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MINI-MANUAL

# Planning: Formative Assessment



INSTRUCTIONAL  
COACHING  
GROUP

Jim Knight

For more detailed information regarding the information contained in this mini-manual, refer to:

*High Impact Instruction: A Framework for Great Teaching*

Chapter 3

By Jim Knight

Also view the High Impact Instruction introduction video:



**Planning: Formative Assessment**

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# *Formative Assessment*

*“You can’t tell me that kids don’t want to learn. Sometimes they don’t want to learn the things that adults say they should, ...but once they begin to experience success, that target becomes a whole lot more attractive... We’ve got to find a way to turn them on to the possibilities.”*

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RICHARD STIGGINS

## KEY CONCEPTS FOR COACHES

### FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

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- 1 Quality formative assessment increases student engagement.
- 2 When feedback on progress occurs, student hope increases.
- 3 Analyzing data gives teachers a starting point for adapting instruction.
- 4 Deep understanding and fluent practice of the multiple steps allows even the best teachers areas to improve and refine their skills.

## *Turning Ideas Into Action*

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### STUDENTS

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- 1 Involve students in identifying quality work.
- 2 Involved students in identifying methods of assessment.
- 3 Ask students to assess the assessments.

### TEACHERS

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- 1 Consider adopting a no-learning-gaps policy.
- 2 Find time to collaborate with your peers.
- 3 Commit to working with a coach to master how you share your checks for understanding with students.
- 4 Continually ask self, “Do both my students and I know how well they are doing?”

### INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

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- 1 Offer to serve in the role of “child’s advocate” when you work with teachers.
- 2 Use your smartphone or digital camera to create a library of video clips of teachers using assessments in class.
- 3 Keep copies of teachers’ proficiency forms and share with other teachers.
- 4 Offer to interview students to get their perspectives.

- 5 Offer to be “another set of eyes” to record students responding to formative assessment with the goal of 100% participation.
- 6 Keep a learning journal in which you record how you have helped other teachers change their teaching when students are not learning.
- 7 Develop a deep understanding of all of the teaching practices described in *High Impact Instruction* so you can provide meaningful support.
- 8 Find a professional learning community to learn about how others are helping teachers adapt their instruction to meet the different needs of their students.

## PRINCIPALS

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- 1 Encourage central office decision makers to establish Intensive Learning Teams.
- 2 Lead school-wide and team discussions about formative assessment.
- 3 Fight to get extra planning time so that teachers will have opportunities to develop guiding questions, learning maps, and specific proficiencies
- 4 Hold assessment exhibitions on professional development days.
- 5 Make assessment a part of everyday conversation.
- 6 During conversations with teachers, ask them about their guiding questions and specific proficiencies.
- 7 Consider making assessment for learning a part of the school improvement target.

## *What It Looks Like*



In classrooms where formative assessment is being used well, both teachers and students have an understanding of what they know and can do. Students will appear engaged and challenged in their learning, and teachers generally have a variety of checks for understanding that they have mastered and can use fluently.

## **SIX-STEP PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING ASSESSMENTS FOR LEARNING**

### **ONE: DEVELOP GUIDING QUESTIONS**

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Effective questions should be comprehensive — that is, if students can effectively answer all of the guiding questions for a unit, they should do well on the end-of-unit assessments. Also, questions should be easy for students to understand. (These questions are your Guiding Questions when planning.)

### **TWO: DEVELOP ANSWERS TO THE GUIDING QUESTIONS**

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Prior to teaching, teachers should identify (a) what students need to know to be able to answer the unit question successfully (key aspects of the content should be identified in the Learning Maps), and (b) what students need to be able to do in order to successfully answer each unit question.

### **THREE: WRITE SPECIFIC PROFICIENCIES**

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Once teachers have written answers to the guiding questions, or while they are answering questions, they should create a list of specific proficiencies: short sentences that summarize the content or abilities students need to learn, demonstrate, or master. Good specific proficiencies are (a) partial answers to guiding questions, (b) short, (c) contain one idea, (d) written as complete sentences, and are (e) easily understood by students.

### **FOUR: IDENTIFY INFORMAL ASSESSMENTS**

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Review the list of possible assessments. Identify effective assessments for each specific proficiency. Effective assessments (a) clearly tell students how well they are performing, (b) clearly tell teachers how well all students are performing, (c) are easy to use, and (d) take little time to implement.

### **FIVE: USE ASSESSMENTS EFFECTIVELY**

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During the class, employ the assessments in a way that ensures you are assessing all students.

### **SIX: REVISIT, REFLECT, REVISE**

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After you've used the assessments, and at the end of the unit, consider whether or not the unit questions and the assessments for learning were effective. Where necessary, revise the assessments to make them more effective.

**SPECIFIC PROFICIENCY CHECKLIST**

THE SPECIFIC PROFICIENCY IS...	CHECK
Targeted: ...a partial answer to a guiding question.	
Focused: ...contains one idea.	
Complete: ...written as a complete sentence.	
Short: ...as concise as possible.	
Accessible: ...easily understood by students.	
Comprehensive: ...in combination with all other specific proficiencies, represents a complete answer to the question	

**PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT FORM**

**GUIDING QUESTION**

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SPECIFIC PROFICIENCY	ASSESSMENT

### QUALITY ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

THE INFORMAL ASSESSMENT IS ...	CHECK
Clearly tells students how well they are performing.	
Clearly tells teachers how well all students are performing.	
Is easy to use.	
Takes little time to implement.	

### CHECKLIST FOR USING ASSESSMENTS EFFECTIVELY

USE ASSESSMENTS EFFECTIVELY TO ...	CHECK
Ensure that all students respond.	
Develop a group response ritual.	
Ask students to explain their responses.	
Use effective questioning techniques.	
Reinforce students as they respond.	
Read nonverbal cues.	
Create a mistake-friendly culture.	
Consider giving students progress charts.	

PLANNING: FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

I DO IT, WE DO IT, YOU DO IT

I DO IT	CHECK
Review prior learning.	
Explain why today's learning is important.	
Tell students what they need to do.	
Think out loud.	
Problem solve.	
Attack the challenge in different ways.	
Address categories of error that arose in the previous day's work.	

WE DO IT	CHECK
Ask the students how to do what they are learning.	
Call on several students to explain how to do the task being learned.	
Ask students to explain their thinking.	
Shape students' responses (connect and redirect).	
Encourage students with praise for effort.	
Assess student understanding (perhaps with a quick assessment like response cards).	
Reteach if necessary.	

YOU DO IT	CHECK
Let students perform independently.	
Give brief constructive feedback.	
Give feedback on the fly.	
Identify categories of error if students haven't mastered the learning.	
Plan how to address the categories of error in the next lesson.	