# Students use the Formative Assessment Feedback Loop

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At this point in time, when so many teachers and students are learning how to work together online, teachers are trying to clearly communicate roles and responsibilities, expectations, and goals. It is a challenge to get everyone on the same page. Joe Nelson and James Ballew, two high school teachers in Tulsa, Ok, use specific strategies to support developing common understandings of learning structures. This work puts them at the forefront of thinking through how to utilize and communicate formative assessment learning structures online.

Where to begin

Starting on day one of the fall semester, 2020, Joe, James, and their colleague, Taylor Pride wanted their students to have a bigger picture understanding of how they would be working together during the school year. They began with posting a video introducing themselves to their new students and then describing the formative assessment feedback loop as a framework to ground their cycles of learning.
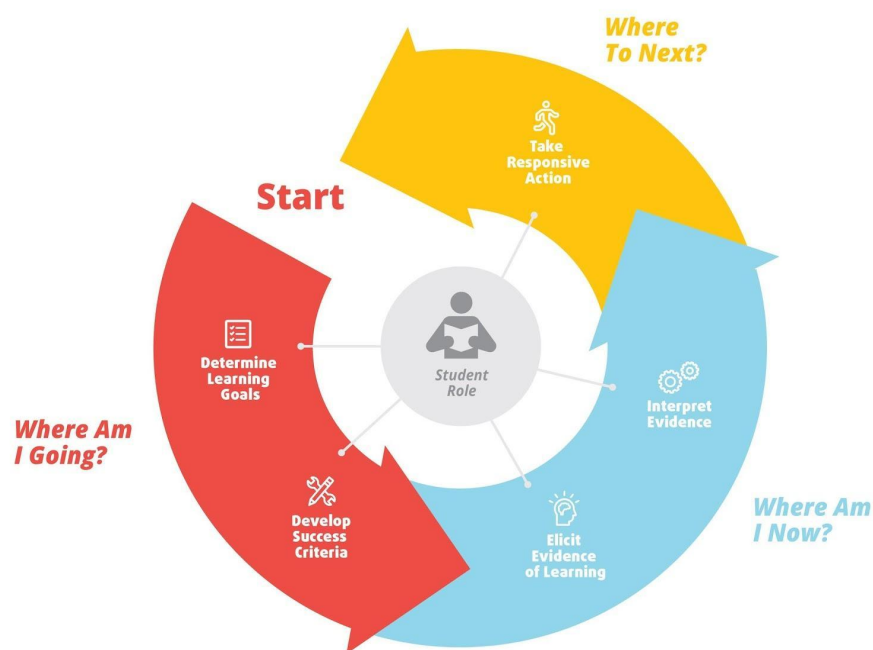
They explained that the feedback loop starts with students asking the question, *Where am I going?* Then based on the answer, setting learning goals and success criteria. They said that after spending time working towards the goal, they would then ask, *Where am I now?* Students would be engaged in eliciting and interpreting evidence of learning to answer the question. The final step in the feedback loop, they

said, is to ask, *Where to next?* At this point, students would take action based on the collected evidence to move their learning forward.

In order to have this framework firmly embedded into the cycle of teaching and learning, Joe and James explained in the video how this would play out each day of the week for students. With this information, students would then know which part of the feedback loop they would be engaged in each day, and could monitor their own learning in relation to those three big questions. Here is the plan Joe and James described.

- On Wednesdays, students get familiar with the learning topic by doing pre-work before they meet.
- On Thursdays, in video sessions, the teachers introduce/co-construct the learning goal and success criteria with students.
- On Fridays, on their own, students engage in new content through reading, video, and other media to get closer to the learning goal.
- On Mondays, in video sessions, students engage in discourse, direct instruction, and collaboration to make further sense of the topic in a social setting.
- On Tuesdays, students engage in more self-reflection and application of their new knowledge to inform next steps.

Modeling elements of the feedback loop
For each new learning structure Joe and James introduced to students from the feedback loop, e.g, using learning goals and success criteria, they first practiced it themselves, both to get a better sense of it and to model for their students how to use it. Below is an example of success criteria Joe created for his own online teaching. Joe used this to help him monitor his own progress, and as a model of what he wanted his students to create for themselves as they manage their own learning.

SUCCESS CRITERIA FOR ONLINE TEACHING

- Provide pre-work for students to connect funds of knowledge to current learning goals.
- Establish learning goals that show students the intended learning for the week.
- Collaborate with other teachers on best practices for remote learning.
- Demonstrate what success looks like using video to model effective habits.
- Provide feedback to students in a variety of ways.
- Allow multiple ways for students to demonstrate evidence of learning.
- Create opportunities for students to connect the intended learning to their community.

Using these processes online, Joe and James were able to give students a big picture overview, a mental model, of *how* they will learn and *why* they will learn that way. They then shared specific practices that students would engage in each day, either on their own or with peers and their teacher. Finally, they applied each element of the formative assessment feedback loop to their own learning, deepening their knowledge of how to effectively teach online and providing a model for students to manage their own learning independently. In this way, students were given the tools they need to increase their agency in online learning and become self-directed learners.