Common Formative Assessments Agenda

OUTCOME

Your leadership team will gain the knowledge and skills it needs to help teachers use common formative assessments.

LEARNING GOALS

Your team will:
1. Develop a shared understanding of key common formative assessment concepts and skills
2. Assess the capacity of a group of teachers to create and use common formative assessments
3. Identify how the team can support a group of teachers in implementing common formative assessments

AGENDA ITEMS

Launching the Module

- Launch: CFA Handout 1 (5 minutes)

Learning Goal 1: What are common formative assessments, and what skills do our teachers need to use them effectively?
- Explore: Understanding common formative assessments and essential capacities, CFA Handout 2 (20 minutes)
- View: Guiding Instruction through CFAs (15 minutes)

Learning Goal 2: How can we find out if our teachers have the skills they need to create and use common formative assessments?
- View: Using CFAs to Improve Teaching and Learning (15 minutes)
- Apply: Assessing the capacity of teachers, CFA Handout 3 (20 minutes)

Learning Goal 3: How can we help our teachers use common formative assessments?
- Apply: Supporting one team at our school, CFA Handout 4 (25 minutes)

Now What?
- Apply: Next steps, CFA Handout 5 (20 minutes)
Common Formative Assessments: Key Concepts and Skills

It is now well understood that highly effective teachers use data to fine-tune their instruction. Common formative assessments—tools that teams of teachers in a grade level or content area use to track student learning—produce especially vital data. As your school’s leaders, your team plays a crucial role in ensuring teachers can effectively use these tools. By gauging your teachers’ capacity to create and use common formative assessments, you can support those who need to build their skills.

What Are Common Formative Assessments?
Formative assessments are ongoing assessments that occur throughout the learning process. Tests and quizzes, student self-assessments, performance tasks with corresponding rubrics, checklists, and portfolios of student work are all forms of formative assessments. Research shows that when used in an ongoing fashion to provide timely feedback to teachers and students and to make instructional adjustments, formative assessments narrow achievement gaps and improve student achievement.

Teachers in a grade level or within a content area can increase the value of formative assessments and develop them more easily by working together to create or adapt existing common formative assessments. Doing so requires teachers to collaborate and come to consensus on what content they will assess, how they will assess and score learning, and how they will respond to the data’s findings.

How Do Teachers Use the Data from Common Formative Assessments?
Many groups of teachers—by grade level, by content/department, and in other leadership teams—can use the results of common formative assessments to:
• diagnose learning difficulties
• establish instructional goals for individual teachers, teams, and the school
• identify and share effective teaching strategies
• differentiate classroom instruction
• design professional development opportunities

What Do Common Formative Assessments Look Like?
Here are three examples of common formative assessment:

• Seventh grade English language arts teachers use district standards to develop common narrative, expository, and persuasive writing assignments and corresponding rubrics. Teachers share completed assignments to calibrate their use of the rubrics and to monitor students’ progress.

• Eighth grade math teachers all agree to administer portions of their curriculum’s end-of-unit tests. After the teachers score the tests, they meet to analyze the results and to develop necessary interventions for struggling students.

• Seventh grade science teachers develop and use common assessments that focus on the curricular content that eighth grade teachers have flagged as problematic for students entering their eighth grade year.
What Capacities Do Teachers Need to Effectively Use Common Formative Assessments?

To effectively develop and use common formative assessments, teams of teachers need six essential capacities:

- **Appreciate the range of data important to impacting student achievement**
  
  Rationale: Teachers can’t learn everything they need to know to improve their teaching from one data source. Data-literate schools use different kinds of data—some on a daily basis, some monthly or quarterly, and some annually—to sustain collaborative inquiry and continuously improve instruction. Common formative assessments represent an important part of this mix.

- **Articulate learning goals**
  
  Rationale: A team needs to agree upon the key learning goals and sub-goals for a unit, assignment, or course prior to designing common formative assessments to measure students’ mastery of these goals. Learning goals should align with state, district, and/or school standards.

- **Design formative assessments**
  
  Rationale: A team needs to learn how to craft quality formative assessments before it can effectively use these tools. Even if a team opts to use ready-made assessments, everyone on the team should know how to create one from scratch to tailor assessments to fit the team’s needs.

- **Analyze the results of common formative assessments**
  
  Rationale: It is not enough to just create and use a common formative assessment. Teachers and teams need to know how to analyze the data to glean information about students’ progress and learning needs relative to the learning goals.

- **Use the results of common formative assessments to improve instruction**
  
  Rationale: After analyzing data findings, teachers need to identify specific instructional responses to the data. Responses might include re-teaching content, changing instructional approaches to meet the needs of all students, or developing more challenging materials.

- **Embrace collaboration**
  
  Rationale: Teachers must collaborate to create, use, and analyze common formative assessments. For a team’s use of formative assessments to be “common,” teachers need to agree on what they will teach, how they will assess content knowledge, and how they will collectively respond to the assessment data.

**REFLECT**

Which of these six capacities have we observed in teams of teachers at our school?
REFERENCES


Capacity Inventory

In this inventory, you gauge the capacity of a team to develop and use common formative assessments. Your leadership team can use the results to target the support you provide.

Selected Team: __________________________

**DIRECTIONS**

Circle the number in each capacity that best represents the selected team’s status.

**Scoring Key:** 1 = Little-to-no capacity  2 = Limited capacity  3 = Solid capacity

1. **Appreciate the range of data important to impacting student achievement**
   The team:  
   1. Does not use data to inform instruction  
   2. Uses and interprets data from only one source  
   3. Uses and interprets multiple sources of data, including formative and summative assessments

2. **Articulate learning goals**
   The team:  
   1. Does not identify learning goals for curricular content  
   2. Identifies overarching learning goal for teaching units  
   3. Identifies learning goals for both teaching units and daily lessons

3. **Design formative assessments**
   The team:  
   1. Lacks experience in designing formative assessments  
   2. Develops quality assessments with limited alignment to learning goals  
   3. Develops quality assessments aligned with learning goals

4. **Analyze the results of common formative assessments**
   The team:  
   1. Does not use assessment data to interpret students’ strengths and weaknesses  
   2. Uses assessment data in limited ways to interpret students’ strengths and weaknesses  
   3. Uses assessment data to interpret students’ strengths and weaknesses and has a protocol to guide the analysis of the data

5. **Use common formative assessments to improve instruction**
   The team:  
   1. Does not use assessment data to identify necessary instructional changes  
   2. Uses assessment data to identify necessary instructional changes but does not enact the changes in the classroom  
   3. Uses assessment data to identify necessary instructional changes, enacts the changes in the classroom, and employs formative assessments to determine the effectiveness of the changes

6. **Embrace collaboration**
   The team:  
   1. Does not collaborate  
   2. Collaborates but not to analyze data  
   3. Frequently collaborates to gather, analyze, and interpret formative assessment data and to reflect on student learning
How Our Team Can Support Teachers

Your leadership team can take a variety of steps to help your school’s teachers become experts in creating, using, analyzing, and acting upon common formative assessments. For example, the team can:

1. **Secure professional development.**
   Your team can plan professional development focused on building teachers’ capacity to:
   - develop specific learning goals
   - design common formative assessments
   - provide descriptive feedback to students
   - organize and use data gained from common formative assessments
   - develop or differentiate instructional strategies based on students’ learning needs
   - work collaboratively in teams

2. **Find or create time for teachers to meet together.**
   Your team can help teachers use existing time more efficiently, reorganize schedules to facilitate ongoing collaboration, and identify additional meeting time beyond the school day to:
   - develop or examine common formative assessments
   - organize and analyze data
   - discuss the implications of data for instructional practices

3. **Identify and procure the systems necessary to analyze formative assessment data.**
   Your team can facilitate your school’s ability to process common formative assessments quickly and easily by:
   - researching technology for expedient data processing
   - educating administrators on the need for and costs associated with identified technology
   - training teachers to use new technology

4. **Monitor the use of common formative assessments.**
   Your team can ensure that common formative assessments are used to impact instruction by:
   - supporting teacher leaders or coaches to convene teams to examine common formative assessments
   - providing teams of teachers with protocols for examining student work and other formative assessments
   - regularly convening teacher leaders or coaches to discuss obstacles to teachers’ collaboration and use of data and taking steps to address the identified obstacles

5. **Cultivate a school culture that values collaboration.**
   Your team can promote the collaboration vital for using common formative assessments by:
   - acknowledging teachers’ efforts and celebrating their progress
   - advocating for collaboration time for teachers
   - displaying the products of teachers’ collaboration (e.g., data walls)

6. **Other steps?**
Next Steps

DIRECTIONS

As a team, work through the Reflect, Commit, and Plan steps below.

Reflect

Circle the learning goal below that your team will pursue further.

1. Your team will develop a shared understanding of key common formative assessment concepts and skills
2. Your team will assess the capacity of a group of teachers to create and use common formative assessments
3. Your team will identify how the team can support a group of teachers in implementing common formative assessments

Commit

Review and discuss the suggested next steps (pp. 2–3) for the learning goal your team selected to pursue. As a team, choose one next step that your team will take (from those listed or from ideas generated by the team). Record it below.

Next Step:

Plan

Identify 2–3 actions related to the next step your team identified. For each action, identify responsible team member(s) and related dates.

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<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsible Team Member(s)</th>
<th>Date(s)</th>
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Suggested next steps

1. Your team will develop a shared understanding of key common formative assessment concepts and skills. (Learning Goal 1)

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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help!</td>
<td>We’ve made progress but real work remains</td>
<td>We’ve mastered it!</td>
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Next Steps:

- **If your team assesses its status as a 3 or below, consider the following:**
  - Explore this module’s resources (accessed from the module’s landing page) to increase your team’s understanding
  - Work with another Success at the Core module, Using Data Effectively, to gain a broader understanding of data sources

- **If your team assesses its status as a 4 or 5, consider the following:**
  - Share CFA Handout 2 with school faculty to develop your colleagues’ understanding of key common formative assessment concepts and skills

2. Your team will assess the capacity of a group of teachers to create and use common formative assessments. (Learning Goal 2)

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Next Steps:

- **If your team assesses its status as a 3 or below, consider the following:**
  - Explore this module’s resources (accessed from the module’s landing page) to further consider the skills teachers need to use common formative assessments effectively
  - Reflect on how an inventory can help you gather data and identify other ways to learn about teachers’ capacity to use common formative assessments (e.g., interviews)

- **If your team assesses its status as a 4 or 5, consider the following:**
  - Ask the team of teachers you analyzed on CFA Handout 3 (from the APPLY activity in Learning Goal 2) to complete the inventory and compare your results to the teachers’ results
  - Share the inventory with other groups at your school to ramp up schoolwide use of common formative assessments
  - Visit Success at the Core’s Teacher Development materials and examine the assessment strategies that can be repurposed as common formative assessments
3. Your team will identify how the team can support a group of teachers in implementing common formative assessments. (Learning Goal 3)

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Next Steps:

☑ If your team assesses its status as a 3 or below, consider the following:
- Explore this module’s resources (accessed from the module’s landing page) to gain a deeper understanding of the actions you can take to support teachers in developing key skills that will enable them to use common formative assessments
- Spend more time discussing and deciding on the actions your team will take, as identified on the note-taking template (from the APPLY activity in Learning Goal 3)

☑ If your team assesses its status as a 4 or 5, consider the following:
- Discuss a timeline for carrying out the actions your team identified in the Support from Leadership Team column of the note-taking template
- Extend the APPLY activity in Learning Goal 3 by brainstorming how you will gain the buy-in and support of district leaders for the actions that require their approval
- Move on to another Success at the Core Leadership Development module