

Setting the Stage for Formative Assessment Part 4: The Teacher's Role

Transcript of Webinar

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We welcome you to *Setting the Stage for Formative Assessment, Part 4, the Teacher's Role*. This presentation was developed by the Center for Standards and Assessment Implementation, or CSAI. The webinar was presented live on September 19, 2018. This is a re-recording of that live webinar. To meet the needs of your professional development time with you and other teachers in your school, we divided this rerecording into two sections that are almost 30 minutes in length. You can listen to each section on different days or both sections on the same day.

The original presenters for this webinar were Dr. Julie Park Haubner and Dr. Sandy Chang. Julie is a Content Specialist in the strands of Standards and Curriculum and Instruction. Sandy is Co-Leader of the Standards content strand.

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We'd like to express our thanks to our partners at the Central and South Central Comprehensive Centers and our Formative Assessment Bi-Regional Advisory Board for their help with planning this webinar and for their states' active participation in this series.

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This webinar is the last in a series of four webinars about how to establish an environment that supports formative assessment in the classroom, or in other words, setting the stage for formative assessment. Formative assessment is enacted by teachers and students, but successful implementation of formative assessment depends on stakeholders at every level of the education system. We organized the series into four levels, or roles, that all work together to establish how students experience formative assessment in the classroom.

In the first webinar, we presented the state's role. We discussed the important considerations and understandings that educators at the state level need to be informed about in order to make good decisions to support formative assessment. In that webinar, we focused on how formative assessment fits into a larger comprehensive assessment system, a shared definition of formative assessment, how formative assessment at the classroom level can be viewed by state level supporters, and how formative assessment fits into the Every Student Succeeds Act.

In our second webinar, we reviewed what formative assessment is, its role in a comprehensive assessment system, and its relationship to student outcomes and instructional initiatives. We also shared information on how district leadership can develop a vision and long-term plan for formative assessment implementation.

In the third webinar, we discussed how school leaders can support teachers' implementation in the classroom. By "school leaders," we meant principals, assistant principals, coaches, department heads, and teacher leaders.

And today, we are here, the last webinar in the series. We'll examine how teachers can incorporate formative assessment practices in their instruction.

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To get to full implementation of formative assessment is a journey, and teachers can take different paths. So before we get into the content, we wanted to make clear the purpose of this webinar, which is to help you begin to implement formative assessment in your classroom, where ever that path may be. As you listen today, think about how you can use these materials to identify your needs and to start investigating the available resources.

Formative assessment is all about giving and receiving feedback and to engage learners in active participation over an extended period of time. In an hour-long webinar, we won't be able to model many of these practices. However, we CAN set clear learning goals, which are these:

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First is to understand what formative assessment is. We will define formative assessment, describe the elements of the formative assessment process, and look at frameworks for formative assessment.

Second, we will learn how teachers can begin to implement formative assessment practices. For this learning goal, we will give you tools to self-assess your current formative assessment practices, share specific formative assessment resources, and help you think about how to plan implementation in your classroom.

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We created a User's Guide that goes along with this webinar. You can see the link here. It isn't necessary for you to access the User's Guide during this presentation; we'll be providing screenshots like this to help you visualize. The actual content is pretty much what you'll see on the slide deck today. Those of you who were here for the last webinar about the school or district's role will recognize that many of the concepts are similar. This parallel content is aligned on purpose so that everyone to be able to speak the same language when considering these issues, but specialized to their roles.

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The very first thing to do in beginning this work in formative assessment is to have definitional clarity.

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If one does a quick search on formative assessment on the internet (which we did), you'll see results such as these. What do you notice about these hits? Right away, we noticed that they are lists - of strategies, examples, techniques. Also notice the /s/ added to assessment in the "25 quick formative assessments" title. That's a sure bet you'll see a list things that are supposed to be formative.

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And when you click on one of those webpages, you'll see a list like this: "analyze student work," "strategic questioning," "extension projects," and the ubiquitous "exit tickets." What we noticed about this list, and many like it, is that the strategies and techniques on this page differ greatly on purpose and intention. It's like having a main course, dessert, drinks, appetizers all over a menu with no categorization. Furthermore, these strategies by themselves do not constitute the formative assessment process. As you will see, formative assessment is a much more comprehensive process of thinking and enacting high quality instruction, not a list of strategies and activities to use by themselves.

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In the User's Guide, we have a quiz on what is formative assessment and provide answers with explanations.

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Let's take a look at this picture of students in a classroom. What do you see when you look at this picture?

During the live webinar, participants wrote in the chat box what they saw when looking at this picture. Some of the responses were collaborative learning, peer-feedback, a teacher observing students working, and engagement.

The traits participants wrote about in the chat box pertained to personalized learning and social emotional learning. These are two popular education initiatives and programs implemented in schools today.

Now, think about the structures in place that allow for students to

- Engage in extended discourse with peers,
- Participate in collaborative learning, and
- Monitor their learning and their peers' learning.

Because you are participating in this webinar on formative assessment, we're certain that you are a type of teacher who thought about structures related to a classroom culture that values collaboration and an environment where students feel comfortable taking risks to learn new content and engage with their peers. These two ideas – student agency and a culture of collaboration – are both a prerequisite and a result of formative assessment.

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In addition to definitional clarity, one of the first steps in implementing formative assessment is establishing a classroom culture where formative assessment can work.

A culture of collaboration is environment in which students and teachers share responsibility for learning; students choose to learn together and their participation is spontaneous and respectful; student contributions inspire deeper engagement and multiple perspectives are actively sought; and all learners – including teachers – demonstrate a willingness to take risks, learn from mistakes, and support each other.

Student agency is when students become active agents in the learning process, rather than passive recipients of information. It is promoted in the classroom by providing learning tasks that stimulate opportunities for students to proactively evaluate their own progress toward a clear learning target and its observable criteria. Students generate feedback for themselves and others and make decisions about their own learning. Student agency is really one of the ultimate goals of formative assessment.

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To establish this culture of collaboration and student agency, we created a framework called the Fundamentals of Learning. Since learning is the property of the learner, we put the learner in the center of three, interconnected core ideas about learning.

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Making meaning refers to the process of making sense of information, experiences, and ideas through the use of critical, creative, and metacognitive thinking skills. When students are engaged in meaning making, they draw on their prior knowledge and connect it to what they are currently learning. And they use language, symbols, and texts from the disciplines.

Participating in and contributing to learning communities allows students to see learning as a co-constructed process. Engaging with others in learning involves communicating ideas, feelings, perspectives, and understanding. Student learning is enhanced when students are able to interact with a diverse range of people by being open to others' viewpoints to develop empathy and benefit from learning that may be outside their own experience.

Managing learning involves self-direction and taking initiative. Students who manage themselves are mindful and resourceful. They establish personal goals, make plans, monitor progress, and adapt their learning tactics when they need to do so. Lastly, they have strategies for meeting challenges and persevere to meet the expectations they set for themselves.

Together, these fundamentals of learning can be used for thinking about how to establish a classroom culture and to structure student learning for formative assessment.

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This resource, found on the CSAI website, describes in more detail the three core ideas we just reviewed. It provides examples of what the Fundamentals look like in the classroom, by students and teachers, in activities and resources. It also examines connections between the standards. And the Fundamentals of Learning provide tools to help teachers with activating students in taking responsibility for their own learning.

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So now that we discussed the conditions that are necessary for formative assessment, we'd like to define it. There are many definitions for formative assessment, and we use CCSSO's FAST SCASS definition, which was recently updated.

Formative assessment is defined as 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 more self-directed learners.

This definition is long and complex. We're going to further break down the definition in this webinar. For now, notice the emphasis on students and the idea that formative assessment promotes student agency.

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Next, we will talk about the elements of formative assessment. What this means is, how can we identify the parts of formative assessment in a way that can be used by teachers and students? At CSAI, we focus on four main elements.

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The four main elements of formative assessment in our framework are:

First, establish high quality learning goals, drawing from standards, learning progressions, and disciplinary practices. Learning goals are often referred to as learning objectives.

Second, articulate success criteria, to communicate clearly to students how they can achieve the learning goals. These are observable behaviors of things students will be able to do that both teachers and students use in order visualize and organize progress toward the learning goals.

Third, plan to gather and analyze evidence about student progress toward learning goals. Every success criterion should have at least one opportunity for students to provide evidence of how they are doing in relation to that criterion. Teachers analyze that evidence, both in the moment, and immediately after the lesson.

And fourth, plan to take pedagogical action in response to evidence of student progress. Both in the moment, and immediately following the lesson, teachers respond to the evidence of student learning and progress.

Throughout the process, engage students as partners by integrating **peer and self-assessment** as a key component with the ultimate goal of promoting **student agency** within a **culture of collaboration**.

In the User's Guide, we provide a copy of this diagram as well as a definition of each term.

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Learning Goals state what students will learn in a lesson. Sometimes they are called learning objectives or targets, but they are NOT simply standards written on the board. They must be able to be achieved by the end of the lesson, and they should establish the context, purpose, and importance of that lesson. They must be written in language that can be understood by students, whether those students are 5 or 15. And they are based on your state's college and career ready standards as well as your content area standards and practices.

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Success criteria are the observable activities of a lesson that describe what students do, say, make, or write. The most important aspect of success criteria is that they align directly with the learning goal. And like learning goals, they must be written in a way that can be shared with students so that students can use them to guide their own learning.

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Evidence gathering and analysis is the process of collecting information about student progress toward success criteria. That's a fancy way of saying: what are the activities that students do to show what they know. The purposes of this process are to provide feedback to the students and to help teachers adjust their instruction. When planning evidence-gathering opportunities, it's important to vary participant structures so that students can show what they know in whole class, small group, and individual settings. This is also where you plan to include peer and self-assessment opportunities.

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Once you set learning goals and success criteria and collect evidence of students' progress, it's necessary to take Pedagogical Action. In order to do so, it requires some pre-planning and knowledge of the content. Before

teachers even begin the lesson, they predict where students may struggle. This may be in the form of misconceptions, procedural errors, gaps in student knowledge, language or communication challenges, or a mismatch of content or level. In other words, perhaps the topic is just not engaging students, or it's too hard or too easy. Once teachers have these considerations in mind, they plan how they will provide support. This may be thinking about how to provide feedback, what they might model, explain, prompt, question, or simply tell.

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This is an example of how these four elements are related. If it sounds a lot like a lesson plan to you, you are correct. We use the familiar template of a lesson plan to highlight how formative assessment is already present in much of what you already do. Keep in mind that we've simplified this greatly in order to use it as an example. A real lesson plan would obviously be more complex and have more moving parts.

That said, this is a 3rd grade reading lesson in which the purpose is for students to learn how to distinguish their own point of view from that of the characters' in narrative text. In order for both students and teachers to see this, students will compare characters' point of view to their own, and explain how the characters' background affects their choices. Clearly, these activities can be done in a number of ways but for this lesson, the teacher has chosen to use a T-chart to compare characters and a combination of small group discussion and short written response.

You'll see immediately of course that this third column, evidence-gathering opportunities, is very similar to the types of strategies that you saw at the beginning of this presentation. This is typically what most people think of as formative assessment, but you can see that this is in fact only the vehicle by which evidence of progress is obtained. The content of the learning, the quality of the learning goals and the tasks that make that learning visible, have very little to do with those strategies and instead rely primarily on the teacher's knowledge of the subject matter and their understanding of how children's learning develops in that subject matter.

Finally, prior to teaching the lesson, the teacher has given some thought as to what challenges students may face and is prepared to address some of them. In this case, perhaps she anticipates that students may give one word answers and thus models elaboration, or provides vocabulary about feelings. When they're in their small groups, perhaps this teacher anticipates that students will get off topic and thus prepares students for how to stay on topic, or reviews how to use textual evidence in a written response of this type. This example is only one of an infinite number of ways that this lesson might play out in a classroom, but the structure is the same regardless of grade level or content area.

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Next, let's look at a math example, also for 3rd graders. In this lesson, students will relate arrays to multiplication. Presumably the lesson that came right before is that they learned how to group objects into equal groups. In order to show they know how to relate arrays to multiplication, students will describe arrays in number sentences and describe how those number sentences using arrays translate into sentences using the multiplication symbol. The mechanisms that they are using in this instance are writing sentences on individual white boards, talking to elbow partners, and submitting an exit ticket. Perhaps the teacher anticipates that some students will need a review of prior content and will provide counters for students who need to practice making equal groups or use different numbers to provide further support or challenge. The teacher can also give examples to student pairs of what these number sentences look like and may use her analysis of exit tickets to review some content with a small group or two the following day.

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Again, these are two very simplified examples that you will find in our open-resource publication about how to use formative assessment in lesson planning. Making examples like this is an exercise you would do in a more detailed training about lesson planning with formative assessment.

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Finally, to complete our first learning goal, let's talk about frameworks for formative assessment. By "frameworks" we mean a structured, logical and consistent model that you use as an aid to learning and thinking about formative assessment. We present two models: a novice and advanced.

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What you will find with most frameworks of formative assessment is that they have many overlapping qualities. Different frameworks doesn't mean that one is more right than another. They often serve different purposes. What we've noticed is that they may differ on the number of elements or components, but they usually address these three instructional questions: "Where is the learner going? Where is the learner now? How does the learner get there?"

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Today we are introducing two frameworks, the first one being the four-part model that we have already talked about. We developed this first one at CSAI and we consider it a beginning framework. You're going to see this again in the next section. Learning goals and success criteria address where the learner is going. Evidence-gathering and analysis answer the question where the learner is now. And pedagogical action helps students achieve the goals of the lesson.

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We do also want to make you aware of a more advanced framework that was developed by CCSSO, the Council of Chief State School Officers. This framework was developed so that teachers could observe and provide feedback to each other. It is far more complex than four-part CSAI model because it goes more deeply into the actual practice of formative assessment in addition to planning for implementation. Notice that their framework also has these three main parts, just worded slightly differently. Where are we headed? Where are we now? And, How to close the gap? Underneath each of these three main sections you will see bullet points, which this protocol calls dimensions.

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The purpose of our sharing these ten dimensions of FARROP is to show you how deep and complex formative assessment work can become. You'll see some very familiar parts, as well as some additional aspects. The ten dimensions are: learning goals, criteria for success, tasks and activities that elicit evidence of learning, questioning strategies to elicit evidence of learning, extended thinking during discourse, descriptive feedback, peer assessment, self-assessment, collaborative culture of learning, and use of evidence to inform instruction. We believe this protocol is incredibly useful for teachers who are past the beginning level but can be a bit overwhelming for those are just starting out. Again, we talk about it today so that you can see what YOUR ultimate learning goals will be as you embark on this journey.

This is the last slide for the learning goal #1, understanding what formative assessment is. The next recording will continue with learning goal #2.

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This is the second half of our recording of Setting the Stage for Formative Assessment, part 4, the teacher's role.

For our second learning goal, about how you as teachers can begin to implement formative assessment, we'll start with figuring out what you already know and can do well. In other words, how can you self-assess the current status of your formative assessment practice? It is really likely that you already have many formative assessment practices in place throughout your various curricula, initiatives, and programs. Let's find out how to identify where you're strong and where you want more support.

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Everything we're going to cover now is provided in the User's Guide. We framed it as a self-assessment. There are 20 elements that you can look for (if 20 seems really large, then start with just one category and work from there). These 20 elements were adapted from that FAST SCASS definition of formative assessment that you saw earlier, so a lot of it may seem familiar. We've just broken it down into observable chunks so that you can target your attention where it's most needed.

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We're going to map this on to that familiar four-part model of formative assessment that we've been using all along. The four categories that you'll be thinking about are instructional practice, learning goals, student involvement, and equity and classroom culture.

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For instructional practice, you're going to think about how frequently and intentionally you plan instruction, whether the professional learning you do about instruction is ongoing rather than one-shot workshops, whether the focus is on classroom-based instruction rather than prepping for interim or summative assessments. You're also going to think about whether you collect evidence on a regular basis, and whether you analyze that evidence. It's easy to collect evidence; it's much harder to do something meaningful with it. And once that evidence is analyzed, do you adjust instruction as a result? And do you use that evidence to respond to students at the individual level?

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Most teachers have some understanding of what learning goals are [click], whether they're called objectives, or targets, or sometimes just daily standards, which is not what we're talking about here. Are the learning goals in your classroom based on college and career ready standards, or other disciplinary standards? Do you understand how these standards encompass learning progressions within the content area? We cannot emphasize enough that you cannot implement formative assessment without a clear and thorough understanding of how students are expected to develop as learners in your content area. Finally, are the learning goals reasonable in size and scope. Meaning, can students actually get these goals accomplished given the time and resources?

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Research indicates that while most teachers are comfortable with gathering evidence about student *learning*, they are less comfortable with actively involving students in their own learning. The focus on student agency is something that most teachers agree with but have a hard time doing on their own. It requires a schoolwide culture of risktaking and support. Ask yourself: is the learning in your classroom primarily student-directed? Do

students regularly have opportunities for self-assessment and peer feedback? Do students know how to achieve their learning goals? Can students identify the gaps between their own understanding and the learning goals? And do they regularly receive actionable feedback from their peers and teachers?

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Student agency doesn't happen without a strong culture of equity and safety for everyone. Ask yourself, does your classroom culture benefit ALL students? benefit ALL teachers? Is it respectful and collaborative? Are all learners—both students and adults—encouraged to take risks and make mistakes? And do students have multiple modes and opportunities to show what they know? In other words, is instruction in your classroom truly differentiated? Once you've taken inventory of your strengths and weaknesses, think about next steps. What will you do to move your practice forward?

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Once you've done a self-assessment on your strengths and identified areas that you would like to improve, where do you go for more information? This section, we'll share resources on formative assessment.

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One way to build knowledge and capacity in formative assessment is to engage in a book study. There are many books about formative assessment, and here are three that we've read several times and recommend. *The Feedback Loop* looks at science lesson planning and formative assessment. *Clarity in the Classroom* provides a thorough description of the formative assessment process and its elements and gives teachers immediate ideas on how to implement formative assessment in their classrooms. Lastly, *Formative Assessment* describes the theory and background of formative assessment and provides examples of teachers implementing formative assessment.

Once you choose a book, you can read it yourself, but it would be more collaborative, productive, and certainly more fun to do a book study with your peers.

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CSAI has developed several resources on formative assessment, including this webinar series and a paper resource series.

You'll notice that the first in the series is the Fundamentals of Learning, which we introduced earlier. Next, we provide guidance on analyzing the standards and laying out a scope and sequence for year long planning. From there, we discuss taking the standards and breaking them down into smaller chunks, which we call building blocks. Once you've done this work, you can write lessons plans that include the formative assessment process. The purpose of this series, as with all our work at CSAI, is to enable student learning of college and career ready standards.

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One of the paper resources in the series we'd like to highlight is this one. You've already seen some of the materials in this webinar that are from this resource. It's our most popular because it describes steps to revise existing lesson plans that you have – and we all have lessons that we love, but could use more tweaking. This resource guides you through examining your lessons with the four-part framework we discussed in this webinar.

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We also have a collection of videos of classroom practice that shows formative assessment in action. We viewed hundreds of videos and selected about a couple dozen exemplars from different grade levels and content areas. A video viewing protocol accompanies each video.

We also wrote lesson plans for middle school grades in math, science, and history that incorporate formative assessment. You can print and use them immediately, or adapt them as needed.

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One last resource we'd like to share is online modules developed by CSAI. This series of recorded PowerPoint presentations introduce the elements of formative assessment. It was created to support Native American learners, but the content is applicable to all students. Each recording runs around 10 minutes in length and has handouts to supplement the recordings.

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Now that we've talked about how you can assess your current status and a brief introduction of possible resources that are available to you, let's now think about the roles and responsibilities that will make it possible for you to do this work.

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Again, we've provided all this content in the User's Guide. We encourage you to adapt this for your own use. We hope that by at least pointing out some beginning steps, you will be able to get your learning off the ground that much faster and build momentum.

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We've grouped these action steps into three categories: Establish a vision and plan; lead your classroom; and locate necessary resources. Consider this a starting point to think about and to discuss with peers some of the important steps that ought to be considered when implementing formative assessment.

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In order to establish your vision and plan, learn about and be prepared for a long-term commitment. As we have reiterated many times already and will do again, establish definitional clarity. Be very clear about what formative assessment is, and what it is not. Learn about the formative assessment process deeply enough to align it meaningfully to your existing practice. And, finally, look for partnerships within your school, district, and maybe even state.

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We understand that each teacher is in a different place with formative assessment implementation. At the beginning stages, you should become very clear about what formative assessment is and explore the various resources out there. In the middle, you can start lesson planning using a novice framework like the one we presented here. And as you progress, you can use an advanced framework like the FARROP to really observe, reflect, and engage in a community of practice.

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One reason that formative assessment takes a long time to implement is that it isn't what most people think it is. As we talked about earlier, many people think of formative assessment as a variety of strategies and

activities that measure student learning about something. However, once that conception changes and it becomes evident that formative assessment is in fact about the entire process of teaching and learning, the scope and time frame expands. There are two other aspects of understanding and implementing formative assessment that are essential: First is the need for expert knowledge, not only in the formative assessment process but also in the subject matters that are being taught. Any professional learning you do in either of these categories will benefit your overall goal of improving formative assessment practice. Second, as we mentioned earlier, is the critical requirement that you involve students in the process. This is an integral aspect of what formative assessment is, and increasing and improving student involvement should be at the forefront of your vision and definition of formative assessment.

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As a teacher, you are in an ideal position to evaluate how formative assessment is already being accomplished in your classroom. Looking carefully at existing programs for their formative assessment elements—which we looked at in depth in the previous section of this webinar—is the first step. Build on what you know by identifying gaps, and supplementing or revising your programs to strengthen their formative assessment qualities. We encourage you to use this evaluation process to dig deep into the program; do not take it on faith that any program “does” formative assessment. Finally, we encourage you to look first to your existing programs in order to improve buy-in from everyone involved. You, the school, the district, and your students have already invested a great deal of resources into implementing these programs; let’s try to maximize that. Linking formative assessment to what you already know and do is also a great way to start the conversation.

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You can demonstrate your leadership by being the lead learner. Make it very clear to your colleagues and students that YOU are also a learner in this process. Ask for feedback. Research shows this is a very powerful tool not only for your stakeholders but for yourself. You will have more meaningful interactions with your students and colleagues. Identify the people in your building who will help you start and sustain this work. These are your administrators, coaches, and teacher leaders. For those of you with older students, this may be your student leaders as well! And of course, communicate regularly to keep people invested in the work and celebrate all your accomplishments.

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We know that this work won’t get done without resources, but let’s break that down a bit. First, has your district or state provided really clear standards, assessment systems, and curriculum to support this work? If not, find out. You don’t want to start this work with a weak foundation. Do you have time for this? It doesn’t work without significant investment of time. Do you have funding for this? It is possible to do this work on a lean budget, but that takes some creativity. And finally, what structures can you put in place to make this happen?

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The foundation of your learning goals are the state college and career ready standards. Not just the standards, but also a usable scope and sequence for how those standards should be taught throughout the year. This should also include learning progressions about how students develop as learners in that domain. Teachers also need to know how all this works together in a comprehensive assessment system. And you will reap many benefits if you can meaningfully integrate with existing curricula.

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Time is one of the most obvious elements but also the most important. It is the thing that teachers talk about all the time. There needs to be enough time. The time has to be prioritized over competing commitments. It needs to be efficiently organized, whether by grade band, or subject area, or with other schools. Basically, so that you don't feel like your time is being wasted. There need to be multiple structures, so perhaps in PLC, small groups or pairs, individual work time, presentation to the group, and so forth. And you will need multiple opportunities to process the content, try it out, and come back for feedback.

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Some of the structures you can seek out to do this work are professional learning communities or PLCs, a social network of school, district, or state people who want to do this work together, or a professional library of resources about formative assessment and providing access to online modules.

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On page 13 of the user's guide, you will see a "Reflect and self-assess" activity. We encourage you to go back to the Preview page on page 3 and see if you have made any progress towards your earlier learning goals. Then we provide some suggestions for how you might expand your learning in future. This process, incidentally, is formative and we hope that by going through the process yourself you can see how internalizing and practicing a structure like this would be helpful not only to yourself as a learner but to the teachers and students in your school.

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This is the end of our series about how educators at all levels can set the stage for formative assessment.

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Thank you for joining us today for this webinar. The website you see here is the landing page for all our webinar materials. This recording, its transcript, and User's Guide are on this webpage. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions about the content of this presentation or would like further assistance.



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