GLOBAL PD

COMMON FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Solution Tree

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Reproducibles are in italics.

Notes to the Facilitator

The purpose of this workshop is to help educators explore the relevance and practice of common formative assessments. It is based on the work of Richard DuFour, Kenneth C. Williams, Mike Mattos, Sharon V. Kramer, and Chris Jakicic, and edited by Chris Jakicic. The workshop is designed to be used with the Global PD Library—a site containing hundreds of professional development videos, books, study guides, and worksheets. The workshop contains pre-work for participants to complete prior to the workshop and post-work that they can complete with the help of Solution Tree virtual coaches—coaches available via webinar. The workshop follows an interactive format that includes group viewing of video segments from experts, suggested discussion prompts, and group activities.

This workshop has eight components.

1. Pre-Work

2. Welcome and Opening

3. Part 1: Understanding the Current Reality

4. Part 2: Understanding What We Want Students to Know and Do

5. Part 3: Understanding the Importance of Validity and Reliability and Developing Constructed-Response Questions

6. Part 4: Developing Selected-Response Items

7. Closing

8. Post-Work

Conducting the Workshop

This workshop is designed to last about eight hours. It can be scheduled for a single day or be scheduled over two days. This package includes all the professional development materials you need to conduct this workshop—the facilitator's guide with detailed teaching suggestions and video resources.

To conduct a successful learning event, please consider the important issues that follow.

- **Preparation:** Please view all videos, read all materials, and complete all activities yourself before leading the workshop.

- **Location:** The workshop should take place in an area that is large enough for individual, team, and whole-group work.

- **Equipment:** You will need a projector, speakers that are able to project to all participants, and a computer with Internet connectivity.

- **Meeting setup:** We recommend that teachers be placed at tables containing no more than five people. If possible, these tables should be segregated by grade level or course area.

- **Global PD and playlists:** Each participant will need a license to the Global PD Library. As part of your purchase of this library, Solution Tree will load playlists that contain all of the videos and worksheets necessary for this workshop. You will need to share these playlists with each participant of the workshop ahead of time.

- **Masters:** This guide includes reproducible masters. Duplicate the handouts before the workshop begins, and distribute them to participants according to the workshop instructions. You may project the master from your computer onto the screen.

- **Pre-work printouts:** This workshop uses a *flipped classroom approach*, where participants are asked to view and comment on a few short videos ahead of time. You will need to log into your Global PD account prior to the event to print out teachers' comments. These comment sheets should be posted on flip charts or the walls around the room. These comments will be part of an activity in the part 1 portion.

- **Discussion prompts:** Discussion prompts are for facilitators to use in preparing for frequently asked questions or comments. We recommend you read through these for each section prior to the event. You can also use these to prompt discussion when participation is low.

- **Additional equipment:** You will also need flip charts and sticky notes with appropriate writing materials to conduct the workshop.

- **Refreshments:** The agenda for the workshop should include one or more breaks with beverages. Snacks and lunch are optional, but water should be available throughout the workshop.

Workshop Overview at a Glance

Time (in Minutes)	Component	Handouts
10–20	Welcome and Opening	
40–60	Part 1: Understanding the Current Reality	
120	Part 2: Understanding What We Want Students to Know and Do	"Essential Standards Chart" "Example of the Five-Step Process for Unwrapping Standards"
120	Part 3: Understanding the Importance of Validity and Reliability and Developing Constructed-Response Questions	"Assessment Item Quality Checklist"
80	Part 4: Developing Selected-Response Items	"Assessment Item Quality Checklist"
10–20	Closing	

Workshop Teaching Suggestions

The purpose of this workshop is for educators to explore the relevance and practice of common formative assessments.

Learning Objectives

After viewing the video and participating in the activities for the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Describe the importance of teacher teams identifying and agreeing on what their students should know and do

- Develop an essential standard plan that includes rigor, prerequisite skills, timing, and common assessments

- Distinguish between assessment validity and quality

- Demonstrate methods for ensuring assessment validity and quality in summative and formative assessments

- Develop high-quality constructed-response assessment questions and rubrics

- Develop high-quality selected-response assessment questions and rubrics

Pre-Work

At least two weeks before your session, share the Common Formative Assessments playlist (already loaded in your Global PD account) with each participant to view prior to the meeting. Under each video in Global PD is an area in which teachers can enter their comments. Request that all teachers watch the videos and write a very brief reflection in the comments section. Suggested email copy is as follows.

> You will be receiving an invitation from me to add a playlist to your Global PD accounts. Please accept the playlist. The playlist is a series of three short videos that I would like for you to review prior to our professional development session on [DATE]. Beneath each of the videos is an area for teachers to add and read others' comments. After you've viewed the videos, please add a brief (one- to three-sentence) reflection on the topic. For instance, you may want to list any concerns you have regarding the implementation of the concepts in your classroom. We will read and discuss these reflections during our professional development session.
>
> In addition, please work with your team or teams to decide on a single academic standard at your grade or course level that you would like to use during the session.

Pre-Work Playlist

The playlist contains the following videos.

Common Formative Assessments: The Key to Improving Schools

In this video, Richard DuFour argues that common formative assessments are the linchpin of the entire professional learning community (PLC) process. We learn that when common assessments are implemented, results are transparent, and best practices are reviewed, student achievement will soar.

Common Formative Assessments: A Powerful Tool for Teacher Collaboration

In this video, Richard DuFour and Rebecca DuFour share the power of common formative assessments as a means of teacher empowerment. We learn that the team has the ability to set the assessment's rigor, to determine the mastery targets, and to set the common pacing required for each team member to be ready to administer an assessment. The presenters advocate for the use of performance-based assessments to create a balanced approach to assessment.

Using Common Formative Assessments to Help Teachers Reflect on Their Practice

In this video, Kenneth C. Williams explains that common formative assessments are a tool for teacher reflection as well as a tool for monitoring student progress. We learn the difference between analyzing data as an individual and as part of a collaborative team.

Welcome and Opening

1. Welcome participants to the workshop, and introduce yourself and anyone else serving as a workshop host, co-leader, or organizer.

2. If participants do not know one another well, conduct a *get to know you* activity. Ask participants to form pairs and interview each other for about five minutes. Then ask the pairs to introduce each other to another pair, stating the person's name, something interesting or different about the person, and what the person hopes to gain from the workshop.

Part 1: Understanding the Current Reality

Part 1 focuses on teams understanding their current reality.

1. Ask all participants to read the comments that their peers entered in Global PD for the pre-work (posted around the room). Ask each participant to place a sticky note next to the five comments they would like to discuss most.

2. The facilitator should tally the results, reading the reflections with the greatest number of sticky "votes." Briefly discuss these comments without suggesting solutions. The goal is for teachers to be able to express and read each other's comments or concerns.

Discussion Prompts

- **Comment:** "We don't have the time to do all this assessment in our classes. We have too much to teach."

- **Response:** This will be a topic of discussion during this professional development session when we look at essential standards. The facilitator should come back to this after they've done Mike Mattos's "Essential Standards Chart" (page 19) in part 2.

- **Comment:** "We don't have enough common planning time to do all this work. We only meet once a week."
- **Response:** It is important to remind the group that this work is an ongoing process. The work is something that builds and improves over time. Teachers will start this year and will continually add and revise each subsequent year. The goal isn't to check items off a to-do list, but rather to make the work become the work of the team.

- **Comment:** "We don't want to judge each other. The person whose results are the lowest will feel uncomfortable sharing his or her scores."
- **Response:** Ken Williams addresses this concern in his video. It is helpful for the facilitator to remind teams that common assessments look at specific strategies that work for specific students, not which teacher is the best teacher.

- **Comment:** "We don't have the skills to write good questions. We aren't test writers."
- **Response:** You don't need to be an expert in order to write good common formative assessments. We will be working with you during this professional development session to develop the necessary skills.

Part 2: Understanding What We Want Students to Know and Do

Part 2 focuses on teams answering PLC critical question 1: "What do we want students to know and be able to do?"

Getting Insanely Clear About What Students Have to Learn

Present the *Getting Insanely Clear About What Students Have to Learn* video, which is in the Common Formative Assessments playlist within Global PD.

In this video, Mike Mattos argues that there are too many standards for any teacher to cover in a given year. Participants learn a seven-step process to make sure that their teams are focusing on the essential standards that students need to know in order to be successful.

Discussion Prompts

- **Comment:** "What if the student is tested on a standard that we haven't identified as essential on a high-stakes test?"

- **Response:** As your team is identifying the essential standards, one thing to do is become familiar with the expectations for high-stakes tests. For example, with tests that align with the Common Core State Standards for English language arts, the students will be expected to cite information in the text to support their answers. This, then, would be important to include on your essential standards list. When teams do not do this preliminary work and simply try to just "cover the curriculum," students are not better prepared for high-stakes tests. By thoughtfully selecting the essential standards, students will be better prepared to answer rigorous questions.

- **Comment:** "What if we don't agree about what's most important?"

- **Response:** In a PLC, teams build shared knowledge to answer the questions they are tackling. Having discussions about our opinions rarely helps teams come to agreement. Building shared knowledge on the other hand, frequently results in common understanding and agreement. The process Mike Mattos suggests allows teams to make sure they are building shared knowledge around the standards for their students.

Activity

Each team should reflect on what it must do now in order to answer the question, "What do we want students to know and do?" Write these activities down on chart paper. Each team should present to the group.

Unwrapping Standards Into Learning Targets

Present the *Unwrapping Standards Into Learning Targets* video, which is in the Common Formative Assessments playlist within Global PD.

In this video, Sharon V. Kramer defines the term *learning targets*, including how teams should write and assess them. We learn how to identify learning targets embedded within a standard, and that these learning targets serve as steps that lead a student to mastery of a standard.

Discussion Prompts

- **Comment:** "I'm not sure I understand why we need to unwrap standards into learning targets for a formative assessment."

- **Response:** When a team assesses learning targets, what members are really doing is getting as diagnostic as possible about what a student has already learned or still needs to learn. For example, if a team knows that a student is struggling with adding fractions, it's much harder to respond than if the team knows that the student isn't able to find the least common denominator for fractions.

- **Comment:** "How do summative assessments fit in here?"

- **Response:** If students only know specific learning targets but are unable to put them together to answer the summative type questions, teams haven't been successful. Students should know both how to add fractions *and* how to find the least common denominator.

Activity

Using the "Example of the Five-Step Process for Unwrapping Standards" reproducible (page 20), ask each team to unwrap a standard and write the results on one or more sheets of paper.

Ask each group to travel around the room and read two other groups' standards. Groups can use sticky notes to provide feedback or ask questions about the unwrapped standard they are reading. Each group should ask questions for clarification. Reconvene the groups and ask them to share their observations about the process of unpacking standards.

Discussion Prompts

- **Comment:** "Couldn't someone just do this work for us? Can we use the unwrapped standards that some websites provide? What if we're wrong about the level of thinking?"

- **Response:** The process of unwrapping allows teams to come to a consensus about what student learning will look like for each of the learning targets as well as for the whole standard. Mike Mattos talks about how his staff didn't come to agreement about what the standards mean before they chose their essential standards and how this affected their ability to write common formative assessments. This holds true for teams who just adopted previously unwrapped standards. The "learning together" comes from the "doing together." No one knows your standards better than you do.

- **Comment:** "Do we unwrap all of our standards or just our essential standards?"

- **Response:** Start with the essential standards and build the pacing guide around these learning targets first. Remember that the essential standards are your guaranteed curriculum. You will write your common formative assessments around these standards and provide corrective instruction and intervention around the essential standards. This doesn't mean you don't teach the other standards; however, they don't get the same amount of time and aren't assessed with common formative assessments. Additionally, we don't use intervention or reteach if students haven't learned them.

- **Comment:** "Do we have to assess every learning target that comes from an essential standard?"

- **Response:** No, as you begin to write your common formative assessments, you'll want to keep them short and focused. This means that your team will also want to consider which learning targets are the must-knows from each essential standard for your course or grade, which are prerequisite skills for future learning. If teachers do not use common learning targets, it often results in student misunderstandings or misconceptions.

Part 3: Understanding the Importance of Validity and Reliability and Developing Constructed-Response Questions

Part 3 focuses on understanding the importance of validity and reliability and developing constructed-response questions.

Defining Validity and Reliability

Present the *Defining Validity and Reliability* video, which is in the Common Formative Assessments playlist within Global PD.

In this video, Chris Jakicic elaborates on two core aspects of a quality assessment: (1) reliability and (2) validity. We learn what these terms mean, as well as how to begin structuring reliable assessments.

Discussion Prompts

- **Comment:** "What can we do to make our assessments more valid?"

- **Response:** As we saw in the video, an assessment is valid when it matches the content at the appropriate level of rigor. Teams ensure that their assessments are valid when they unwrap the assessment into learning targets and determine the expected level of thinking for each target. They also increase rigor by considering what type of item will work best for the learning target being taught (such as lower-level learning targets can be assessed with multiple-choice questions, higher-level targets may require constructed-response questions).

- **Comment:** "What can we do to make our assessments more reliable?"

- **Response:** There are two ways discussed in the video.

  a. Use enough questions to rule out guessing or misunderstanding what students are being asked to do.

  b. Write the questions clearly and make sure students know what they have to include in their answers.

Writing Constructed-Response Questions: Context and Clarity

Present the *Writing Constructed-Response Questions: Context and Clarity* video, which is in the Common Formative Assessments playlist within Global PD.

In this video, Chris Jakicic gives instructions for writing good constructed-response questions. We learn that context and clarity are at the heart of effective constructed-response questions, though they must be provided without giving away the answers.

Discussion Prompts

- **Comment:** "Do all questions need to have a context or just constructed-response questions?"

- **Response:** Not even all constructed-response questions have to include context. Consider the question, "What is the setting of the story?" There is no context necessary. It would be redundant to ask, "In class we studied what the setting of the story is. What is the setting of this story?" Add context when it helps to get students to think in a certain direction in order to answer the question.

- **Comment:** "What if the question clearly asks for three examples from the text and the student provides two really good ones, but not the third?"

- **Response:** Remember that the purpose of formative assessment is to provide students the help or extension they need, not to provide a grade. Many teachers simply return the assessment to the student and ask him or her to "fix" it by finding a third example.

Choosing Stimulus for Constructed-Response Questions

Present the *Choosing Stimulus for Constructed-Response Questions* video, which is in the Common Formative Assessments playlist within Global PD.

In this video, Chris Jakicic addresses text stimulus for constructed-response questions. We learn how additional text stimulus can affect rigor, and receive resources to find stimuli. We also learn how to choose a text based on level of rigor and content.

Discussion Prompts

- **Comment:** "If I'm teaching a novel or a story, can I use that as my stimulus for questions?"

- **Response:** Any text that teachers use as a stimulus should be new to students. If you're reading a novel in class, asking students to provide information that's already been discussed (like "What's the theme of this story?") only guides them to remember what was already discussed. That means that the team must find a short piece of text that it can ask students to read and then answer questions specific to the learning target being assessed.

- **Comment:** "If students can't read grade-level text, can I give them an easier version to read?"

- **Response:** We know that many students are able to demonstrate mastery of a learning target when given an easy text to read. (What's the main idea of this text?) However, this does not make them proficient on that learning target at grade level. Students who are having difficulty with complex text must be taught scaffolding strategies to use in order to make sense of that text.

Building Rubrics to Measure Qualitative Responses

Present the *Building Rubrics to Measure Qualitative Responses* video, which is in the Common Formative Assessments playlist within Global PD.

In this video, Chris Jakicic outlines issues to take into consideration when creating rubrics and determining proficiency, an essential step in assessing constructed responses. We learn to assess different learning targets separately, that there is not necessarily a need for *beyond proficient*, and that criteria for grading should be qualitative, not quantitative.

Discussion Prompt

- **Comment:** "Do all constructed-response questions need a rubric?"

- **Response:** No, only questions that result in various levels of proficiency need a rubric. For example, if a team asks students to delineate the argument and specific claims in a text, the rubric might describe proficiency as: "The student is able to identify the specific place in the text that lays out the author's argument and the specific claims that are made to support it." Partial proficiency might be described as: "The student is able to identify the specific place in the text that lays out the author's argument but is unable to identify the claims the author makes. "No proficiency might be described as: "The student is unable to identify the argument the author is making." However, some constructed-response questions have only one correct response. These questions don't need a rubric (such as for the question, "Who is the main character of the story?").

Activity

In groups, use the "Assessment Item Quality Checklist" reproducible (page 16) to create a constructed-response question and a rubric on chart paper for one of the learning targets that you unwrapped earlier.

Once all teams have completed this action, ask them to walk to another team and review its rubric. Is the context and expectations of the item clear to the student? Is the scoring criterion clear and explicit so that team members are not likely to have different interpretations?

Part 4: Developing Selected-Response Items

Part 4 focuses on developing selected-response items.

Rules for Writing Quality Multiple-Choice Answers

Present the *Rules for Writing Quality Multiple-Choice Answers* video, which is in the Common Formative Assessments playlist within Global PD.

In this video, Chris Jakicic gives suggestions for creating selected-response answers that best reveal what students have learned. We learn common mistakes in crafting answers, as well as how students perceive some answer sets.

Discussion Prompts

- **Comment:** "Should a multiple-choice item be designed so that each distractor represents a different misunderstanding or misconception a student might have?"

- **Response:** This is a great strategy that can help a team know how to respond to students experiencing difficulty. However, this is much more difficult to actually do than a team might think. In mathematics, however, it often works well because the answer might be what a student would get if he or she used the wrong operation, skipped an important step in the solution, or did something specific to the concept being assessed (such as used the wrong order in the order of operations).

- **Comment:** "What should a team do if it can't write three different multiple-choice items around a learning target? For example, teachers want to assess whether students can pick the main character of a story and there's only one way to ask that question. It's unnecessary to have students read three stories and ask them who the main character is three times."

- **Response:** In these cases, it's usually easier to write the question as a constructed-response question (open ended) with no answer choices. Because it's a constructed response, teams only need one question to make it reliable.

Rules for Writing Matching and True or False Questions

Present the *Rules for Writing Matching and True or False Questions* video, which is in the Common Formative Assessments playlist within Global PD.

In this video, Chris Jakicic suggests rules for writing quality matching and true or false questions. We learn basic tips, such as using a maximum of ten items in a matching set, and we also review examples of poorly created questions to better understand what to avoid.

Activity

In groups, on chart paper, write two selected-response questions for one of the learning targets teams unpacked earlier in the day. Make sure to use the "Assessment Item Quality Checklist" reproducible (page 16).

Once each group has had a chance to complete its questions, travel to another table, read another team's selected-response questions, and give the members feedback based on the "Assessment Item Quality Checklist."

Closing

Return to the items on sticky notes that were identified as the largest questions or concerns at the beginning of the day. Have they been answered or addressed? If not, write them down as potential topics to discuss with your virtual coach as part of the post-work.

Post-Work

As teams, use the "Essential Standards Chart" (page 19) and the "Assessment Item Quality Checklist" (page 16) to select an essential standard, identify learning targets, and develop a valid and reliable common formative assessment for at least one learning target.

Work with your administrator to set up a virtual coaching session with a Solution Tree expert and present this work to him or her for constructive feedback and suggestions.

Handout Masters

Assessment Item Quality Checklist

Consider the following general; multiple-choice; true or false, matching, and completion or fill-in; and constructed-response guidelines when crafting assessments. Additionally, consider the formatting, writing, and producing guidelines for assessments.

Following General Guidelines for All Formats

1. Unwrap and unpack standards into learning targets and write questions around the most important targets.

2. Create an assessment planning chart to ensure adequate cognitive demand and number of questions asked per target.

3. Remember the goal is to know whether students know the material, not whether they can use good test-taking strategies to guess the right answer.

4. Provide a sufficient number of items to know whether a student learned, but not so many that the assessment takes too long.

Following Multiple-Choice Guidelines

1. Make sure that each item assesses only one target.

2. State the whole question in item stem.

3. Put the answer choices in an order that makes sense, such as largest to smallest or alphabetical.

4. Be sure there is only one correct or best answer unless directions say otherwise.

5. Keep response options brief and parallel in:

   ▪ Length

   ▪ Grammatical construction

6. Limit use of *all* or *none of the above*.

7. Use *always* and *never* with caution.

8. Vary the number of responses; don't add answers just to make them even.

Following True or False, Matching, and Completion or Fill-In Guidelines

1. True or false items:

    a. Make them entirely true or entirely false as stated.

    b. Avoid negatives, which make questions ambiguous.

    c. Make sure there is only one target per question.

2. Matching items:

    a. Provide clear directions for the match to be made. Indicate if a response can be used more than once or if an item has more than one match.

    b. Include no more than ten items.

    c. Put the responses on the left and the trigger items on the right.

    d. Include only homogeneous items. Do not mix dates, events, and names in a single exercise.

    e. Provide more responses than trigger items.

3. Completion or fill-in items:

    a. Ask a question.

    b. Provide one blank per item.

    c. Do not make length a clue.

    d. Put blank toward the end.

Following Constructed-Response Guidelines

1. Creating questions:

    a. Make the context and the expectations clear to the student.

    b. Don't provide options that allow students to choose areas in which they feel most competent. (You want to know what they really know!)

2. Scoring:

    a. Establish scoring criteria in advance.

    b. Set a policy about nonachievement factors, such as writing skills.

    c. Score collaboratively, if possible.

    d. Score all responses to one exercise at a time. (It's faster!)

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Formatting Assessment Items

1. Be consistent in the presentation of an item type.

2. List the learning target being assessed.

3. Avoid crowding too many questions onto one page.

Writing Directions

1. Write clear, explicit directions for each item type.

2. Indicate how the answer should be expressed. (For example, should *true* or *false* be written, or *T* or *F*? Should numbers be rounded to the nearest tenth? Should students include units such as months, meters, or grams in the answer?)

Producing the Assessment

1. Type the assessment and make sure copies are readable.

2. Proof carefully and double-check the answer key.

3. Ask a colleague to review or take important tests.

References

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Essential Standards Chart

		What Is It We Expect Students to Learn?			
Grade:	Subject:	Semester:	Team Members:		
Description of Standard	**Example of Rigor**	**Prerequisite Skills**	**When Taught?**	**Common Summative Assessment**	**Extension Standards**
What is the essential standard to be learned? Describe in student-friendly vocabulary.	What does proficient student work look like? Provide an example or description.	What prior knowledge, skills, or vocabulary are needed for a student to master this standard?	When will this standard be taught?	What assessments will be used to measure student mastery?	What will we do when students have already learned this standard?

Example of the Five-Step Process for Unwrapping Standards

Step One: Focus on the Key Words			
(Explain) events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a [historical, scientific, or technical text], including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.			
Step Two: Map It Out			
What Will Students Do? (Skills)	**With What Knowledge or Concepts?**	**In What Context?**	**Step Three: Analyze the Target**
			Level of Thinking
Explain	what happened based on specific information in an event, procedure, or idea/concept	contained in historic, scientific, or technical text	Remembering
Explain	why something happened based on specific information in an event, procedure, or idea/concept	contained in historic, scientific, or technical text	Understanding
Implied learning targets: • Negotiate various text structures (such as historic, scientific, or technical text). • Identify key ideas and information within a text. • Summarize (orally or in writing). • Recognize cause-and-effect relationships.			
Vocabulary: Summarize, paraphrase			
Step Four: Determine the Big Ideas			
• There are strategies that good readers use to identify critical information in a text and communicate it effectively to others.			
Step Five: Establish Guiding Questions to Be Answered in Your Instruction			
• How does the way the information is arranged on a page assist me as a reader? • What are strategies that help to organize information that I've learned so that I can share it with others?			

Solution Tree

555 North Morton Street
Bloomington, IN 47404

800.733.6786