

Think of "Evidence" Broadly

Transcript for the online video from CSAI – Section 1

Welcome to this module on Gathering Evidence of Student Learning. In this video we will provide an introduction to the topic and then delve further into the idea of Thinking of “Evidence” Broadly. As we’ve seen, there are four interconnected elements of the formative assessment process.

Learning Goals and Success Criteria anchor the process, next comes gathering evidence of student learning, then analyzing the evidence, and finally taking whatever action is needed to close the gap between where students are and where they need to be. This module focuses on gathering evidence of student progress towards the goals and Success Criteria.

Why is gathering evidence important? If teachers gather real-time, evidence about students’ progress as students are engaged in learning activities, teachers can dynamically respond to students’ immediate needs and keep them on track and moving towards the lesson Learning Goals and Success Criteria. Recall that three central questions ground the formative assessment process:

- Where are students going?
- Where are students now?
- Where to next?

Learning Goals and Success Criteria answer the first question. Evidence gathering, the focus of this module, is the means by which teachers and students answer the second question: “Where are students now?” – specifically where are students now relative to the lesson’s Learning Goals and Success Criteria? This module outlines four major ideas on planning for evidence gathering. These four ideas are:

- Think of “Evidence” Broadly
- Gather Evidence Aligned to Learning Goals and Success Criteria
- Capture a Range of Student Responses
- Plan and Strategically Position Evidence-Gathering Opportunities

The rest of this video is focused on the first idea, Think of “Evidence” Broadly.

“Evidence” for formative assessment is much more than numerical data. It includes all the ways students can exhibit their learning relative to the lesson’s Learning Goals and Success Criteria. Student responses to learning activities within the lesson can and should provide such evidence. In language instruction, especially those focused on oral language, observing

students' actions and reactions to assess their comprehension and listening for the production of target language features are key evidence gathering strategies.

In gathering evidence, it's helpful to use a variety of strategies – for example, evidence gathered by way of what students say, what they do or write, how they interact with the teacher or their peers. By triangulating multiple sources of evidence, teachers can gain a much richer picture of student learning for analysis and action.

While earlier tribal learning environments didn't have the level of technology we have today, the crucial component of student choice and innovation were sacred elements strictly maintained to allow individual to choose what the right path was for them. It could be argued that this adherence to student choice and creativity has enabled indigenous peoples to innovate and survive the many challenges they faced.

Teachers can gain a much richer picture of student learning for analysis and action by triangulating multiple sources of evidence. This concept is different but related to the indigenous idea of cyclical weaving of evidence, such as with the medicine wheel or the Kiowa winter count calendars. These concepts both support the idea that, different students are best able to exhibit their learning in different ways.

Some students find it easy to express their ideas verbally; others may initially need to express their understanding through physical responses. When teachers recognize these differences in their students, they naturally use a variety of strategies to gather evidence about their students' learning. As we discuss later, most crucial is that the strategies are aligned with lesson Learning Goals and Success Criteria.

For the language classroom, keep in mind that different types of situations will provide evidence of different types of language. For example, if a Learning Goal is for students to understand how to express possibility, then a group project where students need to present ideas and negotiate to agree upon a plan will likely evoke this type of language.

Consider common sources of assessment during classroom learning. We highlight three. These are classroom talk, students at work and student work, and peer and self-assessment.

Evidence based on classroom talk is just that: evidence that may come from students' responses to teacher posed questions during instruction or from student to student discourse during small group or whole class activities.

This source of evidence is all the more important in language learning classrooms. A key capacity for formative assessment is being able to listen to students' speech for particular language features that reflect lesson Learning Goals. This capacity takes time for teachers to develop, but is a key to effective language instruction.

Evidence from students at work includes indicators of learning gathered while students are working, such as through observing students engaged in an activity or looking at the work they are producing.

Evidence from student work includes anything students produce related to the Learning Goals and Success Criteria. Some examples are: oral presentations, in process projects or problem solving activities

Peer and self-assessment are a third source of evidence. Students can reflect on their own learning and that of their peers to provide evidence of where students are in their learning. Types of self and peer assessment include:

- structured protocols that provide direction on what students should look for when reviewing each other's work
- student learning journals where students write about what they have learned in the lesson
- exit tickets which provide quick ungraded assessments as students leave class

Here again, regardless of type of peer or self-assessment, most important is that the assessment matches the Learning Goals and Success Criteria. For example, students' analysis of each other's speech often involves rubrics, and the rubrics should be well aligned with lesson Success Criteria. Similarly for the content of questions guiding student learning journals and/or exit tickets.

Next, we'll pause and reflect. How is this concept of formative assessment evidence similar to or different from your school's or district's understanding of the concept? Pause the video for a moment to reflect on this question.

Thank you! You have completed the first section of the Gathering Evidence of Student Learning module.

This video draws on training modules created by CRESST for the Colorado Department of Education. We thank the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) for enabling us to share this work.

We are also grateful to the following people for their contributions to these modules:

- Brenda (Paddlety) Sullivan
- David Sullivan
- Anjanette Williston
- Angela Landrum