What do we mean by formative and summative assessment? (and a few other terms)

Formative Assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students’ achievement of intended instructional outcomes.

Council of Chief School Officers

Summative vs. Formative Assessments

With summative assessments, students are evaluated upon completion of the work and the focus is on the final product. With formative assessments, students are evaluated during the work process and the focus is on improving the process. For example, a summative assessment would be a state achievement test and a formative assessment would be a teacher response to journal entries.

National Council of Teachers of English

Formative assessment

Ongoing observations and methods of evaluation designed to measure student comprehension of a concept or task in order to identify areas that require enhanced or adapted instruction.

Formative assessment emphasizes the mastery of classroom content instead of the earning of grades or test scores. Formative assessment is conducted throughout the entire instructional process to gauge students’ progress. Results are then used to adapt instruction to meet students’ needs. These adaptations can include reviewing material, alternative approaches to instruction, and additional practice. Feedback is also used to help students achieve their learning goals and takes the form of specific suggestions for improvement and discussion of errors rather than merely providing the correct answer.

Examples of formative assessments include journals, learning logs, the minute paper, concept maps, directed summarization, anecdotal records, diagnostic tests, and quizzes.

Summative assessment

Evaluation administered at the conclusion of a unit of instruction to comprehensively assess student learning and the effectiveness of an instructional method or program.

LEARNNC, University of North Carolina
Teachers can build in many opportunities to assess how students are learning and then use this information to make beneficial changes in instruction. This diagnostic use of assessment to provide feedback to teachers and students over the course of instruction is called **formative assessment**. It stands in contrast to **summative assessment**, which generally takes place after a period of instruction and requires making a judgment about the learning that has occurred (e.g., by grading or scoring a test or paper).

Carol Boston, “The Concept of Formative Assessment,”

**Assessment for learning**: Assessment for learning is formative, and involves both teachers and students in ongoing dialogue, descriptive feedback, and reflection throughout instruction.

**Assessment of learning**: Assessment of learning is summative, and involves determining the quality of the learning that has taken place at the end of a unit or theme, term, semester, or school year. Specific learning outcomes and standards are reference points, and grade levels may be the benchmarks for reporting.

**Formative assessment**: Formative assessment is the process of gathering ongoing information (what teachers see and hear) during instruction to determine what students know and can do, and to provide descriptive feedback to improve learning and inform teaching. Feedback is generally directly connected to student learning goals and referenced to student-generated criteria.

**Summative assessment**: Summative assessment is the celebration, summary, evaluation, or judgement reached at the end of a topic, theme, unit, semester, term, or school year based on performances/products and formative assessment data.

Manitoba Department of Education (Canada)

**Assessment FOR learning** turns the classroom assessment process and its results into an instructional intervention designed to increase, not merely monitor, student learning.

Rick Stiggins, ETS/ATI
Read more at [http://www.assessmentinst.com/forms/PL10-05Chappuis.pdf](http://www.assessmentinst.com/forms/PL10-05Chappuis.pdf)
**Informal Assessment**: A non-standard measurement a teacher uses to learn what a student is able to do in a certain area of literacy. The teacher interprets the results and uses those results to plan instruction (e.g., dialog journal entry, reading response, journal, retellings, running records, checklists, anecdotal records, conferencing).

Kansas Department of Education

**Formal** tests *may* be standardized. They are designed to be given according to a standard set of circumstances, they have time limits, and they have sets of directions which are to be followed exactly.

**Informal** tests generally do not have a set of standard directions - they have a great degree of flexibility in how they are administered. They are constructed by teachers and have unknown validity and reliability.

*Just Read, Florida!*