

Activity 2: Looking at assessment practice in your school

Ask a maximum of five teachers to describe one assessment task that they have used that week. Ask them what they learnt from the assessment about the students and what the students learnt from it.

In finding out the extent to which formative assessment is being used, you may want to probe them for examples of where they have given immediate assessment feedback to students or changed the learning task in order to help students improve their learning. This will help you determine whether your teachers are using formative assessment without being conscious of it.

Once you have had these conversations, answer the following questions, keeping a note of the answers in your Learning Diary:

- What types of assessment seems to be most common?
- Is there evidence of formative assessment happening? If so, give examples.
- Do the teachers express a clear desire for students to learn from assessment feedback? In other words, do they understand the role of assessment for learning as opposed to assessment of learning?
- How could you suggest changing the purpose or use of the assessments they discussed with you to become formative?

Discussion

Depending on the background of the teachers in your school and the way the curriculum has been interpreted by the staff, there may be a greater emphasis on one sort of assessment than the other. You also need to be aware that their answers will reflect to some extent what they think you expect from them.

You may discover that there is some excellent practice already in place in certain parts of the curriculum that you can use as an example of good practice. You might like to follow up this activity with a staff meeting where you emphasise the learning possibilities from assessment and highlight the appropriate use of formative assessment that you have discovered. You may also decide to focus on assessment in your walks around the school to help you identify areas of good practice and support staff who need additional help.

You may want to work closely with small groups of teachers to help them establish regular formative assessment opportunities.