Formative Assessment: The Basics

When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative; when the guests taste the soup, that's summative.

> — Stakes, R. cited in Earl, L. 2004. *Assessment as Learning: Using Classroom Achievement to Maximize Student Learning*. Experts in Assessment. Corwin Press Inc. Thousand Oaks, California.

As this apt analogy suggests, understanding the process we follow to create a culinary feast can give us insight into the relationship between instruction, assessment, and learning. Most successful cooks know that following a recipe is important, but they also understand that it's sometimes necessary to add extra stock or additional spices to a watery broth. These cooks also know that the only way to gauge what and how much to add is by continually checking the result. Eventually, the dish will be just right.

Constant monitoring of student understanding is as important to the learning process as tasting the broth is to making good soup. Effective teachers know that, as they teach a lesson, they must continually watch and question their students to determine if, in fact, those students understand the content. The strategies these teachers apply to gauge student understanding are formative assessments.

Course Objectives

In this course, you will:

- Attain a deeper understanding of formative assessment.

- Learn strategies that help teachers gauge understanding.

- Describe meaningful feedback and explain its importance.

- Determine how students can assess their own learning.

- Identify ways to adjust instruction to help students reach learning goals.

Course Syllabus

Module 1	**What is Formative Assessment?**
	• Module Welcome
	• Formative Assessment Research
	• Offering Guidance
	• Video: The Power of Formative Assessment to Advance Learning
	• Audio: Grant Wiggins on Formative Assessment
	• Application: Practicing Formative Assessment
	• Post-Module Reflection
Module 2	**Making Learning Expectations Clear**
	• Module Welcome
	• Low Achievement
	• Introducing A Six-Step Process
	• A Six-Step Process
	• Video: Involving Students in Formative Assessment
	• Audio: Grant Wiggins on Formative Assessment
	• Application: Communicating Learning Targets to Students
	• Post-Module Reflection
Module 3	**Better Questions, Deeper Discussion**
	• Module Welcome
	• Reading: Six Levels of Understanding
	• Effective Questioning
	• Video: How to Improve Your Questioning Techniques
	• Audio: Grant Wiggins on Transfer Tests
	• Post-Module Reflection
Module 4	**Meaningful Feedback**
	• Module Welcome
	• Feedback
	• Video 1: Providing Effective Feedback
	• Video 2: Engendering Confidence
	• Application: Effective Feedback
	• Post-Module Reflection

Module 5	**Sharing Responsibility for Learning**
	• Module Welcome
	• Peer Assessment
	• Self-Assessment
	• Self-Assessment vs. Self-Evaluation
	• Video 1: Using Classroom Assessment to Guide Daily Instruction
	• Video 2: Using Rubrics for Student Self-Assessment
	• Application: Self-Assessments
	• Post-Module Reflection
Module 6	**Adapting Instruction**
	• Module Welcome
	• Learning Target
	• Time Constraints
	• Action Plans
	• Video: Teacher Collaboration
	• Audio: Grant Wiggins on Upfront Teaching
	• Post-Module Reflection

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