

# Strategies

*For success with  
acceleration and differentiation*

**Spring  
2004**

## The Vital Connection Between Assessment and Differentiation

"Differentiation can not succeed without a strategically developed and implemented assessment system that includes pre-instruction assessment, continuing assessment (formative assessment), and culminating evaluation (summative assessment) that is frequently collaborative and incorporates students' self-assessment" (Bertie Kingore, *Differentiation: Simplified, Realistic, and Effective*, 2004).

As you begin to plan your differentiated unit, remember to always begin with end in mind. Ask yourself these three questions about the unit:

- What is it I want students to know?  
Facts, vocabulary, dates, names, rules, etc.
- What do I want them to understand?  
Big ideas, understandings, principles, etc.
- What do I want them to be able to do?  
Skills of the discipline, basic skills, social skills, etc.

Determine these 3 things faithfully at the onset of every unit and then use them as a guide for the development of the pre-

instruction assessment and the summative assessments. Examine the C.C.O.s and A.L.A.s in your curriculum document.

Collect the pre-instruction data and determine what learning activities need to be provided and for whom. What needs to be differentiated and what strategies should be used so students will achieve?

As the students progress through the learning activities check on their learning continually (formative assessment). Do you need to make some adjustments and for whom?

Provide descriptive constructive frequent feedback helping students identify their strengths and how to plan for improvement.

Create an opportunity for your students to self-assess their progress as part of the formative assessment.

Provide students with the opportunity to show you what they have mastered using summative assessments.

In this issue look for explanations and ideas of each of these parts of the assessment system as the basis for implementing differentiation strategies to improve student achievement.

*Assessment always  
has more to do with  
helping students  
grow than with  
cataloging their  
mistakes.*

*Carol Ann Tomlinson*



## Assessment is the Key to Differentiation!

While both assessment of and assessment for learning are necessary in education, assessment for learning is the greater teaching priority as well as the more important influence on instruction.

### Assessment of Learning—Summative

- Used to document individual or group achievement and to inform others about students
- The results are used to help students meet standards.
- Conducted at the end of teacher to gather evidence of learning.
- Feedback is usually delayed and in the form of a grade or score.

### Assessment for Learning—Formative

- Used to promote increases in student achievement and support ongoing student growth.
- The results are used to inform students about themselves.
- Conducted during teaching to influence learning.
- Feedback is immediate and informative about strengths and how to improve.

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## The Benefits of Pre-Assessment

Pre-assessment can be an asset instead of a liability, says Bertie Kingore in *Differentiation: Simplified, Realistic and Effective* (2004). Here are some of the benefits of pre-assessing as identified by Kingore:

- Pre-assessment can motivate students to be more involved in and attentive to instruction and learning experiences as the pre-assessment clearly identifies what they know and what they need to know. It appropriately raises their level of concern by signaling what they need to learn.
- It helps avoid boredom; students are more mentally engaged when the learning is relevant to their needs and interesting to them.
- It saves instruction time when teachers do not re-teach what students already know.
- It reduces the amount of grading, as students demon-

strating mastery do not complete the tasks planned to help others.

- It enables teachers to form appropriate flexible groups—a key principle of a differentiated classroom.
- It supports the use of compacting and tiered instruction to match students' readiness.
- It allows students to demonstrate and get credit for the concepts and skills previously mastered.

For more ideas about or help with developing pre-assessment tools contact Serena Crisp, Acceleration Resource Teacher, 636-938-2300.

*Researchers document that gifted and talented elementary students have mastered 35-50% of the curriculum to be offered in the 5 basic subject areas before they begin the school year. (Ross, 1993)*

## Formative Assessment and Student Achievement

If we want student achievement to improve then we must consider the following points:

- **A key feature of formative assessment is it must offer guidance on how the work can be improved.**
- Teacher's feedback must go beyond managerial functions (grades in the grade book) and move toward the learning function.
- Feedback to any student should be about the particular qualities of the work, with advice on what can be done to improve. Comparisons to other students should be avoided.

- Feedback has been shown to improve learning when it gives each students specific guidance on strengths and weaknesses.
- Each student must be given help and an opportunity to work on improvements.

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*"Delivery" and "coverage" with poor understanding are pointless and can even be harmful.*

*Paul Black and Dylan William, Inside the Black Box, Phi Delta Kappan, Oct. 1998*

## The Many Forms of Formative Assessment

In a differentiated classroom, assessment is ongoing and diagnostic, it is today's means of understanding how to modify tomorrow's instruction says Carol Tomlinson in *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners*. Formative assessment may and should take many different forms.

Consider using some of these:

- Small-group discussions with the teacher and a few students.
- Whole class discussions
- Journal entries
- Exit cards

- Portfolio entries
- Skill inventories and performance tasks
- Interest surveys
- Homework Assignments and other products from learning experiences
- Analytical Observations
- Checklists
- Quick writes or learning logs
- Student self-assessments

*Assessment yields an emerging picture of who understands key ideas and who can perform targeted skills, at what level of profi-*

## Student Self– Assessment

### Is it worth the time?

Student self-assessment is an essential component of formative assessment. “Many students have become accustomed to receiving classroom teaching as an arbitrary sequence of exercises with no overarching rationale. To overcome this pattern of passive reception requires hard and sustained work” explains Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam in their article, *Inside the Black Box* (see reference at the end of this article.) Students can only assess themselves when they have a clear picture of the targets that their learning is meant to attain. When students do have this clear picture then:

- they become more committed and more effective learners.
- their self-assessment becomes the object of discussions with teachers and with one another.
- they reflect on their thinking which is essential to good learning.

In order for someone to improve their learning they must understand what the desired goal is, what their present position is and understand a way to close the gap between those two.

Black and Wiliam conclude that “if formative assessment is to be productive then students should be trained in self-assessment so that they can understand the main purposes of their learning and grasp what they need to achieve.”

From: *Inside The Black Box*, Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam, Phi Delta Kappan, Oct. 1998



Students are generally honest and reliable in assessing themselves; they can even be too hard on themselves.

## I don't have time to create a scoring guide!

If we want to provide students with the opportunity for self-assessment and guidance on how to improve, a scoring guide must be made available to them. A scoring guide should answer the question– What are the conditions of success on the learning task and to what degree are those conditions met by this student's work?

There are many resources that offer ready-made scoring guides and/or can provide help to you as you create one of your own.

Consider these ideas:

- Check in your curriculum guide for scoring guides.

- <http://www.4teachers.org> A great website with examples and guidelines to custom build your own scoring guide.
- Work collaboratively with students to create the scoring guide!
- Contact Serena Crisp, Acceleration Resource Teacher, 636-938-2300 for more ideas or help.

*Students can hit any target they can see and which stands still for them. Richard J. Stiggins*

## Summative Assessments

Summative assessments are designed to provide information to be used to determine the amount of learning by a student at the end of a period of instruction. They can be things such as: an A.L.A., a test, a final draft/attempt, projects, or a performance (which may be oral, written or visual.)

The learning opportunities provided for the student and the summative assessment must be a match. Ken O'Connor in [How to Grade for Learning](#) (Skylight Professional Development, 2002) states that, “it is critical that students have opportunities to practice their knowledge, skills, and behaviors,

but also that they have opportunities to practice the type of assessment that is to be used summatively before the summative assessment. It is also critical that educators use more than one assessment method.” This will ensure that you have a consistent indication of student learning, especially if you have differentiated according to student learning styles.

Teaching is a means to an end. Having a clear goal helps us as educators to focus our planning and guide purposeful action toward the intended results.  
-Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe



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### *Curriculum and School Leadership Department*



### *Student Academic Acceleration Policy 2535*

*The Board believes it is important to encourage, support, and assist each student to develop academically. Where ability is concerned, equality consists of providing equally well for all kinds and levels of individual differences. That students differ may be inconvenient, but it is inescapable. Adapting to that diversity is the inevitable price of productivity, high standards and fairness to the students. In recognition of the diverse needs of students, the Board supports acceleration appropriate to student needs.*



## Terms to Know

**Assessment**—the continual analysis of information to determine students' learning needs and accomplishments. All of the activities undertaken by teachers and their students that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities.

**Evaluation**—the interpretation and judgment of students' learning to grade quality. Making judgments about the quality of student achievement over a period of time, primarily for the purpose of communicating student achievement.

**Formative Assessment**—assessment designed to provide direction for improvement and/or adjustment to instruction for individual students or for a whole class. Allows teachers to provide meaningful, descriptive feedback to students that enable them to feel in control of their own learning.

**Pre-assessment**—(pre-instruction assessment) clarifies students' interests, levels of readiness and learning style. It enables the teacher to better match instruction to student needs and becomes the standard by which to compare future learning and concretely show students their achievement and successes.

**Scoring Guide**—A blueprint of a task or performance event listing the essential components and statements describing various levels of quality. Scoring guides communicate expectations before, during and after the task. Scoring guides are set on a 4-point scale with Level 3 describing the qualities of proficiency.

**Summative Assessment**—Evaluation or assessment designed to provide information to be used in making judgments about a student's achievement at the end of a period of instruction. They occur at benchmarks of instruction such as the end of a chapter or unit and can take the form of tests, final drafts, projects or performances.

## Resources to Know

- Chappuis, Stephen, *Assessment for Learning; An Action Guide for School Leaders*, Assessment Training Institute, 2004
- Kingore, Bertie, *Differentiation: Simplified, Realistic, and Effective; How to Challenge Advanced Potentials in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*, Professional Associates Publishing, 2004.
- O'Connor, Ken, *How to Grade for Learning, Linking Grades; Linking Grades to Standards*, Skylight Professional Development, 2002.
- Tomlinson, Carol Ann, *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*, ASCD, 2001.
- Tomlinson, Carol Ann, *The Differentiated Classroom*;

