

Indicators of a quality formative assessment

1. Focuses on attributes of the student's work rather than attributes of the student as a learner ("here is how to make your writing more effective" rather than "try harder")
2. Is descriptive of that work, revealing to the student how to do better the next time, rather than judgmental
3. Is clearly understood by the intended user, leading to specific inferences as to what is needed
4. Is sufficiently detailed to be helpful yet not so comprehensive as to overwhelm
5. Arrives in time to inform the learning, versus too late

Assessment for Learning, the Achievement Gap, and Truly Effective Schools, Rick Stiggins, ETS Assessment Training Institute (Sept, 2008)

Indicators of a quality performance assessment

1. The assessment is clearly aligned to selected standards and/or benchmarks
2. The assessment requires the student to apply his or her learning to a new situation
3. The student cannot do well on the assessment by making clever guesses
4. The student cannot do well on the assessment by parroting back or plugging in what was learned, with accurate recall but with limited or no understanding
5. The student cannot do well on the assessment by making a good-faith effort, with lots of hard work and enthusiasm, but with limited understanding

6. The student cannot do well on the assessment by producing lovely products and performances, but with limited understanding
7. The student cannot do well on the assessment by applying natural ability to be articulate, but with limited understanding of the content in question
8. The student cannot fail the assignment if he/she has a deep understanding of the big ideas or enduring understandings (the task is a strong match to the relevant goals)

ASCD Understanding By Design Workbook p. 180 (2004)

Indicators of teachers who assess for learning through formative assessment

1. They understand and articulate in advance of teaching the achievement targets that their students are to hit
2. They inform students about those learning goals, in terms that students understand, from the very beginning of the teaching and learning process
3. They become assessment literate and thus are able to transform their expectations into assessment exercises and scoring procedures that accurately reflect student achievement
4. They use classroom assessments to build students' confidence in themselves as learners and help them take responsibility for their own learning, so as to lay a foundation for lifelong learning
5. They translate classroom assessment results into frequent descriptive feedback (versus judgmental feedback) for students, providing them with specific insights as to how to improve
6. They engage students in regular self-assessment, with standards held constant so that students can watch themselves grow over time and thus feel in charge of their own success
7. They actively involve students in communicating with their teacher and their families about their achievement status and improvement

Assessment Crisis: The Absence of Assessment for Learning, Richard Stiggins (June 2002)