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## Spotlight On...Formative Assessment: Eliciting Evidence of Student Learning

“Definitions of formative assessment vary, but few disagree about its central characteristic: its power to yield information about what students are learning while they’re learning it.”  
(Gewertz, 2015)

As Gewertz notes above, central to the process of formative assessment is the importance of eliciting evidence of student learning. Wiliam and Leahy (2015) summarize this aspect of formative assessment this way, “To teach well, we have to find out what students already know. But students do not always learn what we teach. That’s why finding out what students do know is essential to good teaching.”

Teachers can employ a variety of methods to elicit evidence of student learning. These methods can happen at different points in time, including prior to, during and after instruction has occurred. Regardless of when the evidence is collected, it is crucial that the evidence be clearly aligned to the established learning goals. The following table outlines 5 major categories into which methods of gathering evidence of student learning fall. The table includes a summary of each category and examples of typical methods found in the category.

Category	Summary	Methods
<b>Pre-Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies students’ prior knowledge and the depth of that knowledge</li> <li>Identifies gaps in understanding and misconceptions</li> <li>Clarifies where to begin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge activation techniques, like knowledge rating charts and KWLs</li> <li>Quick Writes</li> <li>Entrance Tickets</li> <li>Carousel brainstorming</li> </ul>
<b>Discussion &amp; Dialogue</b>	Provide opportunities for teachers to	All student response routines like:

The dialogue between pupils and a teacher should be thoughtful, reflective, focused to evoke and explore understanding and conducted so that all pupils have an opportunity to think and to express their ideas.

~Black & Wiliam, 1998



The best way to find out what students are thinking is by talking to them.

~Wiliam & Leahy, 2015

	<p>understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What students know</li> <li>• What strategies students are using</li> <li>• How students are thinking</li> </ul> <p>Provide opportunities for students to clarify understanding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “No Hands”</li> <li>• “Popsicle Sticks”</li> <li>• Think-Pair-Shares</li> <li>• Dry Erase Boards</li> <li>• Digital Posts</li> </ul> <p>Use of discussion protocols like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Here’s What, So What, Now What</li> <li>• Confirming &amp; Surprising Ideas</li> </ul>
<b>Questioning</b>	<p>Questions can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illuminate what and how students are thinking</li> <li>• Aid cognitive depth of understanding</li> <li>• Assist students in connecting new learning to prior knowledge</li> <li>• Contribute to creating a learning culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open ended and higher order thinking questions</li> <li>• Question shells and stems to foster conversation</li> <li>• Question sequences to scaffold and deepen understanding</li> </ul>
<b>Written Work</b>	<p>Written work offers teachers information about students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know</li> <li>• Need help understanding</li> <li>• Have questions about</li> </ul>	<p>Written work can take a variety of forms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawing</li> <li>• Text annotations</li> <li>• Graphic organizers</li> <li>• Dialogue journals</li> <li>• Exit tickets</li> </ul>



The test of a good teacher is not how many questions he can ask his pupils that they will answer readily, but how many questions he inspires them to ask him which he finds it hard to answer.

-Alice Wellington Rollins



<b>Observations</b>	Insights about students' learning are provided by watching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kids are doing</li> <li>• How they are doing it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anecdotal notes</li> <li>• Sticky notes</li> <li>• Data logs and checklists</li> <li>• Conferences and conversations</li> </ul>
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## Digital Resources

### [Classroom Formative Assessment in Action](#)

This video segment from The Teaching Channel shows a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher employing the formative assessment process with her students. The video spans identifying success criteria, eliciting evidence, interpreting evidence and acting on the evidence as her students engage in a collaborative discussion about a piece of text.

### [Tools for Eliciting Evidence](#)

The Illinois Department of Education has created a formative assessment resource that includes a collection of tools that can assist teachers in eliciting evidence of student learning.

## Professional Texts

The term “text” has evolved in recent years to include much more than just traditional books. Text refers to information communicated through a variety of modes, including written, visual and oral formats. This month, the suggested professional “texts” present some new formats—one is a webinar and one is a podcast.

### [Formative Assessment in Secondary Level Classrooms](#)

In this webinar produced by NCTE, the use of formative assessment for eliciting evidence of student learning across content area classrooms is explored. Specific examples of practices teachers can employ are described.

### [Informative Assessment](#)

This 2007 ASCD podcast by Chief Editor Marge Schirra explains the power of formative assessment to guide teaching and learning. Schirra also recommends an Educational Leadership article by Carol Tomlinson entitled [Learning to Love Assessment](#) in which Tomlinson describes formative assessment as an informative journey.

## Upcoming Professional Development from the Maine DOE

To explore potential training sessions that may be of interest, be sure to check our extensive list of professional development offerings at

[www.maine.gov/doe/calendar/](http://www.maine.gov/doe/calendar/)



Teachers affect eternity; no one can tell where their influence stops.

~Henry Brooks Adams

## Literature for Children and Adolescents

A number of high quality pieces of children's and adolescent literature will hit the big screen in 2016. Seeing books students have read and loved in movie format is exciting. Additionally, the movie version of a narrative is often an enticement to read the book and aligns to reading standards. These upcoming productions might be worth reading in the coming months.

### **Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children**

**Based on:** *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* by Ransom Riggs

**Expected release date:** March 4, 2016

### **Allegiant: Part 1**

**Based on:** *Allegiant* by Veronica Roth (if you have *Divergent*, it may be time to revisit)

**Expected release date:** March 18, 2016

### **The Jungle Book**

**Based on:** *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling

**Expected release date:** April 2016

### **The BFG**

**Based on:** *The BFG* by Roald Dahl (film by Stephen Spielberg)

**Expected release date:** July 1, 2016

### **Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them**

**Based on:** *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* by J.K. Rowling

**Expected release date:** November 18, 2016

### **Let It Snow**

**Based on:** *Let It Snow* by John Green (could teach any of several novels by John Green and compare to this film)

**Expected release date:** December 9, 2016

**For additional information about this edition, email:**

[leeann.larsen@maine.gov](mailto:leeann.larsen@maine.gov) or [morgan.dunton@maine.gov](mailto:morgan.dunton@maine.gov)

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