Implementation Guide

NC FALCON

North Carolina's Formative Assessment Learning Community's Online Network

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA
www.ncpublicschools.org
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction
Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-6314

May 28, 2010

In compliance with federal laws, NC Public Schools administers all state-operated educational programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination because of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, color, age, military service, disability, or gender, except where exemption is appropriate and allowed by law. Inquiries or complaints should be directed to:

Dr. Rebecca Garland, Chief Academic Officer
Academic Services and Instructional Support
6368 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-6368
Telephone (919)807-3305; fax (919) 807-4065

Table of Contents

Page

Foreword 1

Purpose of NC FALCON 2

CEU Credit Opportunity 2

District and School Formative Assessment Implementation Plan 2

PLCs or Learning Teams 4

Module Activities 5

NC FALCON Modules 6

Appendix 8

Five Phases in the Formative Assessment Roll Out 8

Foreword

Welcome to NC FALCON, North Carolina's Formative Assessment Learning Community's Online Network. This network has been developed in an effort to provide North Carolina teachers with a basic understanding of formative assessment and illustrate the role it should play in a comprehensive, balanced assessment system. A comprehensive, balanced assessment system includes formative assessment, interim/benchmark assessments, and statewide assessments that are aligned to state standards. Each component is important and should be valued for what it contributes.

Formative assessment is an essential component of this system because it forms the foundation of teaching and learning and should occur more often than any other assessment. In contrast to summative assessment, formative assessment is focused on collaboration in the classroom and identifying learning gaps during instruction that can be addressed before end-of-year, summative assessments. The online professional development modules located in NC FALCON are intended to serve as a primer for teachers to learn more about the impact formative assessment can have on their instruction and help their students achieve targeted learning goals.

This paradigm shift from face-to-face training to electronic professional development delivery empowers teachers and allows them to access training according to their schedules. The professional development modules are self-paced, do not have to be completed in one session, and may be accessed 24/7. Access to the professional development modules is managed by using NCRegistration user account management features.

Although teachers may complete the professional development modules independently, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction recommends participants work collaboratively in learning teams. Working together, teachers may assist one another as they complete the modules and practice their formative assessment strategies. The activities teachers will be asked to complete during the modules include the following: reflect upon current practice using digital journals, observe other teachers using formative assessment, practice implementing formative assessment in the classroom, develop and implement formative assessment plans, and post comments in the online Professional Learning Community (PLC).

Completing the modules and implementing formative assessment in the classroom can lead to planning effective lessons, better methods for collecting and documenting evidence of learning, an increased ability to identify and close gaps, and additional strategies for involving students in the learning process. Formative assessment at the classroom level is a seamless, ongoing assessment practice that is integral to instructional delivery and allows students to take ownership of their learning.

Purpose of NC FALCON

The online professional development modules located in NC FALCON are intended to serve as a primer for teachers to learn more about the impact formative assessment can have on their instruction and help their students achieve targeted learning goals. Whether a beginning or seasoned teacher, the NC FALCON formative assessment modules provide a solid framework on which to build effective formative assessment practices in the classroom. Implementing these strategies provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning that will improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes.

CEU Credit Opportunity

At the completion of each module, participants will be able to print a certificate of completion which includes a recommendation for renewal credit or continuing education units (CEUs). Final awarding of CEUs must be approved by the local education agency (LEA). The LEA determines the content area and the number of CEUs granted. Participants may be required to submit their completed assignments for the modules and a copy of the NCDPI issued certificates of completion

Approximately one hour of computer time is needed for each module. This does not include the time necessary for completing the digital journals and activities, practicing formative assessment strategies, and observing colleagues or team members. The total estimated time for completing each module (on and off the computer) is listed in the *NC FALCON Modules* section.

District and School Formative Assessment Implementation Plan

Prior to beginning the formative assessment modules, LEAs/schools must establish a formative assessment implementation plan. Establishing a plan will provide the framework to communicate, monitor, and evaluate the process.

The NCDPI recommends the following when developing LEA/school implementation plans:

1. Use professional learning communities to share ideas on how best to create and implement an overall plan for formative assessment. Communicating and sharing best practices between local education agency staff (LEAs) helps ensure that appropriate training, staff development, and support are offered to all teachers and related personnel involved in formative assessment.
    a. Establish a framework for the PLC such as the DuFour Model (http://pdonline.ascd.org/pd_online/secondary_reading/el200405_dufour.html).

2. Establish formative assessment teams at the district and school levels.

3. Establish a partnership between district personnel and school formative assessment teams. Determine how to:
    a. Work together to initiate the rollout of the online modules,
    b. Build a network to allow communication to flow freely between both groups, and
    c. Share strategies to meet prerequisite skills for implementation.

4. Determine how formative assessment teams at the district level will communicate, monitor, and evaluate the formative assessment process.
    a. Consider the following when developing the district formative assessment team plan:
        i. Identify personnel that will lead the formative assessment team. These stakeholders can model the process during the initial implementation.
        ii. Establish procedures to capture data that provides evidence of the formative assessment implementation processes at the schools.
            1. Monitor and record the progress of teachers who complete the formative assessment modules in NC FALCON.
            2. Schedule PLC meetings.
            3. Collect work samples.
            4. Ensure that a summative evaluation that covers the overall implementation process is written and submitted to the NCDPI formative assessment team at the end of the first year.
        iii. Determine a timeline for discussions with the NCDPI and with schools to gather feedback on the use of NC FALCON and to share evidence of modifications in formative assessment practices. During each phase (see the Appendix for a description of the five phases) of the formative assessment process, a discussion with the NCDPI and district stakeholders should occur in order to share feedback and to relate any necessary modifications needed in programming.

5. Establish formative assessment teams at the school who are responsible for communicating, monitoring, and evaluating the formative assessment process.
    a. Identify and/or designate roles and responsibilities for school personnel, such as:
        i. A contact person responsible for receiving and disseminating state and local formative assessment memos, updates, etc,
        ii. Model teachers who demonstrate regular and meaningful use of formative assessment and may be used as mentors,
        iii. Support personnel who provide technology skills,
        iv. School personnel responsible for monitoring and recording the progress of teachers who complete the formative assessment modules on NC FALCON,
        v. Learning teams that consist of people who want to collectively learn and support each other's learning efforts. (See the section on *PLCs or Learning Teams* in this guide for additional information.)
    b. Establish procedures to discuss, document, and provide evidence of the formative assessment implementation processes at the school.
        i. Develop methods to record modifications in formative assessment practices such as timelines, scheduled learning team and PLC meetings, numbers of personnel trained, and completed work samples that provide clear evidence of how participants' are strengthening their use of formative assessment in the classroom.
        ii. Determine a timeline for discussions with the NCDPI and district stakeholders to share evidence of modifications in formative assessment practices.

iii. Ensure that a summative evaluation that covers the overall implementation process is written and submitted to the district formative assessment team at the end of the first year.

6. Designate technology support personnel to provide necessary technology skills.
    a. Collaborate concerning the integration of technology to support formative assessment.
        i. Use of NCRegistration system for user accounts and passwords
        ii. Storage of teachers' online *Digital Journals*
        iii. *Technical assistance for module viewing*

7. Incorporate informational/training sessions sponsored by district and NCDPI formative assessment team members.

8. Determine workable timelines for individuals and/or learning teams to collaborate on the richness of the online modules. Although teachers may complete the professional development modules independently, the modules are designed for educators to complete collaboratively in learning teams. Providing this type of structure will allow formative monitoring and evaluation, thus modeling the actual formative assessment process.

9. Encourage participants to use the *Digital Journal* for the formative assessment modules on NC FALCON. (See the section *Module Activities* in this guide for additional information.)

10. Establish procedures for providing CEU credit for the completion of the online professional development series modules located in NC FALCON. (See the section *CEU Credit Opportunity* in this guide for additional information.)

PLCs or Learning Teams

The online professional development module series located in NC FALCON is intended to serve as a primer for teachers to learn more about how formative assessment can impact their instruction and help their students achieve targeted learning goals. These modules have been designed so that they can be used by individual educators working independently or with a school or district learning team. The NCDPI recommends participants work collaboratively in learning teams. Working together, teachers may assist one another as they complete the modules and practice implementing formative assessment in their classrooms.

Learning teams may be of various sizes and serve different purposes. For example, the faculty as a whole may meet once or twice a month to view modules and reflect on its formative assessment work, engage in appropriate learning, and assess its progress. Smaller learning teams (usually four to eight faculty members) may meet once a week and concern themselves with practical ways to improve teaching and learning using formative assessment in the classroom. Working together, teachers of learning teams:

- Examine and complete the series of formative assessment modules and their activities,
- Plan effective lessons with clear learning targets and criteria for success,
- Observe and critique team members' classroom formative assessment practices,
- Discuss ways to collect evidence of student learning,

- Discuss ways to analyze evidence of student learning, and
- Gain insight into what is working and what is not so that they can implement best practices in their classrooms to raise student achievement.

In addition, learning teams should determine areas in which additional learning would be helpful and should read articles, attend workshops or take courses, or invite consultants to assist them in acquiring new knowledge. Learning teams are strengthened when other support staff, administrators, and even school board members choose to participate, and especially when communication is facilitated between teams. If there is a common focus and clear direction, problems of fragmentation and incoherence that typically thwart implementation efforts can be eliminated.

Module Activities

Participants will be required to complete pre- and post-surveys to assist the NCDPI in evaluating the effectiveness of the module series and the growth of the participants. Reflection activities are included to help participants self-assess their understanding of formative assessment as it relates to current practices. To facilitate the use of formative assessment, a formative assessment plan template is used throughout the modules to illustrate how formative assessment should be an intentional and well thought out process integrated in instruction. Participants will be asked to complete a formative assessment plan and to discuss its development in the PLCs.

Participants will also be asked to complete a *Digital Journal*. The *Digital Journal*, a feature of NC FALCON, allows participants to record their responses to reflection questions and various activities within the modules. A collection of completed *Digital Journals* will provide participants with strong evidence of how they are strengthening their use of formative assessment in the classroom.

Digital Journals are not permanent records of the NCDPI, and at the end of the school year all *Digital Journals* will be deleted from the online system. Other options for participants to keep reflections include, but are not limited to:

- Downloading a Word document with all reflection questions and keeping the journal on a personal computer.
- Producing an audio recording of reflections and keeping these recordings on a personal computer.
- Creating a video reflection and keeping the videos on a personal computer.

NC FALCON Modules

There are currently five formative assessment modules in the online professional development series. When new modules are added, districts will be notified. The current modules and the activities contained within each module have been created so that the allotted computer time is less than eight hours, while outside activities and practice should require additional time. The modules also have independent self-paced capabilities; therefore, individual participants have the option to control the pace and location of their learning.

In addition to quality video, there are reflections, activities, and *Digital Journals* in each module. The following is a list and description of the modules:

- Importance of Formative Assessment

This module provides an introduction to formative assessment and its role in North Carolina's 21st Century Balanced Assessment System.

At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Communicate the importance of formative assessment,
- Distinguish between formative, benchmark, and summative assessment, and
- Share with others how formative assessment fits into a balanced assessment system.
-

(1 hr. estimated seat time and 1 hr. total time)

- Learning Targets and Criteria for Success

This module focuses on how teachers can write clear learning targets and define criteria for success in order to help students answer the question, "Where am I going?"

At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Recognize clear and unclear learning targets, and
- Develop clear learning targets and their associated criteria for success to use in a lesson or series of lessons.

(1 hr. estimated seat time and 4 hrs. total time)

- Collecting and Documenting Evidence

This module explores how teachers can collect and document evidence of learning to help students answer the question "Where am I now?"

At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Identify at least three ways to collect and document evidence of student learning,
- Choose strategies for collecting and documenting evidence of student learning that provide accurate information about where students are in their learning, and
- Align the strategies with the targets and criteria for success.

(1 hr. estimated seat time and 2 hrs. total time)

- Analyzing Evidence and Descriptive Feedback

This module provides teachers with an understanding of how to analyze evidence of learning and how to use descriptive feedback to reflect student strengths and weaknesses with respect to specific learning goals and success criteria.

At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Effectively examine student work,
- Understand the differences between evaluative and descriptive feedback, and
- Enhance student learning through descriptive feedback.

(1 hr. estimated seat time and 4 hrs. total time)

- Administrator's Role in Formative Assessment

This module looks at the role of the administrator in formative assessment.

At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Describe formative assessment and how an administrator can use it in his or her school,
- Discuss elements of formative assessment, and
- Determine the extent to which a school implements formative assessment.

(1 hr. estimated seat time and 4 hrs. total time)

Appendix

Five Phases in the Formative Assessment Roll Out

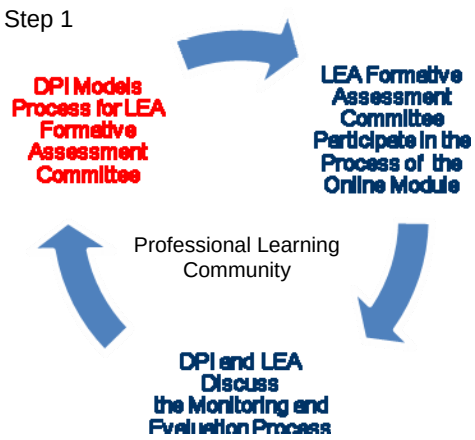
***Phase 1*: Partnerships**

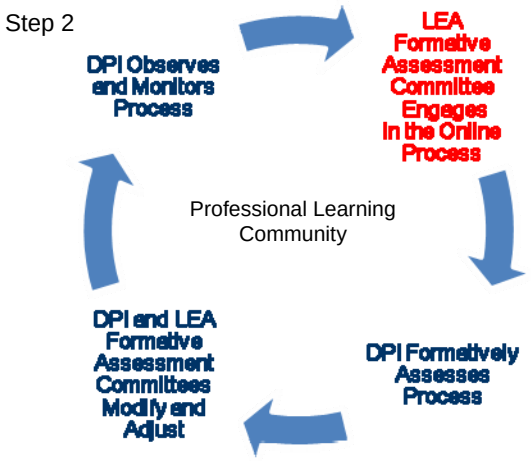
- Establish a partnership between district personnel and formative assessment team to initiate the rollout of the online modules.
- Build a network to allow communication to flow freely between both groups.
- Share strategies to meet prerequisite skills for implementation.

***Phase 2*: Identify Stakeholders**

- District and LEA leadership should identify personnel that will lead the formative assessment committees.
- The NCDPI will identify personnel to provide support during the implementation.
- These stakeholders can model the process during the initial implementation.

***Phase 3:* Establishing the Model**





***Phase 4:* School Improvement**

***Phase 5:* Schoolwide Implementation**