Using Formative Assessments to Support ELL Learning

Educator designs formative assessments to support ELL student growth in the understanding and application of language and/or content skills.

**Key Method**

The educator determines what concepts and/or skills are necessary to measure and create formative assessments that are differentiated for various English language proficiency levels. The educator reflects on the data gathered from these informal assessments to monitor student growth toward proficiency and decide when students have mastered the concept or skill or when it is appropriate to provide additional instruction, practice, and support.

**Method Components**

Educator understands that formative assessment is a timely and essential tool for monitoring progress toward mastery of content and/or language skills. Content area educators or specialists who work with ELLs also recognize that formative assessments have the potential to be personalized for varying levels of English language proficiency (ELP), which can allow students to demonstrate competency of a concept or skill without also having to demonstrate language mastery. Educators who show competency in designing formative assessments also utilize specific methods for analyzing the data these assessments produce and reflecting on what that data reveals about next steps in instruction.

**Key Elements of Formative Assessment of ELLs:**

- Formative assessments for ELLs should be valid and reliable.
- Valid assessments are appropriate for a specific purpose (e.g., a math assessment that is linguistically difficult may assess a student’s language skill even if it is not intended to and is not a valid assessment of math skill). Educators should be clear about what the assessment is being used to measure: content, language, or both.
- A reliable assessment should allow students to receive the same score no matter where they take the assessment.
- When creating formative assessments for ELLs, educators should avoid cultural bias and be aware of the language demands and/or unique needs of their student population (i.e. dual-identified, early learners, long-term ELLs).
- Formative assessments for ELLs must capture data for distinct skills. Skills should be determined from ELP standards or content standards.
- If an assessment is assessing content only for ELLs, modifications should be made to decrease the language demands of the task.
- Formative assessments should be given according to the same structure and/or over the same content as classroom instruction.
- Modifications and/or supports for ELLs should be used both during assessment and instruction.
Formative assessments must be timely. Data from these assessments should be used to help students and educators monitor growth toward larger learning targets.

Formative assessments do not need to be comprehensive. They are a “dipstick” measurement tool for monitoring progress prior to a summative assessment.

Supporting Research


Resources

Sample Formative Assessment Strategies: Data-Driven Instruction https://www.engageny.org/ddl-library


Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and receive a proficient score for all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions

400 word limit

Please answer the following questions:

Describe your classroom demographics and content instructional goals. How is formative assessment an essential part of your practice? How do you meet the specific needs of your ELL population?

What specific theories or practices do you use to design formative assessments for ELLs (e.g., SIOP, Frayer, etc.)? Why are these theories effective?

- **Passing:** Educator completely answers questions using personal examples and supporting evidence that clearly illustrates research-based practice for the intentional use of data gathered from formative assessments.

Part 2. Work Examples / Artifacts

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following artifacts for evaluation:

Artifact 1: Rubric and Assessment Review

300 - 400 words

Create a set of criteria for evaluating formative assessments for ELL students. Use the criteria to evaluate a formative assessment (your own or one that you might use).

- Write a brief analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the assessment,
- Write a brief explanation of how you will modify it to better assess your ELLs.
**Artifact 2: Formative Assessment Process**

Design a formative assessment process for your ELL students and implement it in your classroom. Create a portfolio of evidence gathered during your process. Your portfolio should include:

- 200 - 300 words describing the assessment goal.
- A sample assessment. This can be a video of you implementing the assessment, a copy of a paper and pencil assessment, or a written explanation of the strategy used.
- 150 - 200 words explaining modifications and/or accommodations used.
- 150 - 200 words analyzing student learning based on the assessment results.
- 150 - 200 words explaining next steps.

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<th>Rubric and Assessment Review</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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<td>Educator-created criteria explicitly demonstrates educator ability to analyze assessments for strengths and weakness and specifically addresses unique ELL assessment needs (e.g., awareness of cultural and language bias, etc.)</td>
<td>Educator-created criteria demonstrates educator ability to analyze assessments for strengths and weakness, but response may not address specific ELL assessment needs (e.g., awareness of cultural and language bias, etc.)</td>
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<td>Educator modifications to assessment are specific to student needs, based on expert theories, and demonstrate a clear understanding of the correlation between ELL needs and assessment goals</td>
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<td>Educator modifications to assessment are not specific to student needs, lack connection to expert theories, and show a lack of understanding of the correlation between ELL needs and assessment goals</td>
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**Reflection**

300 - 400 words

Reflect on using formative assessments to support ELL students using the following guided questions:

What did you learn about your ELL students in your formative assessment process? What do you hope to accomplish with your next steps?

How has your thinking about the use of formative assessment with ELLs changed or been enhanced by this process?

- **Passing:** Response utilizes specific details from the formative assessment process and provides concrete evidence of reflective practice and clear next steps for ELL instruction based on data gathered. Writing is organized and easy to understand.

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