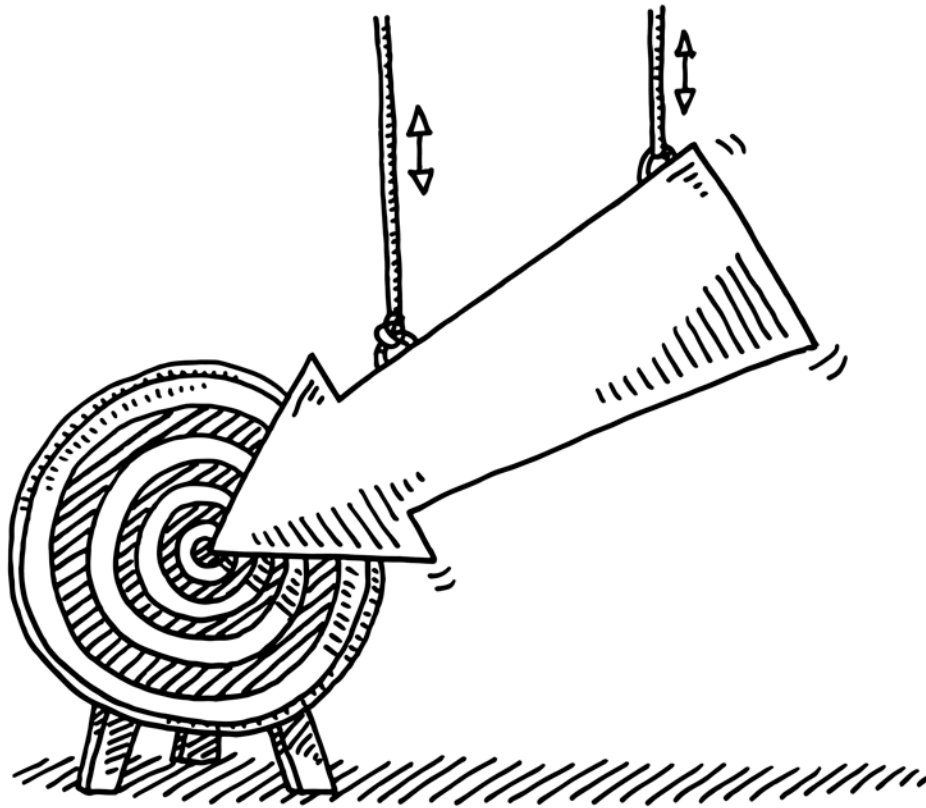


Developing Learning Targets:
Helping Students and Teachers Aim for and Assess Understanding



2015 Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)-RtII Implementers' Forum
June 29, 2015
PaTTAN,
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Dr. Connie M. Moss
Duquesne University School of Education
406 Canevin Hall • Pittsburgh, PA 15282 • 412-396-4433 • moss@duq.edu

What is Formative Assessment? (Moss & Brookhart, 2012, pg. 6)

“An active and intentional learning process that partners the teacher and the students to continuously and systematically gather evidence of learning with the express goal of improving student achievement”. (Moss & Brookhart, 2009, pg. 6).

What are the three guiding questions of the formative assessment process?



1. Where am I headed?
2. Where am I now?
3. What can I do to close the gap between where I am and where I need to go?

A Learning Target Theory of Action in a “Nutshell”



“The most effective teaching and the most meaningful student learning happen when teachers design the right learning target for today’s lesson and use it along with their students to aim for and assess understanding.” (Moss & Brookhart, 2012, p.9).

What Does It Mean to Sit in the Student’s Seat?



When planning, teaching, or observing a lesson using a learning target theory of action, educator’s should “sit in the student’s seat” by framing the lesson from the student’s-eye-view and be able to answer the following questions as the student:

- ✓ *What am I supposed to be able to do at the end of the lesson?*
- ✓ *What must I learn to be able to do it?*
- ✓ *How will I be asked to show I can do it?*
- ✓ *How well will I have to do it?*
- ✓ *How confident am I that I can?*

Aiming for Achievement of What? (Moss & Brookhart, 2012, pg. 154).



“Aiming for achievement means that you are looking for evidence of “something”. A learning target theory of action makes that “something” in today’s lesson and every lesson, public and visible.”

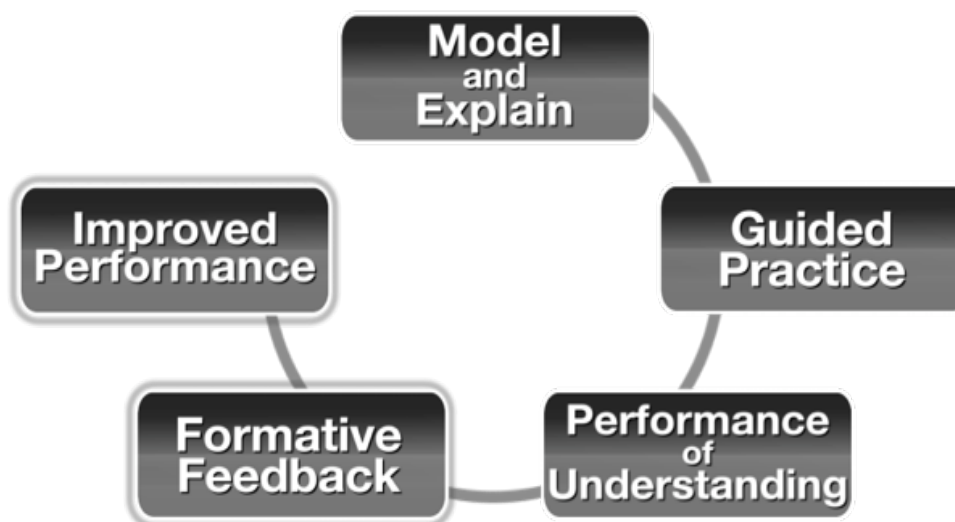


Moss & Brookhart, 2015: *Formative Walkthroughs: How Principals and Teachers Collaborate to Raise Student Achievement*

1. Describes for students—via words, pictures, actions, or some combination of the three—exactly what they are going to learn by the end of today’s lesson.
2. Describes learning in developmentally appropriate language that the student can understand.
3. Is stated from the point of view of a student who has yet to master the content, skill or process that makes up the target.
4. Is connected to the specific performance of understanding for today’s lesson—what the teacher will ask the students to **do, make, say, or write**—that will deepen their understanding, help them aim for mastery of the learning target, allow them to self-assess the quality of their learning, and provide both the teacher and student with evidence of the student’s level of understanding.
5. Contains student look-fors—criteria the students can use to judge how close they have come to the target in language that describes mastery of the target, rather than in grading or scoring language (letters, points, numbers, percentage right, number correct, etc.).

[illegible]

What role does the formative learning cycle play in a learning target? (Moss & Brookhart, 2012; 2015)



Copyright: ASCD

Moss & Brookhart, 2015: *Formative Walkthroughs: How Principals and Teachers Collaborate to Raise Student Achievement*

You can't have a learning target without the formative learning cycle

✧ A formative learning cycle has five phases:

1. **Model and Explain:** The teacher helps students aim for understanding of the learning intention by sharing the learning target, performance of understanding and student look-fors.
2. **Guided Practice:** The teacher scaffolds learning, helps students set goals for their learning and models how to use the look fors to self-assess to prepare them for their independent work.
3. **Performance of Understanding:** The teacher continues to feed the learning forward as students develop more sophisticated understandings and apply their look-fors to focus their learning and self-improvement efforts.
4. **Formative Feedback:** Students receive descriptive information about what they did well and suggestions for exactly what they should do next to increase their understanding and skill and improve the quality of their work.
5. **Chance to Use the Feedback to Improve Performance:** Students get the “golden second chance” to attempt part (or all) of the performance again, this time advantage of being able to apply the strategies and feed forward insights from the formative feedback.

What are the characteristics of a Performance of Understanding?



Copyright: ASCD

Moss & Brookhart, 2015: *Formative Walkthroughs: How Principals and Teachers Collaborate to Raise Student Achievement*

A Performance of Understanding is what students do, say, make or write **during today's lesson**. Its purpose is to deepen students' understanding of the content *and* produce compelling evidence of what students understand and/or can do that both the teacher and the students can use to plan next steps along the journey toward mastery. A performance of understanding has the following five characteristics:

1. Its design incorporates the teacher's understanding of students as well as the content area for today's lesson, and takes into account formative assessment information from previous lesson(s).
2. **It serves an instructional purpose**: to deepen students' understanding of the targeted content/skill for today's lesson.
3. **It serves a formative assessment purpose**: to produce compelling evidence of what students understand and/or can do that both the teacher *and the students* can use to assess where students are (what they know and what they need to learn more about), feed their learning forward, and plan next steps along their journey toward mastery.
4. It provides **the students** and the teacher with things to "look for" (success criteria) that are about learning (the quality of student understanding and proficiency), not assignment completion or grading.
5. It translates the learning target for today's lesson into action for students by providing students the opportunity to try out the learning target and apply their look-fors **during today's lesson**.

What are Student Look-Fors? (Moss & Brookhart, 2015).



Copyright: ASCD

Moss & Brookhart, 2015: *Formative Walkthroughs: How Principals and Teachers Collaborate to Raise Student Achievement*

Student look-fors are descriptions of characteristics of quality that students can, literally, look for in their work and have the following characteristics:

1. The criteria must connect to the learning target for today's lesson.
2. The look-fors must be about learning rather than assignment completion.
3. The criteria should apply to more than one assignment or assessment—if criteria describe learning, the quality should generalize to other similar work (e.g., "My sentences all end with periods," not "I put a period after *boy*"; "I labeled my answers," not "I wrote 'square inches' after all the area problems." [OR – if the criteria are specific to the performance of understanding, is it because the learning is specific, too (e.g., "I can describe the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad")]).
4. The look-fors should be appropriate for the level of student understanding, observable to both the teacher and the students (publicly stated), and definable in terms *students* can understand and use to judge the quality of their performance.
5. The criteria should be distinct from one another—if there is more than one look-for do they communicate that there are specific aspects of the performance or product that can be regulated and assessed for quality?
6. The criteria must form a complete set—When taken together (if there is more than one) do they describe the whole of the learning outcomes the performance is intended to develop and assess?
7. The criteria should exist along a continuum of quality—Do they describe what great, good, and less than good work look like so that students can self-assess and set next step goals to improve their work?

What are the characteristics of quality feedback? (Moss & Brookhart, 2015).

Copyright: ASCD

Moss & Brookhart, 2015: *Formative Walkthroughs: How Principals and Teachers Collaborate to Raise Student Achievement*

Quality feedback works at each of the three levels—the micro view, the snapshot view and the long view:



The micro view: Assess the individual elements of the feedback.

- ✧ Is it descriptive?
- ✧ Is it timely?
- ✧ Does it contain the right amount of information?
- ✧ Does it compare the students' work to the student look-fors?
- ✧ Does it focus on the work?
- ✧ Does it focus on the process used to complete the work?
- ✧ Is it positive?
- ✧ Is it clear **to the student**?
- ✧ Is it specific enough to support learning but not so specific that the work is done for the student?



The snapshot view: Assess the feedback as an episode of learning:

- ✧ Did the student learn something from the feedback?
- ✧ Did the teacher learn something from the feedback?



The long view: Assess the feedback for its support of future learning:

- ✧ Did the student get an immediate opportunity to use the feedback?
- ✧ Did the feedback result in an observable improvement in student work?

Reference

Moss, C.M., & Brookhart, S.M. (2015) *Formative Classroom Walkthroughs: How Principals and Teachers Collaborate to Raise Student Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Moss, C.M., & Brookhart, S.M. (2015) *Learning Targets: Helping Students Aim for Understanding in Today's Lesson*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.