

Solution Tree | Press

Common Formative Assessment: A Toolkit for Professional Learning Communities at Work®, Second Edition

By Kim Bailey and Chris Jakicic

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *Common Formative Assessment: A Toolkit for Professional Learning Communities at Work®, Second Edition* by Kim Bailey and Chris Jakicic. In this second edition of *Common Formative Assessment*, K–12 educators access a wealth of information and updated resources to collaboratively engage students in the assessment process.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

Copyright © 2023 by Solution Tree Press

Chapter 1

Getting Started as a Collaborative Team

1. What are some forms that educator teams can take as outlined in this chapter?
2. While high-functioning teams may take various forms, please discuss common strategies and practices that contribute to their high function. For instance, what are the steps to building consensus that an effective team follows?
3. Describe an experience you've had participating in or leading a meeting that lacked organization and efficiency. What contributed to the feeling of chaos in that meeting, and, if you could go back and do the meeting again, what strategies would likely help bring efficiency and focus to the meeting?
4. How are teams of educators a crucial part of effective common formative assessment?

Chapter 2

Setting the Stage for Common Formative Assessment

1. Describe what makes an assessment *formative*? Additionally, what does the word *common* mean in the phrase *common formative assessment*?
2. *Equity* in the context of teaching and learning means that all students learn the same learning targets regardless of teacher, prior life experience, and so on. How does common formative assessment help ensure equity?
3. Why is a *comprehensive assessment system* important? Describe what this system may consist of and how it works.
4. Thinking about implementing common formative assessments in your school can feel daunting. How might your school begin to explore the concepts and reasons for common formative assessments as a starting point for getting more comfortable with the idea of implementing them?

Chapter 3

Determining Priorities and Essential Standards

1. Describe why it is important for teams to engage the critical question, “What do we want students to know and be able to do?” at the *beginning* of the process of developing common assessments.
2. What does it mean for a curriculum to be *guaranteed* and *viable*?
3. Imagine a scenario in which you and a fellow grade-level teacher are both teaching your students about the early twentieth century. While you think it is important to cover a variety of topics from this era, such as women’s rights, technological changes, and the build-up to world war I, your fellow teacher thinks it is better to focus on this period through the lens of Jazz as outcome and commentary. How might you come to consensus on what constitutes proficiency and understanding?
4. While it is important to align the team-developed essential standards with the learning standards the state or province deems important, it can be impossible to cover all state or province standards fully. To ensure students do well on high-stakes tests, is it often better to attempt to cover every state or province standard in a cursory way or to cover a portion of these standards more fully—why?

Chapter 4

Achieving Collective Clarity With the Unwrapping Process

1. What is the *unwrapping* process and how is it important in determining which standards are essential and to the creation of effective common formative assessments?
2. Describe the visual methods outlined in this chapter for identifying the “smaller pieces of learning” that students need to master to reach a standard.
3. Some academic terms include *chronology*, *solution*, *compare*, and *contrast*. Discuss scenarios in which these and other academic terms might be misunderstood by students. Why is it so important to make explicit to students the meaning of the academic terms and other academic language of learning targets?
4. What characterizes *big ideas* of student learning? Describe the process a team might take to identify the big ideas.

Chapter 5

Designing Quality Common Formative Assessments

1. What questions should a team ask itself to identify which learning targets to assess using formative assessments?
2. What are the three types of assessments outlined in this chapter? Please describe the ways each one provides insight into student learning—for instance, how might a *constructed-response* question offer information about student thinking—and how each supports different DOK levels?
3. What does it mean for an assessment to be *valid* and *reliable*, and how does a team ensure that assessments are such? Please give a content-specific example of an assessment that is both valid and reliable?
4. This chapter notes briefly that many educators are concluding that grades do not motivate students to the degree that it has often been believed that they do. While interesting classroom content likely plays an important role in student engagement in learning, do you think formative assessments themselves have the power to help or hinder engagement in learning—why or why not, and if yes, how so?

Chapter 6

Going Deeper—Advanced Processes for Designing Assessments

1. How does *backward-designed unit planning* aid in the development of an integrated system of instruction and assessment that offers clear guideposts to educators as they move through teaching and assessing?
2. Review the seven steps for workflow for backward unit planning in figure 6.2. Which step do you anticipate being most challenging for your team? How will you address those challenges?
3. What is a *proficiency scale* and what does using one accomplish?
4. Please describe the three different types of rubrics. When and how do you imagine you might use each type?

Chapter 7

Using Data to Make a Difference

1. What are the three major ways teams should use data generated from common formative assessments? Please describe how these three ways fit into a tiered system of support.
2. Common formative assessments, when designed and implemented correctly, work to improve student learning. How can they also improve educator learning?
3. Describe what, at your school, characterizes, or would ideally characterize, an environment of relational trust among team members developing common formative assessments—what do team members say and do? What are their norms? What do they *not* do or say?
3. Why is it beneficial to use a protocol to analyze the results of common formative assessments? Describe the four-step protocol outlined in this chapter along with the purpose of each step.

Chapter 8

Building Student Self-Efficacy in Learning

1. This chapter draws a distinction between doing assessments *to* students versus *with* students. Explain how the approaches differ.
2. The chapter outlines how to make a shift to a student-centered culture, clarifying that an important part of this kind of culture is that students know how to use feedback from formative assessments. What are the three questions it suggests educators use with their students to ensure they are supported by formative assessments and can act effectively on their assessment experiences?
3. What are two important strategies to help students understand what quality work looks like?
4. What is the *I Do / We Do / You Do* approach and what role does it play in shifting to a student-centered culture of learning?

Chapter 9

Strengthening and Sustaining the Work

1. What three important questions should teams successfully using common formative assessments ask themselves to continue their pattern of success?
2. How does *collective* decision-making and work drive every other part of the successful development and implementation of common formative assessments?
3. The chapter notes that to sustain effective common formative assessments, teams must be supported. What kinds of support do they need and how can leaders offer this support to their teachers?
4. Celebrating success can sometimes be overlooked as an important part of a process of change. What questions can teams ask themselves to identify their successes? How can school communities celebrate teams and help build collective momentum for the work they are doing?