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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Formative Assessment*, by Margaret Heritage.

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Introduction

This book is about the everyday practice of teachers in classrooms. It is intended for teachers and for those who support the work of teachers, and it is about making formative assessment practice an integral part of the classroom—any classroom, elementary, middle, or high school, and in any subject area—the arts, social studies, mathematics, language arts, science, physical education, design and technology, and so on. The book is also intended for all teachers, regardless of their stage of implementing formative assessment. Those teachers who are just beginning to think about formative assessment, why do it, and what it looks like in practice will be able to use the book as a starting point, while for others who are further along in implementing formative assessment in their classrooms, it can assist them in continuing to refine and enhance their knowledge and skills.

Bridging Theory, Research, and Practice

Building bridges between the theory and research about formative assessment and its actual practice in the classroom is the core aim of this book. Since the first edition was published in 2010, conceptions of formative assessment have evolved, and the theoretical and research base for the book has been updated to address this evolution. Increasing numbers of teachers have adopted formative assessment in their classrooms and so we now have a great deal more evidence of how it works in practice. What we have learned from evidence-based practice is also included in the book and is reflected in the classroom examples.

College- and Career-Ready Standards

The book's first edition was completed before the introduction of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Science and Technical Subjects and the CCSS for Mathematics (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010b). While not all states have adopted the CCSS, various states have tailored their standards in line with the CCSS, and for this reason they serve as proxies for college- and career-ready standards (CCRS) in this revision. Similarly, a number of states have developed standards from the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) (National Research Council, 2013) and the College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013), and so these two sources are reference points for science and social studies.

Changes in Teaching and Learning

The expectations for student achievement laid out in CCRS have spurred transformations in teaching and learning, which have provided a fertile ground for formative assessment to truly take hold. Past practices such as presenting information for students to passively acquire—a transmission model—have been replaced by inquiry-oriented and discourse-based teaching in which students are active participants. Students are encouraged to ask questions, propose solutions to problems, and apply the knowledge, concepts, and analytic practices they acquire to novel situations. These pedagogical changes can generate rich sources of evidence about student thinking, and a number of original examples have been substituted with those that show formative assessment in the context of CCRS and inquiry-oriented pedagogy and discourse. The examples are not intended as “counsels of perfection,” but rather as sources for readers’ reflection as they think about formative assessment in the classroom.

Broader Goals

Also, in the past ten years or so, broader educational goals have been advanced. For example, a recent position paper published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) outlined important goals for today’s students, including (1) exercising agency, understood as setting goals and taking actions to achieve them; (2) developing social and emotional skills such as empathy, self-efficacy, and collaboration; and (3) acquiring the attitudes and values to mediate their knowledge, for example, motivation, trust, and respect for diversity (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018). Discussions of formative assessment throughout the book as well as the examples of practice are contextualized within these larger educational requirements.

Educational Equity

One of the book’s themes is the contribution that formative assessment can make to supporting educational equity. With respect to educational equity, The National School Boards Association states:

Schools should ensure that all students have the knowledge and skills to succeed as contributing members of a rapidly changing, global society, regardless of factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, English language proficiency, immigration status, socioeconomic status, or disability. (Center for Public Education, 2016, p. 2)

Chapter 1 specifically considers how formative assessment can contribute to ensuring that all students have the knowledge and skills they need, and subsequent chapters reference how equity is supported by a particular aspect of formative assessment.

Sometimes the terms *equality* and *equity* are used interchangeably. While both concepts are key to social justice, they are significantly different. Generally, *equality* is associated with treating people the same or people having equal access to resources and opportunities. However, consider an analogy between equity and a cactus and a sunflower. Although they both need soil and water to survive, a cactus will not grow in the same soil and with the same amount of water as a sunflower. *Equity* requires us to think about what each plant needs to thrive (National Association for Multicultural Education, n.d). In the same way, educational equity requires us to think about what each student needs in order to thrive. Addressing students' individual learning needs is the core goal of formative assessment.

Long-Term Commitment

The teachers represented in this book through examples of practice and quotes, except where noted, are all teachers who are currently implementing formative assessment in their classrooms. They are committed to formative assessment as a way to improve teaching and learning. They recognize formative assessment and the teaching process as inseparable; one cannot happen without the other. They understand that the skillful use of formative assessment is not something acquired overnight. Instead, it is an extended process of learning, trying things out, and reviewing and refining—in short, of continuously engaging in a process of reflective practice. These teachers are willing to change what they do, willing to take risks, make mistakes they can learn from, and willing to learn with and from their colleagues. They value the changes they have made in their approach to teaching and the impact of these changes on student learning.

Overview of the Chapters

Chapter 1 introduces formative assessment and some of the key research that underpins it. The chapter clarifies what formative assessment is and what it is not, and the purposes of other assessments that teachers will be familiar with. The process of formative assessment is represented as a feedback loop, which illustrates how the interdependent elements, learning goals and success criteria, eliciting and using evidence of learning, peer and self-assessment, work together to support students in meeting intended goals. The feedback loop is applicable to all subject areas and to all grades, K–12. An extended classroom vignette illustrates how the feedback loop works in practice. The chapter includes a consideration of what makes a

fertile ground for formative assessment and ends with a discussion of how formative assessment can contribute to equity goals.

Chapter 2 widens the lens on formative assessment and focuses on three mediating factors that play a significant role in student learning and that can be boosted by formative assessment: self-regulation, motivation, and self-efficacy. The three mediating factors contribute not only to student achievement but also to the development of broader competencies called for by influential organizations such as the OECD, noted above. Examples from classroom practice are included that make the three factors concrete. The ideas presented in this chapter are also woven throughout subsequent chapters that consider the specific elements of the feedback loop and how they can bolster the three mediating factors for student learning that are so important in school and beyond.

Chapter 3 applies an even wider lens to formative assessment and, drawing from more recent developments in research, theory, and practice, discusses some of the factors that impact how effectively teachers implement the feedback loop and so maximize the power of formative assessment to student learning. These factors include disciplinary knowledge, knowledge of college- and career-ready standards, ambitious teaching, students' funds of knowledge, and classroom routines and norms. The chapter also includes many examples of classroom practice to illustrate the need for, and impact of, these factors in effectively implementing formative assessment.

Chapter 4 addresses the drivers of formative assessment: learning goals and success criteria. It considers the relationship between CCRS and learning goals, and how goals are derived from them. Creating success criteria that indicate the expected student performances for meeting the goals are explored, and the chapter also reviews how they can be communicated to students or co-constructed with them. By way of illustration, a range of examples of learning goals and success criteria developed by classroom teachers is included. These are not intended as definitive examples, but rather offer opportunities for reflection and discussion.

Chapter 5 focuses on eliciting and interpreting evidence from formative assessment, and how the interpretation of evidence leads to instructional action, which is central to formative assessment being formative. In a seminal paper, D. Royce Sadler (1989) established the essential purpose of formative assessment as the means to identify the “gap” between a learner's current status in learning and some desired educational goal. Identifying the “gap” involves teachers obtaining evidence of learning while instruction is underway, interpreting the evidence in relation to the learning goals and success criteria for the lesson, and then taking action intended to move students' learning further from where they are to where they can go next. Drawing from ambitious teaching practices (discussed in Chapter 3), and using examples from practicing teachers, the chapter highlights how evidence can be acquired through the planned learning tasks and activities of the lesson. How teachers can interpret evidence and the range of actions they might take is discussed. The chapter also includes additional ways for

teachers to gather evidence that they can use as supplements to the evidence obtained from students' tasks and activities.

In their review of studies of formative assessment, Black & Wiliam (1998) concluded that when formative assessment is combined with quality feedback, improvements in learning occur. **Chapter 6** considers the feedback that students receive externally from their teachers and peers, and internally through their own self-monitoring during the course of learning. The chapter describes the contribution of external feedback to learning, what kind of feedback is effective and what is not, and provides plenty of examples of feedback. The effects of self-assessment on learning are considered, as well as how students can be supported to successfully engage in this process. The chapter also briefly addresses grading and why it does not have a place in formative assessment.

It is challenging for teachers to develop the skillful use of formative assessment on their own. **Chapter 7**, co-authored with Caroline Wylie from the Educational Testing Service, considers how teachers can develop and deepen their knowledge and skills for formative assessment in their classrooms. The chapter discusses a range of ways that teachers can collaborate together to enhance the knowledge and skills that have been highlighted throughout the book. Our suggestions rest on four interdependent pillars— inquiry- and knowledge-building cycles, deliberate practice, feedback, and reflection—and are informed by research on effective professional learning. The chapter also describes the features of a supportive professional learning culture for teachers and suggests how school administrators can encourage and guide teacher learning.

Each chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter's main ideas and a set of reflection questions. It is hoped that teachers can use these to think about their own formative assessment practices and how they might develop them further.

As already noted, for many teachers implementing the process of formative assessment in their classrooms will require some change in how the business of teaching and learning is conducted. For some, the change will be significant, for others less so—but some change will happen, for sure. This book is about and for teachers who engage in reflection and ongoing professional learning to make changes in what they do to benefit their students.