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# Faculty Learning Community - Module 2

## Checking for Understanding & Providing Feedback

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As instructors, it's critical that we constantly anticipate and work to prevent gaps between **what we think we're teaching** and **what is actually being learned** in the classroom. In the field of education, the continuous monitoring of learning, with the goal of closing this gap, is usually referred to as "formative assessment."

Formative assessment is different from "summative assessment." It is used not to measure students' success in reaching official course outcomes or standards but, rather, to assess and improve one's own instructional techniques and to help students monitor their own learning.

High-impact formative assessment practices include, for instance:

- Frequently stopping and checking for student understanding with a wide range of strategies to assess whether instructional practices have been effective; adjusting instruction pace and approach if students seem lost. (Rosenshine p)
- Pausing a lecture every 15 minutes or so and giving students substantial opportunity for guided practice (small steps) to try out the process that you're modeling; then providing corrective feedback so that the students know if they are right or wrong (and why) before you move on. (Rosenshine p)
- Incorporating "metacognitive" (self-assessment) opportunities within your instruction so that students learn to check their own understanding of content and develop awareness about the effectiveness of their own learning strategies. (Nicol and Macfarlan-Dick p)
- Providing clear expectations (e.g., goals, criteria, example work, etc.) for student performance as well as specific, actionable feedback so that students understand what their performance gap is and have tools to improve it. (Sadler p)

The videos in this Brightspace module focus on various practices that MSUN instructors have developed to check for understanding and ensure quick, direct feedback opportunities so both the instructor and the students have the information they need to improve the teaching and learning environment on a continual basis. Please let OTLE know if you would like to share any of your own strategies for future instructor snapshots!

## Helpful Resources

**Angelo, Thomas A. and K. Patricia Cross. *Classroom Assessment Techniques. A Handbook for College Teachers*. 2nd ed. San Francisco, CA: 1993.** This guide to classroom assessment is a classic in the field of teaching and learning. It walks instructors through a goal-setting process and then offers dozens of “CATs” (Classroom Assessment Techniques) that align with different kinds of teaching goals. Whether instructors want to completely revamp their approach or adopt a few quick strategies, this is an excellent resource. It is available in the OTLE (hard copy).

**Fisher, Doug and Nancy Frey. *Checking for Understanding: Formative Assessment Techniques for Your Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2007.** Disclaimer: the book cover is terrible, but don't let it scare you off. This resource is technically geared toward K12 instruction, but it does a great job of explaining why it's so important to check for student understanding on a frequent basis. Each chapter tackles a different method for checking for understanding: through oral language, questioning, writing, projects, performances, and tests. Most importantly, the last half of each chapter dissects common teaching moves that are relatively unproductive and introduces specific strategies to use instead. The MSUN Library has the ebook version.

**Nicol, David J. and Debra Macfarlane-Dick. “Formative Assessment and Self-Regulated Learning: A Model and Seven Principles of Good Feedback Practice.” *Studies in Higher Education* 31.2 (2006): 199-218.** This article focuses on the feedback side of formative assessment. The authors use research to create a conceptual model for developing self-regulation skills in learners, rather than leaving all feedback responsibility to instructors. The “seven principles of good feedback practices” that they present at the end are well described and help instructors gain a clear sense of concrete strategies that help strengthen students' capacity to self-regulate their own class performance. The article is available in Brightspace in the “Resources Cited” area of Module 2.

**Rosenshine, Barak. “Principles of Instruction: Research-Based Strategies That All Teachers Should Know.” *American Educator* 36.1 (2012): 12-19.** This is a user-friendly resource that offers ten research-based instructional principles and explains methods for carrying them out. It is somewhat K12 centered in terms of the studies it references. However, it provides very concrete examples of high-impact classroom practices that make them easy to imagine and implement. Several of these practices fall under the “formative assessment” category. The article is available in Brightspace in the “Resources Cited” area of Module 2.

**Sadler, D. Royce. “Formative Assessment and the Design of Instructional Systems.” *Instructional Science* 18 (1989): 119-44.** This article lays the groundwork for much of the research that has been conducted over the past few decades on the role of feedback in learning environments. One of the key takeaways from the framework proposed in this article is that students must possess some of the instructor's “judgment” and “assessment” ability in order to act upon instructor feedback and improve their own performance. The authors provide some helpful insight into how instructors can involve learners more actively in the feedback process. The article is available in Brightspace in the “Resources Cited” area of Module 2.