



Using Formative Assessments to Support ELL Learning

Competency

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.



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- 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 Rationale and Research

Abedi, Jamal, and Nancy Ewers. “Accommodations for English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities: A Research-Based Decision Algorithm.” Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, 2013,

<https://portal.smarterbalanced.org/library/en/accommodations-for-english-language-learners-and-students-with-disabilities-a-research-based-decision-algorithm.pdf>

Alvarez, Laura, et al. “Focusing Formative Assessment on the Needs of English Language Learners.” WestEd, 2014,

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Brookhart, Susan M. (2010). “What is Formative Assessment? In Formative Assessment Strategies for Every Classroom.” An ASCD Action Tool (Vol. 2).

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/111005/chapters/Section-1@-What-Is-Formative-Assessment%2%A2.aspx>

Cook, H. Gary, and Robert Liguanti. (2015). Strengthening policies and practices for the initial classification of English Language Learners: Insights from a national working session.



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Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/14dlvO9NefOcrmBw01UJkakPEP1qsC9mW/view?usp=sharing>

Fenner, Diane Staehr. (2016). Fair and Square Assessments for ELLs, [Fair And Square Assessments for ELLs - Educational Leadership \(ascd.org\)](#)

Staehr Fenner, Diane. "Computer-based Common Core Testing: Considerations and Supports for ELLs." [blog post], ColorinColorado, WETA, 2015,
<https://www.colorincolorado.org/blog/computer-based-common-core-testing-considerations-and-supports-ells>

Theory of Language Assessment, Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota.
<http://www.carla.umn.edu/assessment/VAC/research/theory.html>

Wolf, Mikyung Kim, et al. (2010) "Improving the Validity of English Language Learner Assessment Systems." National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, CRESST.
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1B7wJGg6csZTLqz8mUGWrJwMNYu3YE34k/view?usp=sharing>

"English Learners and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)." Migration Policy Institute, National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy,
<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/nciip-english-learners-and-every-student-succeeds-act-ess>

Resources

[What is the Difference Between Formative and Summative Assessment?](#)

[Authentic Assessment Toolbox](#)

[Assessment of English Language Learners](#)

[Sample Formative Assessment Strategies: Data-Driven Instruction](#)

[Claremont Immersion School in Arlington, Virginia](#)

[Formative Assessment Processes](#)



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Submission Guidelines and 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 (Provides Context)

300 - 400 words

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?
- How do you avoid cultural bias and be cognizant of the language demands and/or unique needs of your student population?

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/Evidence

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.



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- 150 - 200 words analyzing student learning based on the assessment results.
- 150 - 200 words explaining next steps.

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Rubric and Assessment Review	<p>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.)</p> <p>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</p> <p>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure enhance clear communication.</p> <p>Analysis and explanation is 300 - 400 words.</p>	<p>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.)</p> <p>Educator modifications to assessment may be specific to student needs OR based on expert theories OR demonstrate a clear understanding of the correlation between ELL needs and assessment goals, but do not cover all of these needs</p> <p>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure allow clear communication.</p> <p>Analysis and explanation is not 300 - 400 words.</p>	<p>Educator-created criteria does not demonstrate educator ability to analyze assessments for strengths and weaknesses and demonstrates a lack of knowledge of unique ELL assessment needs</p> <p>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</p> <p>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure inhibit clear communication</p> <p>Analysis and explanation is not 300 - 400 words.</p>
Artifact 2: Formative Assessment Process	<p>Portfolio is proficient if all of the following are met:</p> <p>Assessment goal is articulated in such a way that it is clear whether educator is measuring</p>	<p>Portfolio is basic if 3-4 of the following are met:</p> <p>Assessment goal is articulated in such a way that it is clear whether educator is measuring language skills, content</p>	<p>Portfolio is developing if 1-2 of the following are met:</p> <p>Assessment goal is articulated in such a way that it is clear whether educator is measuring</p>



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	<p>language skills, content skills, or both</p> <p>Sample assessment explicitly meets the assessment goals</p> <p>Modifications and/or accommodations are based on student need and expert theories</p> <p>Analysis of student results demonstrates educator ability to interpret data</p> <p>Plan for next steps clearly stems from assessment data and demonstrates educator ability to utilize formative assessments as a part of cyclical teaching processes</p> <p>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure enhance clear communication</p> <p>Adheres to word limits</p>	<p>skills, or both</p> <p>Sample assessment explicitly meets the assessment goals</p> <p>Modifications and/or accommodations are based on student need and expert theories</p> <p>Analysis of student results demonstrates educator ability to interpret data</p> <p>Plan for next steps clearly stems from assessment data and demonstrate educator ability to utilize formative assessments as a part of cyclical teaching processes</p> <p>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure allow clear communication</p> <p>Does not adhere to word limits</p>	<p>language skills, content skills, or both</p> <p>Sample assessment explicitly meets the assessment goals</p> <p>Modifications and/or accommodations are based on student need and expert theories</p> <p>Analysis of student results demonstrates educator ability to interpret data</p> <p>Plan for next steps clearly stems from assessment data and demonstrate educator ability to utilize formative assessments as a part of cyclical teaching processes</p> <p>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure inhibit clear communication</p> <p>Does not adhere to word limits</p>
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Part 3. Reflection

300 - 400 words

Use the word count as a guide to write a personal reflection about your work on this micro-credential. For tips on writing a good reflection review the following resource:

[How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?](#)

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



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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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