

# District and Charter Leaders' Role in Formative Assessment

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Stepping back into a learning role also makes leadership more fun. It's about growth and empowering others—and in a time when there's administrative turnover as well as teacher turnover, it helps sustain people because they know you believe in them and have a vested interest in their growth.

~ **ADE Formative Assessment Working Group**

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## A Picture of Practice

District and charter leaders strengthen their knowledge and commitment to formative assessment by collectively engaging others in learning and reflection, garnering enthusiasm, and supporting all school staff. They communicate the global perspective and vision of student-centered learning and assessment to all district staff and education partners. District and charter leaders work closely with other leaders to connect their current practices to formative assessment.

District and charter leaders work with education partners to evaluate and improve their overall assessment system, eliminating unnecessary and redundant assessment tools and requirements to create space for the implementation of authentic formative assessment. They review and revise policies and practices that inhibit implementation and develop structures, like professional learning groups, that support collaboration and learning.

District and charter leaders endorse, model, and coach to support successful formative assessment implementation across schools. They leverage a shared vision to ensure safe, intellectual learning cultures for all staff and cultivate a shared model of learning and assessment to empower agile execution by educators and leaders. District and charter leaders are active members of learning communities to ensure an ongoing commitment to effective formative assessment practices that move the needle on long-term student achievement.

## How Does the District or Charter Leader Role Shift?

While many district and charter leaders agree on the student-centered learning and assessment they want in schools, enacting this vision requires a shift in mindsets about what formative assessment is and is not, a belief in the possibility of success for all students, and an understanding of how to create systems that support best practices. District and charter leaders support school site leaders and teachers to attain desired educational goals by holding this vision and engaging in the practice of welcoming, empowering, and supporting the diverse academic and language needs of all students. They work to build collective will for students to have rigorous and relevant educational opportunities. To make this happen, everyone collectively and collaboratively learns together to develop the skills needed to reach all students and create a culture of teaching and learning through formative assessment.

## How Does This Shift Support Learning for All Students?

This shift supports a vision for all learners by empowering district and charter leaders to engage in individual and collective reflection on how their district or charter system contributes to or hinders student learning and development. By identifying existing programs and policies that may hinder learning or negatively impact students, leaders can clear the way for formative assessment systems that provide effective learning opportunities for all students. Through their reflection and analysis, they can establish coherence among systems and align formative assessment implementation to key district goals, such as improving student learning and ensuring opportunities for site-based professional learning.

## How Do Systems Grounded in Formative Assessment Look and Sound?

**You would see** district and charter leaders working with site leaders to define formative assessment, focusing on what it looks like in practice. They would share a clear vision about how to move it forward, including creating the time, space, and funding for formative assessment work to happen at all levels.

**You would hear** district and charter leaders sharing their expectation that formative assessment be *the foundational practice* of their district or charter system. They would do this by codifying, communicating, and modeling the core values of formative assessment. District and charter leaders would be learners with an equal voice and would communicate how they plan to evaluate success to ensure sustainability.

## District and Charter Leader Success Criteria

- Design formative assessment systems that provide opportunities for all to participate by creating the time, resources, and funding for formative assessment to be understood, practiced, and implemented with sustained fidelity.
- Communicate the vision and purpose of formative assessment and provide clear expectations for school communities, building collective will.

- Build teacher capacity by providing professional learning and materials on formative assessment-informed instruction so all students can access a respectful and effective learning environment.
- Audit and manage district and site assessments to allow space for authentic formative assessment practices.
- Work toward implementation of formative assessment practices through ongoing and sustained efforts.

## Discussion Questions

- How does your current district or charter vision align with formative assessment values and practices?
- What systems, policies, and practices do you need to implement (or eliminate) to make formative assessment successful in your district or charter system?
- What does a districtwide focus on formative assessment look, sound, and feel like for your school, district, and community?
- What supports do educators need to engage in formative assessment?