***Tips for Creating Common Formative Assessments***

The following suggestions and strategies drawn from Kim Bailey and Chris Jakicic’s *Common Formative Assessment: A Toolkit for Professional Learning Communities at Work* (2012) can help your learning team to move forward with more responsible, action-oriented formative assessment.

***General Suggestions:***

***Keep Common Formative Assessments Short and Give Them Frequently:*** Because common assessments are designed to inform practice, it is essential that learning teams take action after every assessment – analyzing results, reteaching, and providing enrichment to small groups of students. This kind of action-oriented response is only possible when common formative assessments are delivered frequently – and it’s always easier to deliver assessments frequently when they are short.

Bailey and Jakicic recommend that common formative assessments test *no more than* three essential learning targets and include *no more than* four questions – three selected response and one constructed response – per target. They also recommend that teams give common formative assessments at least every three weeks. Doing so allows teams to respond immediately to identified student needs during weekly intervention periods.

***Tie Every Question to a Learning Target***: Because common assessments are designed to inform practice, it is essential that assessments allow teams to collect and report information about levels of mastery on individual learning targets. For Bailey and Jakicic, that means the learning target measured by every question on a common formative assessment MUST be clearly identified in some way. To make this process even easier, consider focusing on ONE learning target per common assessment.

***Consider the Level of Thinking Each Question on a Common Formative Assessment Requires:*** Because common assessments are designed to inform practice, it is essential that questions asked actually measure the content and/or skills that students are expected to master. For Bailey and Jakicic, that means teams MUST consider the kind of thinking that each question on a common formative assessment asks students to demonstrate.

Using knowledge-based questions to demonstrate mastery of learning targets that require drawing conclusions from information provided results in unreliable assessments. Similarly, using application-based questions to demonstrate mastery of knowledge-based learning targets can make common formative assessments more time consuming to deliver and score than they need to be.

***Types of Assessment Questions:*** The most common types of questions asked on common formative assessments fall into three broad categories – Selected Response, Constructed Response and Performance Assessments.

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| Selected Response Questions | Constructed Response Questions | Performance Assessments |
| * Multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, true/false, matching items.
* Easy to grade, allowing teams to get results back quickly.
* Make it possible for teams to easily ask multiple questions for each learning target.
* Good for measuring concepts and thinking skills at the lower levels of the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy.
 | * Ask students to provide short answers, to write essays, or to complete graphic organizers.
* Require more time to score.
* Requires teams to develop shared rubrics and exemplars of different levels of student mastery.
* Good for measuring higher order thinking skills and for identifying students who can spot relationships between concepts.
 | * Ask students to carry out a process while an assessor watches.
* Good for measuring the ability to apply knowledge in novel situations – thinking required at the highest levels of the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy.
* Requires the most time to administer as teachers must observe and evaluate every student individually.
* Requires teams to develop and utilize shared rubrics consistently.
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