Continuous Assessment

Formative assessment methods: Snake oil? Magic potion? Or something else?

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Fail fast. Learn vicariously.

If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.
What could prevent reactions like this?

Developing a culture that relies heavily on continuous (formative) assessment isn’t magic, but it would help!
Profile of the South Carolina Graduate

**World Class Knowledge**
- Rigorous standards in language arts and math for career and college readiness
- Multiple languages, science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), arts and social sciences

**World Class Skills**
- Creativity and innovation
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Communication, information, media and technology
- Knowing how to learn

**Life and Career Characteristics**
- Integrity
- Self-direction
- Global perspective
- Perseverance
- Work ethic
- Interpersonal skills

Approved by SCASA Superintendents’ Roundtable, SC Chamber of Commerce, State Board of Education, and Education Oversight Committee.
Understanding the definition is critical!
Recognize evidence of continuous assessment in use.

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<th>Continuous Assessment of World Class Knowledge</th>
<th>NOR</th>
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<th>PC</th>
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Category NOR: Not on Radar
Category ID: In discussion
Category P: Planning for implementation
Category PC: Plan complete with timeline
Category PI: Partially implementing
Category FE: Formatively evaluating
Category FI: Fully implementing
What are continuous assessments?

Continuous assessments are “planned activities, purposefully implemented to gather evidence of learning. They are conducted unobtrusively as a natural part of the instructional activity, and “short-cycle,” occurring during a lesson or unit of study and providing near-immediate feedback to the teacher.”
Examples of continuous assessment?

Yes  No  Maybe
Watching non-verbal cues
End-of-course assessments
Socratic Seminars
Response cards
Mid-term or final exams
Audience polling systems
Write-Pair-Share
Exit slips
Unit tests
MAP tests
(Measures of Academic Progress from NWEA)
Continuous assessment is NOT:

• End-of-Course assessments
• Mid-term or final exams
• Unit exams
Continuous assessment is:

• Observing oral language, retelling
• Questioning techniques that include
  – understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, create
• Following up questions with scaffolding
• Quick write
• Graphic organizer
Continuous assessment is also:

• Watching non-verbal cues
• Response cards
• Audience response systems
• Write-Pair-Share, Think-Pair-Share
• Exit slip
• Hand signals
• Socratic Seminar

and many more
Continuous assessment might be:

Rubrics for any of the following

- Essay items
- Performances
- Presentations
- Projects

BUT only when...

- used for practice
- students know criteria
- students receive specific, constructive feedback
Continuous assessment might be:

Group of multiple-choice items

– if purpose is practice, rather than grading
– if distractors represent misconceptions
– if used to give feedback & adjust instruction
Interim tests

MAP testing may inform continuous assessment, but teachers must follow up with additional formative assessment to plan customized instruction.

Tests that predict performance on accountability tests can inform a continuous assessment program, but they are usually aggregated beyond the classroom and may not give enough information to allow teachers to design appropriate learning activities.
What is the purpose of continuous assessment?

Think

Pair

Share
Foundational research...


http://weaeducation.typepad.co.uk/files/blackbox-1.pdf

(14 pages)
What is quality formative or continuous assessment?

Black and Wiliam conclude that “assessment becomes formative assessment when the evidence is actually used to **adapt the teaching to meet student needs**. . . . Formative assessment is at the heart of effective teaching.”
Teachers need feedback to plan and adjust instruction.

• Who knows this now?
• Who is beginning to struggle?
• Who needs a little help?
• Who needs a lot of support?
Is the solution a more sophisticated data analysis and reporting system?

Here’s what they said:

“Even if the data are better analyzed, teachers do not know how to translate the information into powerful, focused instruction that responds to individual students’ needs.”
Teachers must

• Understand learning progressions
• Find the student’s growing edge or “zone of proximal development”
• Design or select learning appropriate learning activities
Can a computer program do this?

Sometimes...

– Measurement error
– Incorrect diagnosis
– Poor prescriptions
– Rigid sequences

Computer programs can support teaching, but not replace teachers entirely.
What do students need in order to improve?

Specific, constructive feedback
Specific, constructive feedback

What do I need to do differently?

• Mistake?
• Error?
• Other gaps?
• Already understand?
Feedback for mistake

I understand, but I was careless or rushed. I didn’t do what I know how to do.

Not “Try harder.”

Give me a different way to
• Check my work
• Evaluate what I’ve done
Feedback for error

I don’t understand the concept. Find my misconception!

Give me a different way to
• think about the problem
• organize my work
• gather information
• evaluate sources
Feedback for other gaps

I don’t have this information.
I don’t know this strategy.

Design opportunities for new learning and guided practice
Feedback for further improvement

I understand the concepts. What now?

Not more practice

Help me think like an expert.

Offer me a creative challenge.

Encourage me to explore an area in depth.

Let me move on to other topics.
Continuous assessment is not about giving a grade.

It’s about what to do next.
Continuous Assessment takes place during the learning process and not after the learning!
Handy 20-page how-to guide

http://www.learningpt.org/pdfs/Formative Assessment.pdf
High quality formative (continuous) assessment must

• be relevant to **learning goals**, 
• provide specific, constructive **feedback** to the student
• avoid comparison to other students
• include teaching students how to **self-assess**.

(Source: Wiliam & Black)
Formative (continuous) assessments must:

- **Identify the gaps** in what students know and what they need to know.
- Provide constructive, descriptive **feedback** between the teacher and student.
- Empower students to **monitor** their own learning and needs.
- Include learning progressions that break down the **learning goals into smaller subgoals** needed to master learning standards.

Do most of your teachers routinely ...

<table>
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<tr>
<td>• Break learning progressions into subgoals</td>
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<td>• Identify gaps</td>
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<td>• Provide specific, constructive feedback</td>
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<td>• Help students self-assess</td>
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Where’s the evidence?

**Teachers**

- adapt instruction to meet student needs.
- give specific ideas for making progress.

**Students**

- know their learning goals.
- recognize examples of good work.
- know how they are progressing.
Pros & Cons

Pros

• Quickly reinforces or corrects learned responses
• Assists in pacing learning
• Customizes learning to students’ needs
• More feedback results in faster learning and less confusion.

Cons/Issues

• Labor intensive for students & teacher (record-keeping and feedback)
• Misconceptions re: definitions of formative, summative, interim assessments
• Unfamiliar process for many teachers
Continuous Assessment

Formative assessment methods: Snake oil? Magic potion? Or something else?
Continuous Assessment

Formative assessment methods:
Expert professional practice
Thank you for attending our session on continuing assessment and competency-based progressions.

Did you find the presentation worthwhile?
Yes No

If not why not?

How well do your teachers use the information gleaned from continuous assessment for adapting instruction?

Which areas of the presentation would you like to know more about?

What should a principal consider before deciding to implement competency-based progressions?

What supports would be needed if SC schools want to implement competency-based progressions on a large scale?