

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT MEETS OPENCLASS

How can you engage students in a way that will allow collecting and documenting evidence of learning? OpenClass is a tool in Home Base that allows for collaboration and discussion among students, their peers, and teachers in an environment where feedback can be used to inform student learning and instruction. This document describes possible ways to use OpenClass to support formative assessment as a process.

What is formative assessment?

Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve intended instructional outcomes (CCSSO FAST SCASS, 2006).

Tools Available in OpenClass that Support the Formative Assessment Process

- Syllabus
- Threaded Discussion
- Collaborations
- Submissions

Brief descriptions of these tools and detailed suggestions of how each tool can be used to support the formative assessment process are provided in this document.

Syllabus

The Syllabus tool allows teachers to communicate information about a class or course to help guide students in planning and preparation to take ownership of their learning.

How can the Syllabus tool support the formative assessment process?

For teachers who are using or planning to use formative assessment, information can be provided in the syllabus to help students understand how they can engage in the formative assessment process to advance learning. The information can answer questions like:

- What is formative assessment?
- Why is formative assessment important for learning?
- How can students use formative assessment to take ownership of their learning?

Teachers can also provide specific learning targets and criteria for success for different days, weeks, lessons, units, etc. in the syllabus to help students have a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn.

Syllabus Example

Your School
Course Syllabus
7th Grade Orchestra

Course Description
 Seventh grade orchestra focuses on advancing abilities of orchestra students. Students in this class are given opportunities to play a variety of musical styles from classical to contemporary. In this class, students will continue to develop proper technique, the ability to read notes, and the responsibility as solo performers.

Course Goals for Current Period
 NC Essential Standard 7.MR.1
 Understand the interacting elements to respond to music and music performances.

Clarifying Objective 7.MR.1.2
 Analyze aural examples of music representing diverse genres, styles, and cultures, using appropriate music terminology.

Learning Targets

- I can describe music I hear in terms of melody, pitch, tempo, dynamics, texture, form, and instruments.
- I can compare different examples or pieces of music.
- I can explain how a piece of music makes me feel.
- I can choose and analyze a musical example of my choosing.

Criteria for Success

- I will listen to music and document my observations about the music.
- I will identify similarities and differences between different examples of music.
- I will choose a color (red, orange, yellow, etc.) and explain, using my personal thoughts why I chose the color and how it makes me feel.
- I will analyze a piece of my choosing using words from the musical word bank.

Information that supports the formative assessment process can be included in the syllabus.

Learning targets and criteria for success that support the course goals and objectives are shown in the example.

Threaded Discussion

Within a threaded discussion, students post responses to a discussion topic and engage in dialogue with other students about the topic.

How can the Threaded Discussion tool support formative assessment?

Using discussion topics aligned with learning targets and criteria for success, can guide students toward intended learning.

- Teachers are able to identify learning targets and criteria for success and post questions that will elicit a student's understanding of the targets.
- Students are able to reflect on their learning and post a response to the discussion topic or upload artifacts of learning.
- Students are able to dialogue with other students about responses given through peer-assessment.
- Communication and feedback from peers and the teacher can highlight areas of strength and areas that need improvement based on learning targets and criteria for success.
- Descriptive feedback based on the criteria for success should be provided for the purpose of helping students extend their understanding rather than evaluate current thinking.
- Rubrics provided in this tool can guide student reflections and responses toward the target.

Student discussions provide documented evidence of learning that can be analyzed by students and the teacher. Students are able to use feedback to decide what to do next to advance their learning. Teachers can use evidence of learning to plan to address student misconceptions and make other decisions about instruction.

Threaded discussion example with responses from other students and the teacher

Threaded Discussion 1

After listening to two contrasting examples of music, use the musical word bank provided to answer the following questions:

1. How are these musical pieces similar and different?
2. What are the related qualities to compare and contrast?
3. Are they more alike or different?
4. What are the most important qualities that are similar and different?

Your initial response should be as detailed and specific as possible. After you post your initial response, please respond to at least two of your classmates' posts.

Responses

Response	Author	Date/Time*
My Thoughts...	Student10 DPISStudent10	1/28/2014 12:21:27 PM
Similarities and Differences	Student15 DPISStudent15	1/28/2014 12:22:36 PM
RE: Similarities and Differences	Instructor Urbanski	1/28/2014 12:26:40 PM
Musical Qualities	Student17 DPISStudent17	1/28/2014 12:24:48 PM
Musical Word Bank	Student19 DPISStudent19	1/28/2014 12:26:16 PM
RE: Musical Word Bank	Instructor Urbanski	1/28/2014 12:26:58 PM

* Times are displayed in (GMT-07:00) Mountain Time (US & Canada)

Teacher selected topic

Responses between students and the teacher pertaining to the discussion.

Collaborations

The Collaborations tool enables teachers to organize students into collaborative groups to share documents and work together on assignments aligned with learning targets and criteria for success in Google Docs. These documents and assignments may be instructional resources provided by the teacher or created by the student to satisfy assignments.

How can the Collaborations tool support formative assessment?

- Students are able to work with other students in collaborative groups.
- Students are able to reflect on their own understanding and provide feedback to their peers.
- Students and groups of students are able to make adjustments as needed and take action steps to reach intended outcomes.
- Teachers are able to collect, document, and analyze evidence of learning to determine if students are meeting intended learning targets.

Teachers can take actionable steps toward adjusting instruction based on the needs of individual students or a group of students as identified through the Collaborations tool.

Collaborations Example

Collaborative Groups A and B were assigned by the teacher

Each group is given directions for the upcoming project.

Submissions

The Submissions tool enables students to submit assignments that may contain links, videos, attached files, etc.

How can the Submissions tool support the formative assessment process?

- Students are able to submit individual assignments electronically to the teacher for feedback.
- Students are able to review returned assignments and feedback provided by the teacher.
- Students are able to use the feedback and self-reflection to determine next steps in learning.
- Teachers are able to collect submitted assignments to analyze for evidence of learning.
- Teachers are able to provide descriptive feedback on assignments to students based on identified learning targets and criteria for success.

Assignments submitted during the formative assessment process are non-graded to allow for feedback and reflection for the purpose of informing learning and instruction while they are happening.

Submissions Example

The screenshot shows the Home Base interface for a 7th Grade Orchestra course. The left sidebar contains navigation options like Course Home, Syllabus, Assignment Calendar, Gradebook, Threaded Discussion, Assignment 1 - Listening Journal, Submissions, Collaborations, Email, and Doc Sharing. The main content area displays 'All Submitted for Review' for 'Assignment 1 - Listening Journal'. It shows a submission from 'Student17 DPI' dated 1/6/2014 9:25 AM with the message 'Hello Teacher, Please find attached my Journal for your review. Thank you.' and an attachment 'Student 17 Journal.docx'. Below this, a feedback box contains the text: 'Thank you for submitting your Listening Journal. Please find attached your original journal with descriptive feedback and suggestions embedded. Once you have reviewed the feedback, make any necessary changes and self-assess your work using the criteria for success. Resubmit this document after you make any needed adjustments.' A second submission from 'Student19 DPI' is also visible below.

In this example, a student has submitted the assignment as an attached word document. The teacher has provided descriptive feedback on the original work of the student.

Summary

Formative assessment is a process used by students and teachers while learning occurs. This document details specific tools in OpenClass that support the use of the formative assessment process in driving decisions to advance learning and adjust instruction. OpenClass allows for collaborations and discussions similar to the way they occur in a classroom environment with the use of formative assessment attributes such as collecting, documenting, and analyzing evidence of learning, self- and peer-assessment, and descriptive feedback. The combination of formative assessment and OpenClass promotes student engagement in learning, which may increase student motivation for learning.