



# Formative Assessment

## A White Paper

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The history of formative assessment, also known as assessment for learning, is nothing new. Educators have utilized some aspect of formative assessment for decades, but only over the last 15 years have the true benefits been realized and major emphasis placed upon implementing it into classrooms. Why is this the case? Besides the rapid growth in educational research, both quantitatively and qualitatively, educational technology has played a critical role. As the Department of Education and Skills – *2020 Vision: Report of the Teaching and Learning in 2020 Review Group*, states (2006):

...As much richer data have become available, it [formative assessment] has become a more important and sharper tool, aided by developments in technology. It is not an occasional activity at the end of a unit of work, but a complex, joint activity between teacher and pupil. It helps teachers identify what pupils have or have not achieved, while pupils increase their understanding of the standard expected, their progress towards it and what they need to do to reach it. All this provides information to help teachers adjust their teaching... (Department of Education and Skills, 2006).

At Thinkgate, we are proud to be a part of the technological innovations related to formative assessment for over five years. Our core principle of “Revolutionizing Education” has guided us into creating one of the most robust assessment and data systems available. As such,



we have developed relationships with a vast array of school districts across the southeast to improve student achievement.

In order to impact student achievement, Marzano (2003) states that feedback must have two specific characteristics: it must be timely; and, it must be specific to the content being learned. Marzano goes on to recommend three action steps related to formative assessment as found in *What Works in Schools* (2003):

1. “Implement an assessment system that provides timely feedback on specific knowledge and skills for specific students” (p. 39);
2. “Establish specific, challenging achievement goals for the school as a whole” (p. 40);
3. “Establish specific goals for individual students” (p. 46).

With the comprehensive nature of Elements™ each action step above can be implemented throughout every school system, including each school, classroom, teacher and student. School systems have the ability to create district-wide assessments, either as benchmarks or pre/post exams. When each assessment is given results become immediate as every test is scored. Teachers and administrators can view results related to a multitude of factors in a timely fashion and gain the insight needed to better evaluate and instruct every student thru their own classroom level assessments and other instructional means. As Chappuis and Chappuis (2007) state, “assessment for learning in the classroom offers a number of distinct benefits:

1. The timeliness of results enables teachers to adjust instruction quickly, while learning is in progress;
2. The students who are assessed are the ones who benefit from the adjustments;



3. The students can use the results to adjust and improve their own learning” (p. 19).

As a result, true data-based decision making can proceed to establish direction for every class, content area and grade-level thru the development of learning goals which are rigorous and linked to the curriculum. Ultimately, this leads to the creation of individual student plans, which can be comprised of every content standard a student has mastered or not mastered, along with goals, objectives and strategies that both teacher and student can implement.

Formative assessment is critical to enhancing student achievement. Elements™ can assist educators with enacting a comprehensive, efficient and quality formative assessment program by which all educators have the necessary data to make informed decisions and every student benefits through understanding their own strengths and weaknesses. This is when true and lasting change begins.

### References

Chappuis, S., & Chappuis, J. (2007). The best value in formative assessment. *Educational Leadership, 65(4)*, 14-19.

Department of Education and Skills. (2006). *2020 Vision: Report of the Teaching and Learning in 2020 Review Group*. London: Author.

Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.