

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: MAXIMIZING LEARNING THROUGH TARGETING NEEDS



Effective literacy instruction requires teachers adapt to student needs, ensuring each child masters the foundational skills of reading. However, teachers often lack the time, tools, and support to regularly gather and analyze student performance information, or integrate this data into their teaching approaches. In Pakistan and Georgia, Chemonics is combining formative assessment with teacher professional development to support teachers to adapt instruction to student learning needs.

Formative assessments for progressive learning. Formative assessments are formal and informal processes for teachers and students to gather evidence to improve learning.ⁱ Implemented effectively, they can produce an increase in learning gains of 0.4 to 0.7 points, and are especially impactful for struggling learners.ⁱⁱ Formative assessments provide teachers with real-time, targeted feedback on students' mastery of literacy skills, tracking reading growth over time. By demonstrating that struggling students can make incremental progress with targeted support, formative assessments promote, among both teachers and students, the idea that all children can learn.ⁱⁱⁱ Additionally, using tests as an improvement tool rather than a measure of success or failure can make teachers and students more comfortable with assessment and foster more interactive learning.

Analyzing, Tracking, and Boosting Performance in Pakistan and Georgia

USAID's Pakistan Sindh Reading Program (SRP) and the Georgia Primary Education Project (G-PriEd) leverage formative assessments to analyze learning needs of students with the greatest skill deficiencies and to help teachers individualize instruction and set goals based on assessment results. In Pakistan, SRP and the Sindh government use monthly assessments linked to progressive curricular goals to provide teachers, school leadership, and government officials with real-time data, recorded on tablets, about achievements and areas for adaptation. In Sindh Province, 50 percent of third grade students were unable to answer a single question correctly on the SRP Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) baseline. SRP uses the assessment results to divide



these “zero-scorers” into a spectrum of specific needs, identifying and tracking student gaps in mastery of the component skills of reading. In Georgia, G-PriEd tied formative assessments to the national curriculum and assessment of literacy by empowering teachers to measure classroom-level progress toward national goals and benchmarks for reading. The G-PriEd E-Assess platform allows teachers to generate their own subject- and skill-specific assessments, and provides a suite of additional formative assessments, all aligned with the national curriculum and standards for reading. G-PriEd also developed tools and software to level student reading materials for assessment of student reading ability.

Key to Success: Combining Formative Assessment with Teacher Professional Development

Formative assessments are most effective when fed back into teacher coaching and training.^{iv} G-PriEd uses teacher learning circles (TLCs) as a teacher peer-to-peer learning opportunity. In TLCs, facilitators guide teachers through discussions and reflections on applying improved classroom teaching practices. TLC facilitators are equipped with video modules demonstrating best practice in constructivism, formative assessment, and differentiated instruction. The videos serve as a basis for sessions with early grade teachers, supporting them to digest their data and adapt their instruction according to assessment results. In Sindh, teaching and learning associates (TLAs) conduct formative assessments and also serve as teacher coaches, reviewing and discussing assessment results with teachers on the day assessments are collected. This structured support expands teacher capacity to internalize assessment results and use them to adapt instruction toward student needs.



Using Data to Work Smarter in the Classroom

Following G-PriEd program implementation, classroom observations revealed that **82 percent** of teachers used formative assessments regularly in measuring student progress, and with the results adapted their practices. **99 percent** of Georgian principals reported seeing noticeable improvements in teachers’ instructional strategies during the project’s course. In Pakistan, the SRP baseline study found that across eight cities, students in grades one and two averaged 26.5 correct words per minute (CWPM) and 12.99 correct non-words per minute. SRP TLAs will use formative assessments similar to the EGRA every four to six weeks to measure students from a starting point, and provide instant feedback to teachers on student progress and best practices for targeted assistance. Muhammad Jawed, head teacher from Karachi, said that, through formative assessments, “teachers got a great chance to know the weak points of each and every student, now they know well about each and every child” and “students know where they stand and where they need to work hard.”

ⁱ Chappuis, J. (2009). Seven strategies of assessment for learning. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

ⁱⁱ Black, P., & William, D. (1998a). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles Policy and Practice*, 5(1), 7–73

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid

^{iv} Ibid