Professional Learning Community Facilitation Guide:

Formative Assessment

West Virginia Department of Education
Division of Teaching and Learning
October 2016
Introduction

As part of the One Voice. One Focus. All Students Achieving vision plan, West Virginia schools provide a statewide early childhood focus where we teach every child to read, on grade level, by third grade. The WVDE is moving forward with the West Virginia Leaders of Literacy: Campaign for Grade Level Reading through a comprehensive approach to early literacy that includes an emphasis on all content areas of development in school, as well as strengthening school readiness efforts, promoting positive attendance patterns, and providing access to high-quality, sustained extended day and extended year learning opportunities.

Each county in West Virginia has developed a formal plan to address the underlying challenges that can keep young children, especially those from low-income families, from learning to read well:

- School readiness - too many children are entering kindergarten already behind
- School attendance - too many children are missing too many days of school
- Extended learning opportunities - too many children are losing ground academically over the summer
- High quality instruction – while schools cannot do it alone, there is an obligation to support increased teacher expertise which is the factor most closely related to student achievement

The Professional Learning Community (PLC) materials were created for counties and schools to use as part of their efforts to support teacher expertise and ultimately improve upon high quality instruction. The intent of these documents is to provide guidance for teachers seeking to learn more about instruction around foundational reading skills. The editors of these documents hope that teachers feel supported in their endeavors to improve reading instruction for West Virginia children.
Formative Assessment PLC

What is Formative Assessment? WV defines formative assessment as the deliberate process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides actionable feedback used to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students’ achievement of intended outcomes. Throughout the course, participants will explore various types of formative assessments and will be introduced to many formative assessment resources from the WVDE TREE, including the Formative Assessment Toolkit. Participants will understand how to collect and analyze data, reflect and plan for instruction, and effectively communicate assessment results. One session provides information on various data collection tools, how to use them, and what information may be gleaned from each. Participants will learn to analyze data to determine student achievement and will answer the critical question: did students learn what was expected from the activity or lesson? Participants will also learn to use reflection to inform instruction and become reflective problem solvers. The final session reviews the importance of communicating assessment results on an on-going basis to all stakeholders.
# Table of Contents

**Session 1:** What is Formative Assessment .................................................................................................................. 4  
  Overview  
  Goals  
  Potential PLC Activities  
  Discussion Points  

**Session 2:** Using Observation as a Data Collection Tool ......................................................................................... 5  
  Overview  
  Goals  
  Potential PLC Activities  
  Discussion Points  

**Session 3:** Analyzing Data .......................................................................................................................................... 6  
  Overview  
  Goals  
  Potential PLC Activities  
  Discussion Points  

**Session 4:** Reflecting on Instructional Practices ...................................................................................................... 7  
  Overview  
  Goals  
  Potential PLC Activities  
  Discussion Points  

**Session 5:** Planning for Instruction .......................................................................................................................... 8  
  Overview  
  Goals  
  Potential PLC Activities  
  Discussion Points  

**Session 6:** Communicating Assessment Results .................................................................................................... 9  
  Overview  
  Goals  
  Potential PLC Activities  
  Discussion Points
Session 1: What is Formative Assessment?

**Overview:** This session defines Formative Assessment and briefly discusses the importance of using formative assessments to inform instruction. Various types of formative assessments will be introduced. Participants will utilize the WVDE TREE website for the completion of formative assessment session activities including observation, questioning, and discussion strategies.

**Goals:** In this session you will...
- gain an understanding of formative assessment and the importance of its use in the classroom,
- develop strategies and techniques for using formative assessment in the classroom, and
- review various types of formative assessment.

**Potential PLC Activities:**
- Read and discuss *Formative Assessment: A Student Level Planning Process*
  This article describes the formative assessment process and stresses the importance of establishing and communicating learning goals. It also explores the similarities and differences between lesson planning, accountability, and formative assessment.
  **Guiding Question:** What is the planning process for formative assessment?
- Read and discuss *Using the Formative Assessment Rubrics, Reflection, and Observation Tools to Support Professional Reflection on Practice*
  This document provides guidelines and resources for use in observations and reflections to support teacher and student learning. A summary of the ten dimensions of formative assessment is provided as a one-page resource guide.
  **Guiding Question:** What are the three guiding questions associated with formative assessment, and how do these questions support continuous improvement?
- Read and discuss *Assessment FOR Learning*
  This Iowa Dept of Education website provides information regarding the intended purpose of Assessment FOR Learning. Developed by Richard Stiggins, there are seven strategies of Assessment FOR Learning. These are intended to increase progress toward learning targets as well as student motivation and achievement.
  **Guiding Question:** What is the intended purpose of formative assessment?
- Read and discuss *Why Formative Assessments Matter*
  This article provides a description of formative assessment and discusses when and how to use them. Examples of various types of formative assessments are reviewed.
  **Guiding Question:** What is the difference between summative assessments and formative assessments?
- Visit the *WVDE TREE* website and select the Early Learning (P-5) tab at the top. Choose a grade level K-5 and scroll to the (Formative) Assessment Processes section. Select Formative Assessment Process Strategies. This will take you to Examples of Formative Assessment. Review the first three links (Observation, Questioning, and Discussion). **Record** your thoughts about these strategies. Provide a description of each type of formative assessment and list specific ways that you would incorporate it in your classroom.
Discussions:
- Reflect on your readings and classroom practices. How is progress toward learning targets assessed and communicated with students and families?
- What does assessment look like in your classrooms?
- Based on your discussions and readings, how would you define formative assessment?
- How does your current practice compare with what has been presented in the session readings and activities?

Session 2: Using Observation as a Data Collection Tool

Overview: Teachers must know their students for truly meaningful instruction. This session focuses on the process of observing and collecting data. It provides information on various data collection tools, how to use them, and what information may be gleaned from each. After completing various readings, discussions, and visits to the WVDE TREE, you will have the resources and skills to fully understand your students’ needs.

Goals: In this session you will...
- learn the importance of using observation as a data collection tool,
- list the factors to consider when choosing a method of assessment,
- determine formative assessment adaptations that are necessary to ensure developmental and situational appropriateness, and
- understand how to collect data.

Potential PLC Activities:
- Read and discuss Gathering Evidence: Making Student Learning Visible
  This article helps the teacher to determine what the student is learning and how to make that visible. It reviews the difference between direct and indirect evidence as well as qualitative and quantitative data.
  Guiding Question: What are some direct and indirect data that would make learning visible?
- Read and discuss Observation and Early Childhood Teaching
  This article discusses the importance of the teacher as an observer of children. Just as children learn through observation of their environment, teachers also learn as they observe children.
  Guiding Question: How does observing children benefit teachers?
- Read and discuss NCTE Position Statement: Formative Assessment that Truly Informs Instruction
  This paper describes the purposes of assessment, what formative assessment is and is not, and the importance of the teacher’s use of formative assessment in decision making. Formative assessment is a continual process. Teachers must engage in an ongoing analysis of the information.
  Guiding Question: What is the difference between formative and summative assessment?
- Read and discuss Observing Children: A Tool for Assessment
  This article discusses assessment as the process of observing, recording, and documenting children’s growth and behavior over time in order to make decisions about their education. Assessment has many purposes, but it is primarily used in planning developmentally appropriate curriculum.
  Guiding Question: What is meant by the term authentic assessment?
• Visit the WVDE TREE website and select the Early Learning (P-5) tab at the top. Choose a grade level K-5 and scroll to the (Formative) Assessment Processes section. Select Formative Assessment Process Strategies. This will take you to Examples of Formative Assessment. Review the first three links (Exit/Admit Slips, Learning Response Logs, and Graphic Organizers). Record your thoughts about these strategies. Provide a description of each type of formative assessment and list specific ways that you would incorporate it in your classroom.

**Discussions:**
• Reflect on your readings and your current classroom practices. Compile a list of authentic assessment tools you currently utilize. What types of information do you glean by using each of those tools? How do you determine which tool to use in each situation?
• What do you know about conducting observations?
• What are you learning when you observe students?
• What are your strengths and weaknesses when doing observations?
• How do you know what to observe?
• What tool will you utilize to document your observations?

**Session 3: Analyzing Data**

**Overview:** Once teachers have collected assessment data, it is important for them to understand that information. This session focuses on analyzing previously collected data. Also, an analysis reviews the critical question of whether the students actually learned what was expected from the activity or lesson. Throughout the session, you will learn how to complete these tasks using the resources provided in the readings and WVDE TREE.

**Goals:** In this session you will...
• review and analyze data,
• decide what data is useful in determining student learning, and
• determine if students learned the intended information.

**Potential PLC Activities:**
• Read and discuss *Using Data to Improve Student Achievement*
  This article discusses the importance of analyzing data and reviews how that impacts instruction. It discusses 6 steps to effective data use and the importance of using formative assessment to guide instruction.
  **Guiding Question:** How do you decide what data is useful?
• Read and discuss *Analyzing and Using the Data*
  (readings under each of the first three tabs: How will you analyze it? How will you discuss it? How will you use it?)
  This site provides strategies for what to do with data once it has been collected. The purpose in analyzing classroom data is to determine what your students have learned, areas where students may need extra help, and how to plan instruction to ensure that their needs are met. Administrators and teachers must learn to analyze the data and apply this information.
  **Guiding Question:** How do you recognize and use meaningful data?
• Read and discuss *Formative Assessment That Truly Informs Instruction*
  Teachers must have the desire to refine their practice based on an understanding of student performance in order to successfully implement formative assessment. Formative assessment is valuable for teachers, students, and families.

  **Guiding Question:** How is assessment data analyzed?

• Visit the *WVDE TREE* website and select the Early Learning (P-5) tab at the top. Choose a grade level K-5 and scroll to the (Formative) Assessment Processes section. Select Formative Assessment Process Strategies. This will take you to Examples of Formative Assessment. Review the first three links (Peer/Self-Assessments, Practice Presentations, and Visual Representations). Record your thoughts about these strategies. Provide a description of each type of formative assessment and list specific ways that you would incorporate it in your classroom.

**Discussions:**

• Based on the readings and your current practices, what is a data-based decision you’ve made that improved student outcomes? Within your response, provide details pertaining to the situation such as the content area and standards being addressed, student activity assessed, student learning, and the decisions made based on the data.

**Session 4: Reflecting on Instructional Practices**

**Overview:** This session stresses the importance of reflection as a regular teaching practice. It also discusses the use of formative assessment as a foundation for reflection. Readings and discussions will ask you to evaluate your own practice.

**Goals:** In this session you will…

• reflect on your teaching practices,
• learn ways to become a more reflective practitioner, and
• gain an understanding of the importance of reflection.

**Potential PLC Activities:**

• Read and discuss *How Assessment Can Lead to Deeper Learning*
  Reflection invites students and teachers to recognize growth and accomplishments as well as identify opportunities for improvement and development. It is not separate from the learning process: It is an integral step on the path to deeper learning -- it’s assessment as learning.

  **Guiding Question:** How do we know if students are learning?

• Read and discuss *The Reflective Teacher: A Taxonomy of Reflection*
  This article uses Bloom’s Taxonomy as a structure for teacher reflection. It reviews the importance of teacher reflection and suggests questions to help guide reflection.

  **Guiding Question:** How does asking questions help a teacher understand their practice?

• Visit the *WVDE TREE* website and select the Early Learning (P-5) tab at the top. Choose a grade level K-5 and scroll to the (Formative) Assessment Processes section. Select Formative Assessment Process Strategies. This will take you to Examples of Formative Assessment. Review the first three links (Kinesthetic Assessments, Individual Whiteboards, and Laundry Day). Record your thoughts about these strategies. Provide a description of each type of formative assessment and list specific ways that you would incorporate it in your classroom.
**Discussions:**
- Finding time for reflection can be challenging for teachers. John Dewey says “We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience”. Time must be allocated for this important practice.
- Share your plans to add this important practice to your daily routine.
  - What part of the day can you set aside for reflection?
  - How will you record your reflections?
  - How will you use this information?

**Session 5: Planning for Instruction**

**Overview:** Once data is analyzed and reflected upon, teachers can then use the information to inform instruction. This session focuses on the use of data in order to plan the next steps of instruction. Strategies and techniques for differentiating activities in order to meet the needs of all learners will be shared. By the end of the session, you will have used the resources and activities to apply appropriate strategies.

**Goals:** In this session you will…
- gain an understanding of the effective use of data to inform instruction,
- review several instructional strategies, and
- develop a plan for next instructional steps.

**Potential PLC Activities:**
  This chapter discusses how to use formative assessment to plan for instruction. It reviews when and how to adjust instruction in order to achieve learning goals.
  **Guiding Question:** What is the advantage of using formative assessment to guide instruction?

- Read and discuss Using Assessment to Drive Instruction at http://people.virginia.edu/~cat3y/presentations/ASCD09/RexOrlandoBreakouts/AssessFL.pdf
  This presentation guides you through effective ways to use formative assessment to drive instruction. It shows how instruction can be modified based on student assessment.
  **Guiding Question:** How is formative assessment related to summative assessment?

- Read and discuss Using Formative Assessment to Drive Instruction
  This presentation shows the cycle of formative assessment and why it should be used to guide instruction. The graphics and detailed resources will help you plan for purposeful instruction.
  **Guiding Question:** How do you plan to use the cycle of formative assessment?

- Visit the WVDE TREE website and select the Early Learning (P-5) tab at the top. Choose a grade level K-5 and scroll to the (Formative) Assessment Processes section. Select Formative Assessment Process Strategies. This will take you to Examples of Formative Assessment. Review the first three links (Four Corners, Constructive Quizzes, and Think Pair Share). Record your thoughts about these strategies. Provide a description of each type of formative assessment and list specific that ways you would incorporate it in your classroom.
Discussions:
- Using a piece of evidence you have collected, what do you understand about your student’s progress toward meeting targets?
- It is important to use the information gleaned from formative assessments. Based on the information gained about the student’s progress, how do you determine the next instructional steps?
- How do you decide when to reteach a lesson, offer enrichment, or continue with instruction?
- The Critical Questions for Teaching and Learning provide a structure for how to think about student progress in relation to the desired learning targets.

Session 6: Communicating Assessment Results

Overview: This session reviews the importance of communicating assessment results on an ongoing basis with all stakeholders. Strategies for sharing information with students, families, and colleagues are reviewed. The session activities will guide you through the process of effectively communicating formative assessment results.

Goals: In this session you will…
- understand the importance of sharing assessment information with all stakeholders,
- review various strategies for communicating information, and
- will create a plan for sharing assessment results.

Potential PLC Activities:
- Read and discuss Leveling the Playing Field: Sharing Learning Targets and Criteria for Success
  This article discusses strategies teachers can use to share assessment information with their students. It stresses the use of learning targets and strategies for sharing them.
  Guiding Question: Why is it important to share assessment information with students?
- Read and discuss Facilitating Professional Conversations: Data-Driven Planning for the Early Childhood Classroom
  This article shares protocols for having conversations about student achievement. Formative assessment requires a deep understanding of standards and typical developmental progress.
  Guiding Question: When is it appropriate to discuss student achievement?
- Read and discuss Tips for Administrators, Teachers and Families: How to Share Data Effectively
  Once data is collected, it is important to know how to effectively communicate assessment results to various audiences. These tips give you suggestions for data-sharing with families, teachers, and administrators. You will learn how to use these strategies to share student data in meaningful ways to strengthen student, family and community relationships.
  Guiding Question: What are good strategies when sharing assessment data with students, families, and administration?
- Create two letters sharing the assessment results of a focus student. Reference specific learning outcomes based on the instructional activities that you conducted. Communicating assessment results accurately to families and other teachers is a skill that must be developed. The language, tone, and vocabulary used in the discussion, both written and oral, must be taken into account. For the assessment results to be used to close the achievement gap, the information must be effectively communicated.
Discussions:

- Compile a list of items that you would include in a child's portfolio. Describe how each type of formative assessment data gives you a picture of the whole child.
- When communicating formative assessment results with the student, their family, and other teachers, it is important to share specific strengths and weaknesses. Using information from the session readings, how should a teacher communicate student progress with each of the intended audiences (student, family, teachers)?