

Addressing Early Stage Implementation Challenges in Formative Assessment

The following table outlines ways to directly address initial (or lingering) misconceptions about formative assessment

Typical misconceptions	What you might hear	Possible underlying issue(s)	Strategies to resolve misconceptions
Misperception of the definition of formative assessment, and/or a belief they are already good teachers and therefore, don't need to learn this.	"I already do this." "This is just good instruction."	Many teachers come to this work with different definitions of formative assessment most of which involve something a teacher does. But formative assessment actually involves a shift in the student role, such that students demonstrate ownership and "agency" in their learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore evidence of current practice: Work with teachers to develop a practice of noticing how students are learning through the use of daily noticing and sensemaking. • Engage students in providing evidence: Have students complete the SAIL Mod 1 survey and explore the results with the teacher.
When shown exemplars, either in text or video form, teachers have difficulty seeing formative assessment.	"I'm sorry, but I just don't see what is different."	Formative assessment is a practice that involves teachers and students interpreting evidence to guide instruction. More often than not, the evidence teachers use to inform or make decisions is not visible to, or known by, students. This is also <i>extremely difficult</i> to see in videos.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share your instructional vision: Be ready to articulate how your emerging vision of instruction includes new ways to have students make learning visible, or new ways for students to own their learning. • Deepen knowledge: Share your emerging knowledge about the research around the importance of students moving out of compliance modes so they can <i>learn how to learn</i>.
Lack of belief that the exemplar practices represented in professional learning resources could be possible for their students.	"Those aren't my kids." "Sure, put me in a suburban classroom and my kids would do that too."	A major shift in formative assessment is for teachers to create new instructional routines, and let go of others, that shift the student role away from a compliance orientation and increase learning behaviors for most or all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with leaders: Be sure you have touched base with leaders about their goals for formative assessment and that you can confidently communicate these goals.
Perception by teachers that they would "get in trouble" for doing formative assessment.	"This doesn't align with our model for teacher evaluation." "Sure, our coach is pushing this, but our principal tells us to do something different."	Many current policies and practices, including grading and reporting practices, teacher evaluation review policies, and required use of pacing guides, must be reviewed in order to fully implement formative assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep track of challenges to implementation: Share identified challenges with school and district leaders and keep track of these as they emerge. Communicate when and how these issues are discussed and resolved.