



RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Dr. Sarah McManus, Section Chief
Testing Policy & Operations, NCDPI

Dr. W. James Popham, Professor Emeritus
UCLA

Drawn from “Assessment and Classroom
Learning” by Paul Black & Dylan Wiliam in
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INTRODUCTION



In this review, formative assessment is viewed as “encompassing all those activities undertaken by teachers and/or students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.” p. 7



EXAMPLES IN EVIDENCE



“The examples do exhibit part of the variety of ways in which enhanced formative work can be embedded in new modes of pedagogy. In particular it can be a salient and explicit feature of an innovation, or an adjunct to some different and larger scale movement—such as mastery learning. In both cases it might be difficult to separate out the particular contribution of the formative feedback to any learning gains. (p. 16)”



“For assessment to be formative the feedback information has to be used—which means that a significant aspect of any approach will be the differential treatments which are incorporated in response to the feedback. (p. 16)”



“However, the consistent feature across the variety of these examples is that they all show that attention to formative assessment can lead to significant learning gains. Although there is no guarantee that it will do so irrespective of the context and the particular approach adopted, we have not come across any report of negative effects following on an enhancement of formative practice. (p. 17)”



ASSESSMENT BY TEACHERS



Key weaknesses:

- Evaluation practices encourage superficial and rote learning
- Teachers do not review or discuss assessment questions critically with peers
- Grading is over-emphasized and learning underemphasized
- A normative rather than criterion approach is utilized

Crooks (1988) and Black (1993b)



STUDENTS AND FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT



Referring to Ames (1992) “She also recommends that feedback should be private, must be linked to opportunities for improvement, and should encourage the view that mistakes are a part of learning. The self-perception of students is all-important here and this will be strongly influenced by teachers’ beliefs about the relative importance of ‘effort’ as against ‘ability’ in their views of learning. (p. 24)”



“The way in which formative information is conveyed to a student, and the context of classroom culture and beliefs about ability and effort within which feedback is interpreted by the individual recipient, can affect these personal features for good or ill. (p. 25)”



“Assessment is to be seen as a moment of learning, and students have to be active in their own assessment and to picture their own learning in the light of an understanding of what it means to get better. In summary, it can be seen that these various approaches to developing self-assessment by pupils hold promise of success. (p. 30)”



STRATEGIES AND TACTICS FOR TEACHERS



Teachers must plan and analyze the type of tasks that will be used. This is an “essential condition for planning the incorporation of formative assessment, both for the provision of feedback and for the planning how to respond to it. p.32”



“If the tests are not used to give feedback about learning, and if they are no more than indicators of a final high-stakes summative test, or if they are components of a continuous assessment scheme so that they all bear a high-stakes implication, then the situation can amount to no more than frequent summative testing p.36”



CONTACT INFO

- Dr. Sarah McManus
smcmanus@dpi.state.nc.us
- Dr. W. James Popham
wpopham@ucla.edu