A thick black L-shaped frame surrounds the text. The top horizontal bar is on the left, the left vertical bar is on the left, and the bottom horizontal bar is on the right.

# ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING: CLOSING THE FEEDBACK LOOP

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# What is formative assessment (FA)?



Formative assessment refers to a wide variety of methods that teachers use to conduct in-process evaluations of student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during a lesson, unit, or course. Formative assessments help teachers identify concepts that students are struggling to understand, skills they are having difficulty acquiring, **or** learning standards they have not yet achieved so that **adjustments** can be made to lessons, instructional techniques, and academic support.

What is the  
GOAL of  
formative  
assessment  
?



The general goal of formative assessment is to collect detailed information that can be used to improve instruction and student learning while it's happening. What makes an assessment “formative” is not the design of a test, technique, or self-evaluation, per se, but the way it is used—i.e., to inform in-process teaching and learning modifications.

# Assessment FOR, AS and OF learning



Assessment FOR learning (use of any type of assessment in a formative learning cycle manner for improving learning)



Assessment AS learning (learners monitor metacognition, learn about themselves and how they learn)

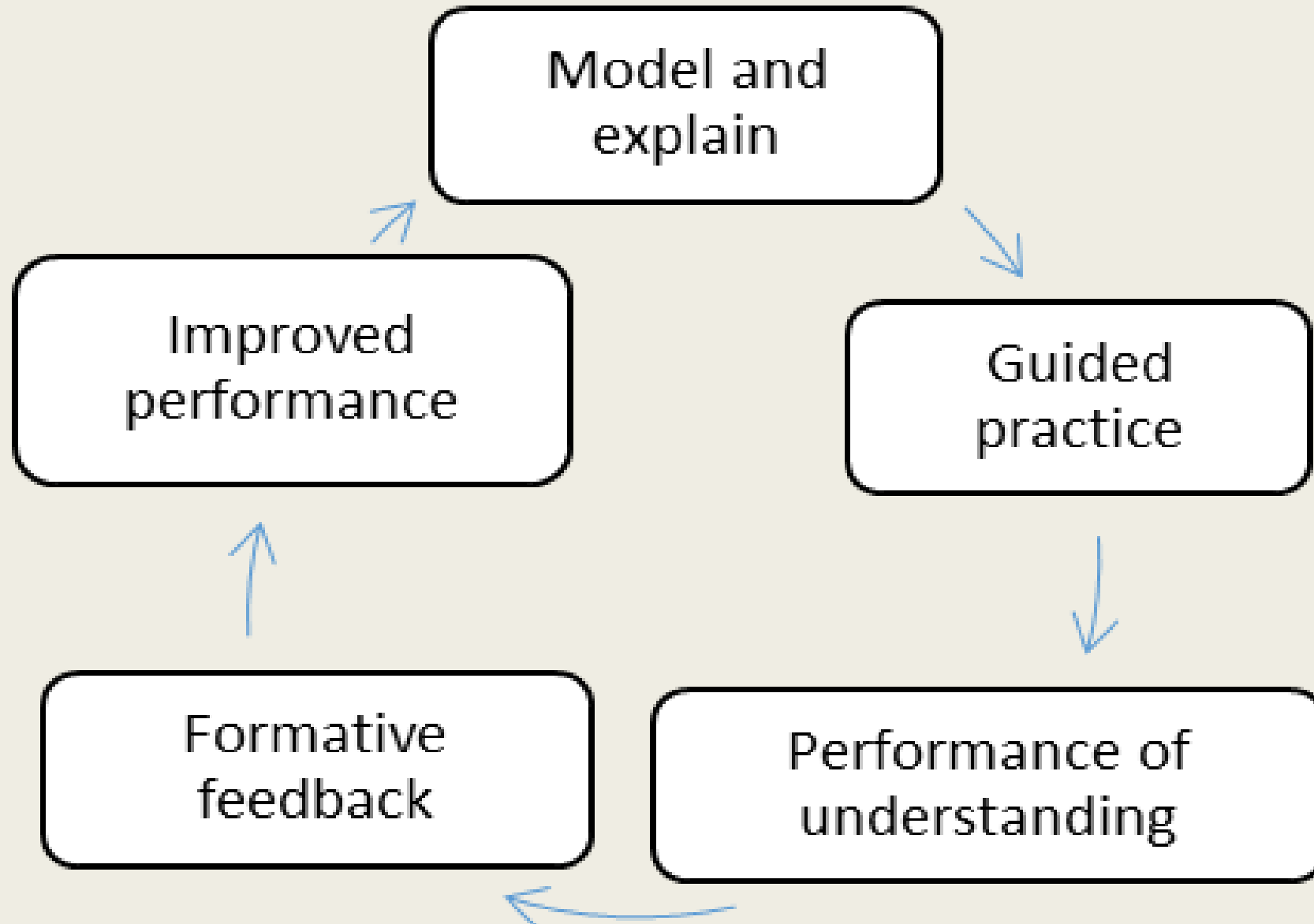


Assessment OF learning  
(summative)

# Formative assessment compared with Summative assessment

Aspect	Formative	Summative
When?	In class, DURING the learning process	At the END of the unit, term, year
What?	Determines the LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING at a particular stage	Determines the ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL/ PERFORMANCE
Timing of feedback	Provides IMMEDIATE feedback (to teacher and learner)	AFTER SOME TIME to learners, parents, teachers, school, system
Formality level	Mostly informal	Formal
Marks and records	Not usually for marks, not necessarily recorded	Marks awarded and recorded
Level of significance	Not high-stakes	High-stakes – promotion, certification, selection

# Formative assessment learning cycle



# Teachers need knowledge and skills in:

1. Identifying the lesson learning target and how to progress to achieving it
2. Describing success criteria for each learning target
3. Designing powerful lesson plans that include FA
4. Selecting a suitable FA strategy from a repertoire of FA strategies/total participation techniques (TPTs)
5. Using Bloom's Taxonomy or/and SOLO and/or Barrett's when designing assessment tasks, including assessing higher order thinking skills
6. Providing powerful descriptive feedback orally or in writing and avoiding evaluative grading (marks)
7. Designing and using rubrics

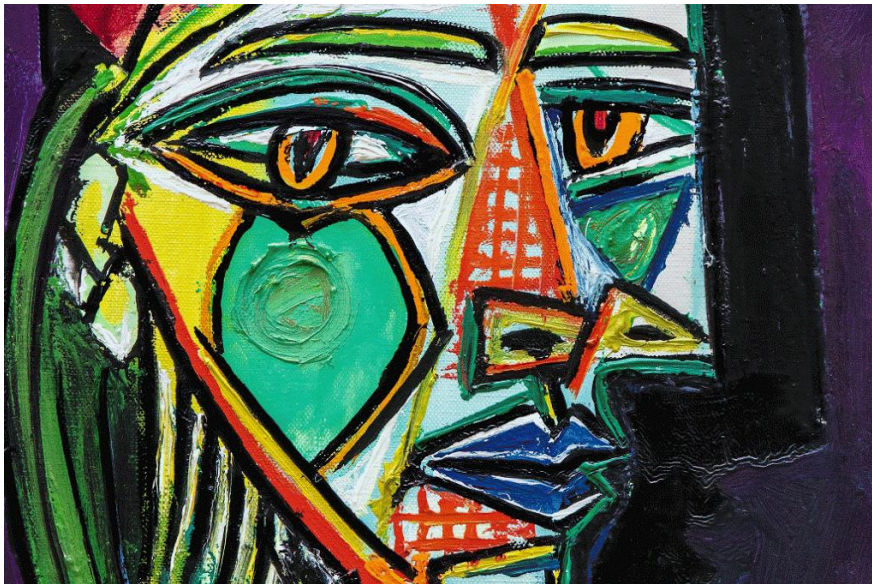
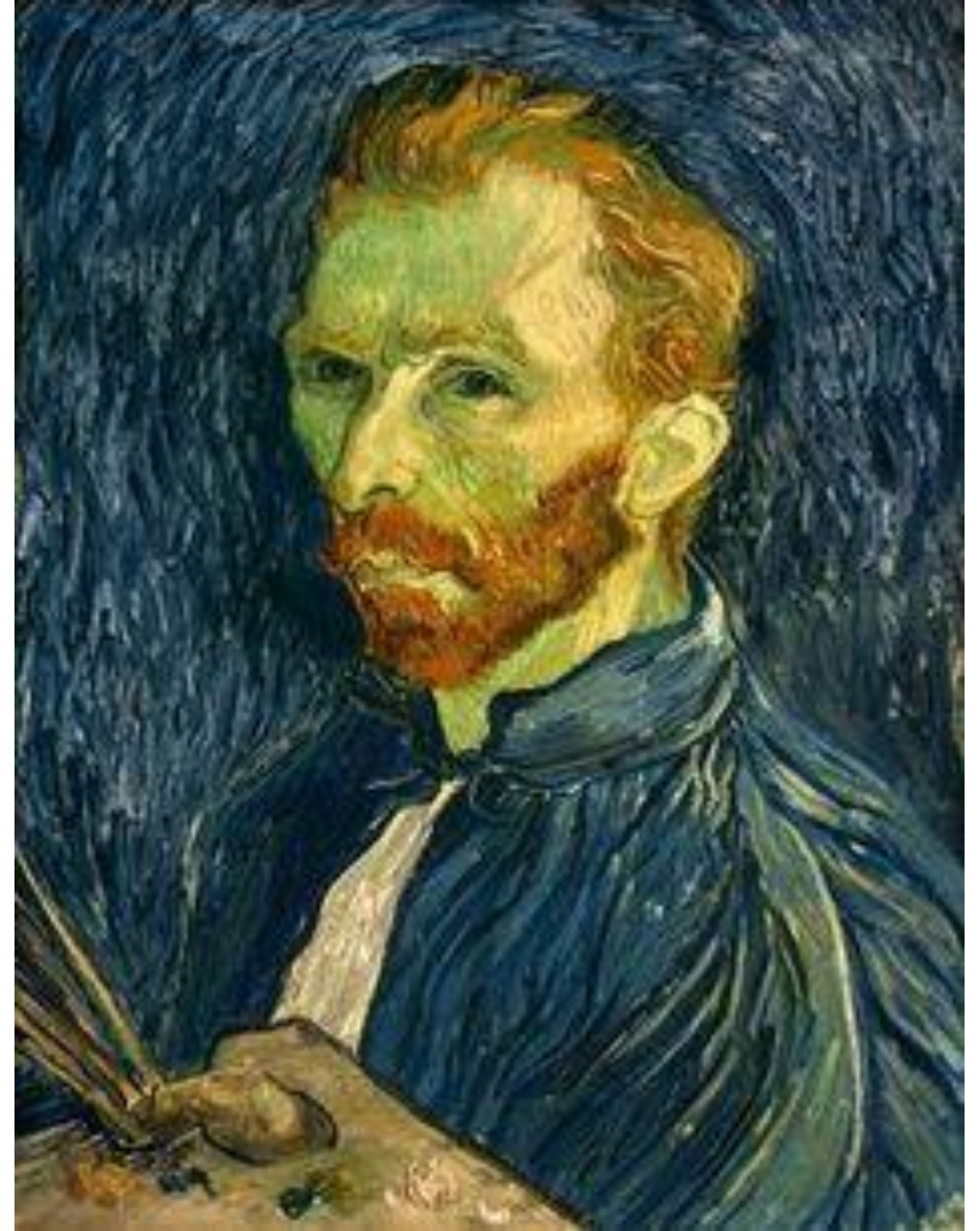
Teachers  
need  
knowledge  
and skills  
in:

8. Using effective questioning
9. Using effective learner peer and self-assessment strategies
10. Observing learners' learning
11. Reflecting on FA effectiveness
12. Using data from formative and summative assessment tasks to advance learners' learning
13. Creating and maintaining a supportive classroom climate (trust, respect, freedom to take risks)



**This is where attention is needed.**





# Three feedback questions (for learners and teachers)

- Where am I going?
- Where am I now?
- How can I close the gap between where I am now and where I want to go?

(Hattie, 2012, pp. 130-132)

# Four feedback levels

- Task/product: How well has the task been performed?
- Process: What are the strategies needed to perform the task? Are there alternative strategies that can be used?
- Self-regulation: What is the conditional knowledge and understanding needed to know what you are doing? Self-monitoring, directing the processes and tasks.
- Self: Personal evaluation and affect about the learning

(Hattie, 2012, pp. 133<sub>1</sub>137)

# Frequency of feedback

- Just in time
- Just for me
- Just for where I am in the learning process
- Just what I need to help me move forward

(Hattie, 2012, pp. 137-139)

# Types of feedback

- Disconfirmation
- Errors welcomed
- For teachers

(Hattie, 2012, pp. 139-141)



# What can teachers do through assessment for learning to advance learning?

- Clearly communicate learning goals to learners
  - Help learners make connections between learning goals and the work they do
  - Obtain information from learners about where they are
  - Give feedback to learners or suggestions about how they might move closer to their learning goals
  - Keep records that show patterns in the kind of feedback learners need and receive
  - Facilitate learners' self-assessment and goal-setting
  - Use assessment information to fine-tune lessons in progress and plan future lessons
- (Extracted and adapted from Brookhart, 2009:14)

# “Feedback that fits” – some thoughts

- Good feedback contains information learners can use.
- Put yourself in the learner’s shoes.
- The amount depends on the learner’s developmental level.
- The mode of feedback must be appropriate for what is communicated.
- Compose the feedback content so the message is received
  - focus on the work, the process; relate it to the learning goal, describe (don’t judge) what you see.
- Be positive and specific – don’t lecture.

See a Tale of two feedback choices

~~This~~ is why I like dogs better than cats. I think dogs are really playful. They can also be strong to pull you or something. They can come in different sizes like a Great Dane or a <sup>Dachshund</sup> ~~wener~~ dog. They can also be in different colors. Some are just mutts. Others are pedigree. Best of all, dogs are cute and cuddly. That is why I like dogs a lot better than cats.



## Possible teacher comments

## What's best about this feedback

Your topic sentence and concluding sentence are clear and go well together.

You used a lot of details. I counted seven things you like about dogs.

Your reasons are all about dog. Readers would already have to know what cats are like. They would not know from your cats whether cats are playful, for instance. When you compare two things, write about both things that you are comparing.

Did you check your spelling? See if you can find two misspelled words.

These comments describe achievements in terms of the criteria for the assignment. They show the student that you noticed these specific features and connected them to the criteria for good work.

This constructive feedback criticises a specific feature of the work, explains the reason for the criticism, and suggests what to do about it.

This comment does not directly reflect the learning target, which was about paragraphing. However, it concerns an important writing skill.

# Formative assessment in lesson plans

Three stages and all  
the steps in each  
stage

Prior to  
instruction

During  
instruction

After  
instruction

Use a variety of FA  
strategies (FASs) and  
Total participation  
techniques (TPTs)  
throughout the lesson

# Seven strategies to help students understand assessment

1. Provide a clear and understandable vision of the learning target
2. Use examples of strong and weak work
3. Offer regular descriptive feedback
4. Teach learners to self-assess and set goals
5. Design lessons to focus on one aspect of quality at a time
6. Teach learners focused revision
7. Engage learners in self-reflection and let them document and share their learning

# Going forward what can we do?

- Do something about the inadequate understanding of what FA is and the critical role it plays. CLOSE THE GAP in the knowledge of curriculum advisors, subject advisors, teachers, school management
- FA happens along the way to summative assessment – it helps CLOSE THE GAP
- Current feedback mode is mostly a MARK and a less than helpful remark – the GAP IS NOT CLOSED
- Teachers need the knowledge and skills to CLOSE THE GAP – to complete the feedback loop
- Teachers need to have the confidence (“permission”) to slow down to CLOSE THE GAP
- Most SBA is summative which may be used formatively if it CLOSES THE LEARNING GAP
- In higher grades SBA is high-stakes assessment – prevents risk-taking, creativity etc
- SBA cannot be used to track curriculum coverage – completing a task does not mean the content has been covered or that learning has been achieved