EMBEDDING Formative Assessment

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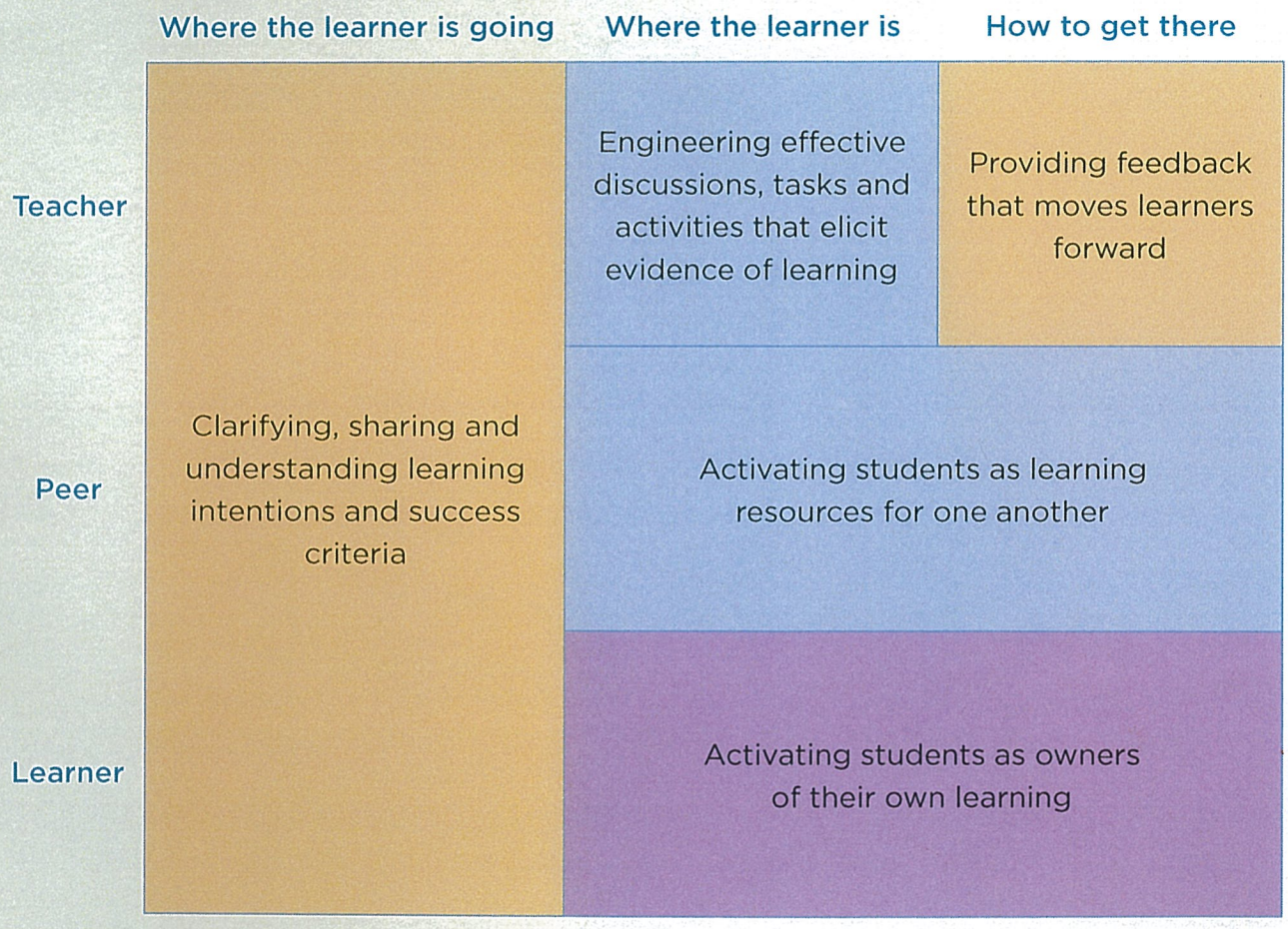
The Five Key Strategies



EMBEDDED FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

identifies the five key strategies of formative assessment.

STRATEGY 1: Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions and success criteria – deals with the joint responsibility of teachers, the learners themselves and their peers to break this down into a number of criteria for success.

STRATEGY 2: Engineering effective discussion, tasks and activates that elicit evidence of learning – deals with the teacher's role in finding out where learners are in their learning, once the teacher is clear about the learning intentions (this sequence is deliberate – until you know what you want your students to learn, you do not know what evidence to collect).

STRATEGY 3: Providing feedback that moves learners forward – emphasises the teacher's role in providing feedback to the students that tells them not only where they are but also what steps they need to take to move their learning forward.

STRATEGY 4: Activating students as learning resources for one another – emphasises the role that peer assessment can play in supporting student learning and also makes clear that the purpose of peer assessment within a formative assessment framework is not to judge the work of a peer so much as to improve it.

STRATEGY 5: Activating students as owners of their own learning – emphasises that the ultimate goal is always to produce independent learners.

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STRATEGY 1: Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions and success criteria

The aim is not to help students complete the activity – it is to help them learn.

Ideas	Techniques	Tips	Cautions	Enhancements
Learning intentions versus success criteria	WALT: We are learning to ... (learning intention) WILF: What I'm looking for ... (success criteria)	Get students to apply what they have learned in other contexts. Mix it up by varying the activities.	Don't differentiate learning intentions; only differentiate success criteria. Don't always give the learning intention at the start of the lesson: • You may not know where the lesson is going. • It may spoil the journey. • It may not inspire students.	Use process success criteria sometimes, product success criteria at other times. Remember that to be formative, both learning intentions and success criteria should be generic.
Samples of work, rather than rubrics, to communicate quality	Get students to assess samples of student work • first from anonymous students • then from peers • lastly their own work. Use a document camera.	Remember that rubrics are just collections of success criteria. Help students develop a nose for quality. Use only two pieces of work for younger students.	Use examples where deep features are not aligned with surface features. Be aware that sometimes quality cannot be put into words. Don't abdicate responsibility for quality.	Use rubrics as the starting point for a dialogue with your students. Find out what your students think they are learning.
Big ideas, learning progressions and staging posts	Work both top-down and bottom-up. Develop learning progressions. Focus on the big picture to help students develop a growth mindset.	Get the grain size of big ideas right.	Not all useful learning intentions will be big ideas. Remember that learning progressions need both an empirical and a theoretical basis.	Involve students in clarifying the big ideas.

The following question shells and alternatives to teacher questions will aid in the implementation of Strategy 2.

Some question shells:

- How are ... and ... different?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of ... ?
- What is the difference between ... and ... ?
- Explain why ...
- What are the implications of ... for ... ?
- How does ... affect ... ?
- What is the strongest counterargument against ... ?
- Why is ... happening?
- What would happen if ... ?
- Why is ... an example of ... ?
- Compare ... and ... in terms of ...
- How are ... and ... similar?
- How would you explain ... to a student in Year ... ?

Some alternatives to teacher questions:

- Declarative statement ("You thought B was the best answer.")
- Reflective restatement ("So, what you're saying is ... ")
- Statement of mind ("I'm puzzled when you say ... ")
- Statement of interest ("I'd like to hear a bit more about ... ")
- Student referral ("It sounds like you're agreeing with what ... said ... ")
- Teacher opinion ("I've never seen that happen ... ")
- Student question ("Perhaps you could express that as a question.")
- Class question ("What questions should we be asking now?")
- Phatics and fillers (uh-huh, hmm)
- Pass (hand gesture, glance)
- Silences

STRATEGY 2: Engineering effective discussion, tasks and activities that elicit evidence of learning

Plan questions in advance.

Ideas	Techniques	Tips	Cautions	Enhancements
No hands up, except to ask a question	Choose students at random: • Electronic randomiser • Sticks • Small cards Ask the audience. Phone a friend.	Allow volunteers after random selection. Use numbers rather than names on sticks or cards. Don't let "don't know" end the conversation.	Don't allow students to raise their hands anyway. Don't choose the student first, then ask the question. Don't forget to replace sticks after using them. Check that no sticks are missing.	Have a student look after the sticks. Use • hand signals • basketball • hot-seat questioning.
Time for thinking	Include wait time after you ask a question and also after a student answers.	Plan the question. Increase wait time slowly. Explain any changes you are making in classroom routines to students.	Allow as much wait time as students need. Don't answer your own question.	Think-pair-share
Avoid questions altogether	Make statements. (See list of alternatives to teacher questions on previous page.) Use learning logs.	Listen interpretatively rather than evaluatively.	Don't over structure the learning environment.	Minimal encouragers Model-revealing activities (e.g. concept cartoons)
All-student response systems	Try • red/green discs • ABCD cards • finger voting • mini whiteboards • exit tickets.	Limit the amount students write on mini whiteboards. Get all students responding at the same time.	Don't try to remember all the responses. Choose the method to match the question. Use decision-driven data collection, not data-driven decision making.	Page protectors ABCD corners Student square dance Exit-ticket placemats Placing self-adhesive notes along a line Student scatterplot
Question shells	Get students to generate two or three questions using question shells • to ask you at the end of a lesson • working in pairs asking and answering questions • they would like the answer to at the start of the lesson.	Have a list of question shells available. (See list of question shells on previous page.)		
Hinge questions	Use diagnostic questions that • students cannot get correct for the wrong reason • only take two minutes to ask and get all students responding • only take thirty seconds for the teacher to interpret the student responses.	Use multiple-choice (MC) formats. Use as many options in MC questions as the content requires. Use distractor-driven MC items based on • common misconceptions • troublesome knowledge • incomplete ideas.	Hinge questions are always "works in progress".	Give real-time tests. Have multiple correct answers at varied levels of difficulty to support differentiation.

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STRATEGY 3: Providing feedback that moves learners forward

Feedback should be more work for the recipient than the donor.

Ideas	Techniques	Tips	Cautions	Enhancements
Reactions of students, not the feedback	Give feedback that either increases the students' efforts (if they are not meeting the goal) or increases the students' aspiration (if they are already achieving the goal).	Get to know your students. Build trust with your students.	Don't believe most of what is said about feedback. Be careful with the "bad-news sandwich". Respect the students' work.	Build your students' capacity to use feedback. Model responding to feedback by discussing feedback given to an anonymous student.
Growth mindset	Stress that "smart" is not something you are but rather something you get: it's down to you and you can do something about it.	Help your students see the connection between the feedback and the improvement. Focus on self-efficacy, not self-esteem. Help students develop appropriate learning goals.	Be careful how you praise: don't praise intelligence, rather make praise specific to a task recently completed. Give task-involving rather than ego-involving feedback. Be aware of the implicit messages your feedback sends.	Use personal bests, not ranks or marks. Use students' reactions to feedback as clues to their mindsets.
Feedback as part of a system	Whenever you give feedback, allocate class time for students to respond.	Focus your feedback: don't give feedback on everything students do. Provide an appropriate balance of critical and supportive feedback. Link the feedback to the learning intentions and success criteria. Make it clear what the student is meant to do with the comment.	Feedback should focus on what's next, not what's past. Don't mix up the different functions of feedback. Focus on the feedback itself, not proving that you have given it. Don't expect the students to like comment-only feedback. Don't make the feedback too specific.	Practise giving comment-only feedback with other teachers.
Feedback as detective work	Have groups of students match the comments to the work.	Get students to link the feedback to the learning intentions and success criteria.		Categorising strengths and weaknesses: • Find it and fix it • Margin marks • Different coloured highlighters

STRATEGY 4: Activating students as learning resources for one another

When students support each other, both those who receive and those who give help benefit.

Ideas	Techniques	Tips	Cautions	Enhancements
Peer feedback	Start with a whole-class session then move into pairs. Use two stars and a wish. Use a document camera. Use "expert" students as learning resources for other students on a particular topic.	Start by agreeing to ground rules. Get students to write their comments on sticky notes. Model and discuss effective and ineffective feedback. Provide sentence starters. Use the ABC feedback technique: • Agree with • Build on • Challenge	Start with assessments of anonymous work, not classmates' work.	Use structured protocols for peer-assessment activities. Get peers to mediate teacher feedback. Have two students review a topic with the class.
Emphasising group goals in classroom work	Display distribution of class scores. Present best composite answer. Use choose-swap-choose. Use class or group personal best.	Start with pairs before going on to groups.	If there is no individual accountability, monitor carefully that no students are free riding. Build in plenty of time for groups to reflect on how they are working.	Students jointly evaluate multiple attempts at tasks.
Prioritising individual accountability in group work	Assign specific roles to students (e.g. editor, challenger). Use a cube or spinner with question starters (e.g. who, what, where).	Think carefully about the kinds of goal and reward structures that are likely to be most effective for your students. Use a preflight checklist.	Be careful when using subjective criteria for self-evaluation. Start with simple and straightforward tasks. Move from individual tasks to group goals and then add individual accountability to the group.	Put the elements together.

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STRATEGY 5: Activating students as owners of their own learning

Only learners create learning. Teachers create environments within which students learn.

Ideas	Techniques	Tips	Cautions	Enhancements
Self-reports	Use red/yellow/green self-assessments for grouping students. Focus self-assessment on improvement, not on marks.	Provide clear criteria for self-reports. Make self-reports consequential.	Don't make self-reports too consequential!	Use plus-minus-interesting.
Time for students to own the learning	Make self-assessment a routine part of classwork.	Use learning portfolios. Create a question parking lot.	Ask students to identify possible changes, but don't require the changes to be made.	Survey students regularly on their learning.
Frameworks to see connections in self-assessments	Use the REAL framework – self-assessment prompts addressing feelings, thoughts and actions related to the work.			
Student-led parent-teacher conferences	Insist that students attend conferences. Prepare students before conferences.	Have a list of questions to help students plan what they will discuss with their parents. Prepare a reminder sheet for the conference.	Parents and teachers speak at the conference after the student.	
Students as Lesson observers	Carry out initial training. Plan the observation. Schedule time for feedback.	Have students develop specialisms.	Start focused and then open out.	Students as videographers