

Formative assessment can take on many forms and can be built around your teaching style. Not grading -- and taking grades only from summative assessments -- is one of the biggest changes in formative assessment. Not grading goes against the grain for many teachers, who have used grades as leverage to get students to do work, rather than looking at how to engage students in the learning process. Many closure activities use instructional strategies that let you assess student without grading.

To help with formative assessing, we need to look at how we are using assessment. Do we use it to gather grades as students are practicing a skill or task, or are we using it to guide our instruction and the students’ learning process? A middle ground for grading and assessing can be achieved by looking at the attributes of the formative assessment process.

* **Clarify intended learning**: The teacher and the students define the learning goals or big ideas. Students become engaged in creating the criteria and discussing how the goals will be met. Using [Bloom’s Taxonomy’s](http://www.trenton.k12.nj.us/Downloads/05-2Bloom-16-17StemsforInstruction1.pdf) higher level questions will create an open dialogue with the students about how they will reach the goal for the lesson or unit.
* **Elicit evidence**: Use informal assessment to observe the students’ thinking, collaborating and communicating solutions to the learning goals using guiding questions (Bloom’s). Doing so will allow you to observe, take notes, ask clarifying questions and quiz as needed to make sure students are on track to understanding the big ideas.

Eliciting evidence can be formal or informal and does not have to receive a formal grade every time. The informal process can be as simple as observing students as they work and asking clarifying questions that allow students to elaborate. Formal evidence can be collected through daily journals or quizzes, which could be graded or corrected and used as further prep for the summative evaluation.

Formative assessment continued next week.