Adapted from *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning*

**FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT 0.90**

**Rapid formative assessment:**
The notion of rapid formative assessment is very powerful as a form of feedback. It emerged out of the work of Black and Wiliam (1998), 'Inside the black box', and starts from the premise that assessment for learning is based on five key factors:

- students were actively involved in their own learning processes;
- effective feedback is provided to students;
- teaching activities are adapted in a response to assessment results;
- students are able to perform self-assessments; and
- the influence of assessment on students’ motivation and self esteem is recognized

From this, Black and Wiliam (2009) derived five major strategies:

1) clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success;
2) engineering effective classroom discussion and other learning tasks that elicit evidence of student understanding;
3) providing feedback that moves learners forward;
4) activating students as instructional resources for one another; and
5) activating students as the owners of their own learning

Dylan Wiliam and colleagues have demonstrated the value of formative assessment - that is, that assessment that can lead to feedback during the process of learning (Wiliam, 2011). This means much more than tests, and includes many forms of evidence:

> Practice in a classroom is formative to the extent that evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, learners, or their peers, to make decisions about the next steps and instruction that are likely to be better, or better founded, than the decisions they would've taken of the absence of the evidence that was elicited (Black & Wiliam, 2009: p.9).

The key is the focus on decisions that teachers and students make during the lesson, so most of all the aim is to inform teacher or student judgments about the key decisions: 'Should I relearn… Practice again… Move forward… To what?, And so on.

But what Wiliam is most concerned with is feedback during the lesson--that is, short cycle formative assessments, or what he terms 'rapid formative assessment' (assessments conducted between two and five times per week). For example, Black et al. (2003) described how they supported a group of 24 teachers to develop their use of ‘in the moment’ formative assessment in mathematics and science. They found that the gains in student achievement were substantial--equivalent to an increase in the rate of student learning of around 70%.
Wiliam makes the important distinction between the 'strategies' and the 'techniques' of formative assessment. Strategies relate to identifying where the learners are in their learning, where they are going, and what steps need to be taken to get there. This closely aligns to our three feedback questions, ‘Where am I going?’, ‘How am I going there?’; ‘Where to next?’

Leahy's and Wiliam's (2009, 15) work in schools shows that:

> When formative assessment practices are integrated into the minute to minute and day-by-day classroom activities of teachers, substantial increases in student achievement—of the order of the 70 to 80% increase in the speed of learning—are possible, even when the outcomes are measured with externally mandated standardized tests.

Their overall messages about putting ideas into practice also mirror much of what Hattie notes in Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning

- The criteria for evaluating any learning achievements must be made transparent to students to enable them to have a clear overview of the aims of their work and what it means to complete it successfully.

- Students should be taught the habits and skills of collaboration and peer assessment, both because they are of intrinsic value and because peer assessment can help to develop the objectivity required for effective self-assessment.

- Students should be encouraged to bear in mind the aims of their work and to assess their own progress to meet these aims as they proceed. They will then be able to guide their own work and so become independent learners (Black et al., 2003: 52-3).

Citations:


