



What are adjustments to learning?

In the formative assessment process, teachers intentionally plan instruction, periodically check for student understanding in order to monitor student learning, and make any necessary instructional adjustments to promote student learning. As active partners in the process, students need structured support to use evidence from their learning and to make adjustments to their future learning processes.

Teachers can help students develop greater competence in this area by ensuring students have opportunities to receive and reflect on feedback they receive. By providing time for revisions, modeling, practicing with tools and resources, and facilitating the process, teachers can support

“In formative assessment, students are active participants with their teachers, sharing learning goals and understanding how their learning is progressing, what next steps they need to take, and how to take them.”

Margaret Heritage, 2007, p. 141

students to use the feedback they receive to move their learning forward.

Adjustments to learning defined

Adjustments to learning is the process in which students receive feedback that they can use to make

adjustments in their learning tactics and set goals in order to improve their current and future work.

Applications to practice

The teacher can support students in their use of feedback to make adjustments in their learning by:

1. ensuring students receive feedback—from self, from peers, or from the teacher;
2. modeling how to use feedback to adjust learning tactics;
3. providing opportunities for students to use the feedback; and
4. supporting students to set goals and make adjustments in learning tactics based on the feedback.

Teachers and students can engage in regular classroom structures and routines in which they gather evidence and analyze student work to provide meaningful feedback on a regular basis (see related Learning Points: *What is gathering evidence of student understanding? What is feedback?*)



“Students who have well developed assessment capabilities are able and motivated to access, interpret, and use information from quality assessment in ways that affirm or further their learning.”

Directions for Assessment in New Zealand, 2009

What is self-assessment? and What is peer assessment?). It is important for teachers to model the metacognitive and self-regulation processes that students will need to learn in order to use feedback to make adjustments to their learning. Students develop skills and knowledge through self- and peer assessment to develop student agency and self-regulation. Teachers must explicitly teach self- and peer assessment skills to students and provide regular time in the classroom for students to use feedback, monitor their learning, and identify next steps.

Student self- and peer assessment involves students reflecting on the learning goal, success criteria, and student work. Teachers help students understand what constitutes quality work for a given learning target through modeling and explicit instruction. The teacher can provide anchor papers or models of proficient achievement, examples of work at various stages, and the use of feedback to advance student work toward desired learning goals. In this way, the teacher can support students to internalize an understanding about the quality of work. Through this process, students consider their progress and reflect on their current understanding relative to the learning goal and what steps they need to take to close the gap.

In self-assessment, students generate internal feedback to guide their adjustments to learning. Peer assessment activates students to be resources for one another. Teachers use quality, formative feedback themselves as well as model and

teach students to provide quality feedback to one another. Students continually ask, “Where am I going in my learning?” Then, they review their work and skills to determine, “Where am I now?” Then students consider, “Where to next?” Over time, students can begin to develop their capacity to reflect on their own work and make adjustments in their skills and performance in relation to the learning target.

Teachers can also support students to set goals in their learning as they reflect on their current level of understanding and learn to make adjustments in their learning tactics. Modeling the process with one goal for the entire class can be helpful for students to learn the process. Then, students can create individual goals for themselves based on their current skill level to attain the learning target or broader learning goals.” The students may record their goals in individual notebooks and monitor their progress using different sources of data.

Students can further develop their ability to make adjustments to learn-

ing based on feedback by engaging in class discussions, modeling their process in front of the class, and working in small groups and one-on-one conferences to reflect on how feedback might inform their future work. When students have consistent opportunities to reflect on their own strategies and learn new approaches, they are able to build on their current understanding and incorporate new strategies that meet their needs. The teacher can revisit previous learning strategies with students to reinforce the changes and ensure the ongoing development of their learning.

“The research shows that the person providing the feedback benefits just as much as the recipient, because they are forced to internalize the learning intentions and success criteria in the context of someone else’s work, which is less emotionally charged than one’s own work.” (William, 2006, p. 5)

References

- Absolum, M., Flockton, L., Hattie, J., Hipkins, R., & Reid, I. (2009).** Directions for assessment in New Zealand: Developing students’ assessment capabilities. Unpublished paper prepared for the Ministry of Education.
- Heritage, M. (2007).** Formative assessment: What do teachers need to know and do? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89(2), 140-146
- William, D. (2006).** Formative assessment: Getting the focus right. *Educational assessment*, 11(3-4), 283-289.

TO LEARN MORE

Formative assessment: What do teachers need to know and do?

Margaret Heritage. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89(2), 140–146.
http://www.pdkmembers.org/members_online/publications/Archive/pdf/k0710her.pdf

What do we mean by formative assessment?

Learning Point (Michigan Assessment Consortium, 2016).
bit.ly/LP-FormativeAssessment

The Michigan Assessment Consortium’s Assessment Learning Network (ALN) is a professional learning community consisting of members from MI’s professional education organizations; the goal of the ALN is to increase the assessment literacy of all of Michigan’s professional educators.