: Where are they in their “sense-making” right now? What kind of nudge will move them further along?

**Traditional paradigm:** Teacher talks, Students listen, do worksheets, and take tests; review, demonstration, practice (NCTM, 2014)

**Contemporary paradigm:**  Inquiry, Reasoning, Sense‐making, Collaboration, Discourse

FA envisions learning as a never-ending progression rather than a “summing up” of finite learning.

### Dr. Heritage revisited the FAST SCASS 2017 definition:

Formative assessment is a **planned**, ongoing process used by all students and teachers during learning and teaching to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of **intended disciplinary learning outcomes**, and support students to become **self‐directed learners.** (FAST SCASS, 2017)

### Formative assessment (or assessment for learning) requires a shift of relationship:

* From vertical to horizontal (if students aren’t involved, it’s not assessment for learning)
* From an emphasis on teacher-student only to include student/student relationships as well

### Summary: What Formative Assessment IS and is NOT (see chart on page 15 of presentation archive)

## Changing thinking and practice

The underpinning theories of assessment for learning [formative assessment] potentially conflict with teachers’ previous conceptions of the purpose of assessment and their theories of teaching. –Earl and Timperley, 2014, p. 326

### What kinds of support will teachers need to make the required shift in paradigm?

Leadership support is critical and includes *at least* the following elements:

* safety to introduce ambiguity into lessons
* comfort around letting go of control
* professional learning opportunities;
* collaborative networks to support best practice;
* running interference with outside pressures to go back to old methods

## Teacher knowledge, skills, and habits of mind

* Disciplinary knowledge—core ideas and practices
  + Teachers need to understand standards DEEPLY…which is not the current status in some cases
  + They also need knowledge of how learning progresses
* Formative assessment practices
  + Clear learning goals & success criteria
  + Eliciting and interpreting evidence of learning while it is developing
  + Immediate or near-immediate evidence-based responses
  + Feedback to students
  + Student involvement—peer feedback and self-assessment
* Habits of practice
  + A commitment to engage in continued inquiry about, and reflection on, formative assessment practice (Heritage, 2010, 2013);
  + A willingness to de‐privatize practice and engage in collaboration with colleagues (Darling‐Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Hayden, Moore‐Russo, & Marino, 2013);
  + A willingness to engage in deliberate practice (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch‐Römer, 1993).

## Preservice and continuing support

Dr. Heritage described the types of preservice experiences and support systems for continued learning necessary to create a statewide network of teachers skilled in FA practices. She also shared resources that could assist with those efforts.

Dr. Heritage shared a video recording of “advice” from experienced practitioners to teachers new to the process, then finished up with an assignment for all participants to think about how they can influence the broader use of “assessment for learning” from their own individual role.