Formative Assessment Practices in Sunnyside Unified School District

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Introduction

This report provides a snapshot of the status of formative assessment implementation practiced in Sunnyside Unified School District (SUSD) in Tucson, Arizona in spring 2021. For the purposes of this report, formative assessment is defined as "the process used by teachers and students to notice, recognize, and respond to student learning in order to enhance that learning, during learning." The definition is further operationalized in this study through use of six dimensions of formative assessment outlined in the Formative Assessment Rubrics, Reflection and Observation Protocol (FARROP). The FARROP is a validated classroom observation tool and is further described below.

Since 2015, SUSD has engaged in a multi-year effort to support the development of teachers' formative assessment practices. The 2020–2021 school year represents an exceptional time in this learning journey as educators, leaders, and families responded to the global pandemic. They quickly adapted to virtual and hybrid learning contexts, developed creative solutions for ensuring student accountability, and integrated technology into daily learning.

At the beginning of the pandemic, SUSD district leaders decided that even though the challenges to meeting student needs were higher, it was not the time to "lean back" to make the work easier, but instead, to "lean in" to their educational principles in order to make virtual and hybrid learning meaningful and effective. At Sunnyside, this meant leaning into the principles of formative assessment, and by extension, student agency in learning. They worked on this by focusing on creating coherence across their systems to support teachers and leaders with clear goals and processes. They wrapped formative assessment into their bigger systems (e.g., Curriculum & Instruction, and Accountability); worked to make sure departments and programs were in alignment and communicating with one another; and created the expectation that everyone operate under the formative assessment paradigm, e.g., elevating distributed agency and evidence-based decision-making.

During the 2020–2021 school year, a technical assistance team from the Region 15 Comprehensive Center (R15CC) supported SUSD's ongoing effort to enhance formative assessment practices (including how to translate them to online contexts) by working with 28 teachers (referred to as lab classroom teachers in this report) and 61 site leaders to support their formative assessment knowledge and practices.

In fall 2020, the lab classroom teachers and their school site leaders met monthly in four 90-minute virtual training sessions led by the R15CC technical assistance team to develop classroom "look-fors." The look-fors represent the specific ways lab classroom teachers implement formative assessment elements in their daily practice and are aligned to the

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FARROP. The look-fors describe actions that teachers and students might be seen engaging in if they were observed in the classroom. The training sessions also included larger themes in which the formative assessment practices are embedded and the purposes which they serve, namely, student agency and achievement, collaborative classroom culture, and positive learner identity.

In winter and spring 2021, the R15CC team trained SUSD site leaders to reliably observe and rate formative assessment classroom practices in relation to six FARROP formative assessment dimensions. The leadership training consisted of five virtual 90-minute monthly meetings during which leaders learned about the six formative assessment dimensions and rated practices using the FARROP rubric. These six dimensions are

- Student Peer Feedback

- Student Self-Assessment

- Collaborative Culture of Learning

- Questioning Strategies that Elicit Evidence of Student Learning

- Tasks and Activities that Elicit Evidence of Student Learning

- Extended Thinking through Discourse

For this study, trained site leaders observed lab classroom teachers in their classrooms at the end of the 2020–2021 school year to assess the extent to which they implemented the FARROP formative assessment dimensions. Additionally, a set of nonlab classroom teachers (n = 30) who did not participate in the 2020–2021 formative assessment training was observed using the same rubric. The majority of the nonlab classroom teachers had received some form of formative assessment training in previous years.

This report summarizes findings from the observations, which focused on the extent to which all observed teachers (lab classroom teachers and nonlab classroom teachers) implemented different dimensions of formative assessment and their related indicators, with the goal of highlighting areas where teachers demonstrated proficient formative assessment practice and where there are opportunities to further support teachers' formative assessment implementation. Additionally, this report compares the formative assessment practices of lab classroom teachers who participated in the fall 2020 trainings to the nonlab classroom teachers.

This report introduces the research questions, describes the data collected, and presents key findings. It ends with a summary, reflection questions, and a discussion to guide reflection on the results and the overall project.

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Research Questions

1. To what extent did teachers implement the different dimensions of formative assessment?

2. Are there some formative assessment indicators and dimensions that teachers implemented at higher levels?

3. To what extent are there differences in formative assessment ratings for lab classroom teachers in comparison with nonlab classroom teachers?

Data

The data analyzed represents the results from the observation of 58 primary and secondary teachers' formative assessment practices. Twenty-eight teachers were lab classroom teachers, while 30 were nonlab classroom teachers. The 58 teachers were from 15 different schools. The lab classroom teachers taught across 8 different schools, while the nonlab classroom teachers taught across 10 different schools. Of the lab classroom teachers observed, 3 taught grades 9 through 12, 20 taught grades kindergarten through 5, and 5 taught grades 6 through 8. Information on grades taught was not available for nonlab classroom teachers though the district strove to select nonlab classroom teachers comparable to the lab classroom teachers in terms of teaching contexts. The teachers were all observed at the end of the 2020–2021 academic school year.

The data in this report summarizes results from classroom observations conducted using the FARROP. The six overarching FARROP dimensions used in this study each have 2–4 indicators[1]. Altogether there is a total of 22 indicators. Each dimension is described in Table 1. For each indicator, a teacher received a rating: 1, 2, 3, or 4. Scores of 3 or 4 represent evidence of

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[1] The full FARROP tool includes a total of ten dimensions. Only six were used for this study due to time constraints for the leadership training and observations.
https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2018/07/FARROP_Final%20with%20letters.pdf?id=5b48d5ad1dcb25132c624d9c

proficient practice, while scores of 1 or 2 indicate that, during the observation, a teacher did not demonstrate proficient formative assessment practice or that the practice of the dimension or indicator was not evident. Dimension scores are averages of teachers' scores on the individual indicators within a dimension, and therefore also range from 1–4, with a score of 3 or above representing proficient practice. All teachers had complete data across all indicators.

Table 1. FARROP Dimensions and Dimension Descriptions

Dimension	Description
Student Peer Feedback	This dimension relates to the role of student-to-student feedback. Peer feedback involves reflecting on a peer's demonstration of learning and providing feedback to advance that learning, often in relation to success criteria. While the dimension addresses the teacher's role in ensuring that students are successful in engaging with the peer feedback, the focus is on the ways in which the process allows students to support one another. Research suggests that opportunities to review the work of a peer and to provide feedback are very beneficial to the person providing the feedback, as well as to the person receiving the feedback. Peer feedback can also be provided on student thinking represented orally as it is emerging.
Student Self-Assessment	Self-assessment refers to the process of reflecting on the status of one's thinking or demonstration of learning and making a determination of one's learning relative to the learning goal. This process is important because it provides students with an opportunity to think metacognitively about their learning. Research suggests that improved understanding of one's own learning status is a critical strategy that can lead to advancements in learning. While the dimension addresses the teacher's role in ensuring that students are successful in engaging with opportunities for self-assessment, the focus is on the ways in which the process allows students to meaningfully reflect on their own learning.
Collaborative Culture of Learning	This dimension directly targets the ways in which students and teachers work together, evidenced by a clear focus on learning, collaboration, respect, and an appreciation of multiple viewpoints. Research suggests that classrooms that promote thinking and learning, student autonomy, and students as learning resources for one another are more successful in encouraging lifelong learning. A classroom culture in which teachers and students are partners in learning should be established.
Questioning Strategies that Elicit Evidence of Student Learning	The focus of this dimension is on one way that a teacher can collect evidence of student progress through classroom questioning. Teachers use a range of questioning strategies to collect relevant evidence of student thinking, from more students, more often, and more systematically. Research indicates that students who ask and respond to probing questions think more deeply about their learning and that teachers can use probing questions to frame follow-up questions that shape the further exploration of concepts and understanding at deeper levels.
Tasks and Activities that Elicit Evidence of Student Learning	The focus of this dimension is on those things with which students engage during the lesson that potentially produce evidence of student learning (excluding classroom discussions which are measured by a different dimension). Teachers need to use a range of tasks and activities to collect relevant evidence of student thinking. When students are engaged in quality tasks and activities (on their own, with another student, or in a small group) evidence of students' current learning status can be obtained. While the teacher is the person who selects the tasks and ensures they are connected to the learning goals, the evidence of their appropriateness will come from students and their ability to engage with the tasks.
Extended Thinking through Discourse	This dimension focuses on teachers and students building on one another's comments and providing feedback during class discussions in order to support students' exploration of ideas more deeply and thoughtfully. Teachers attend to student talk in discussions to be able to make inferences about student thinking and adjust instruction appropriately.

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Key Findings

This section presents key findings organized by the three research questions.

Research Question 1: To what extent did teachers implement the different indicators and dimensions of formative assessment?

Teachers' implementation of the different formative assessment indicators and dimensions was examined by looking at average teacher ratings on individual FARROP indicators as well as average ratings on the six different overarching dimensions. In this section, results are presented for all teachers, regardless of whether they were lab classroom teachers or nonlab classroom teachers.

Teachers were rated on 22 indicators. Figure 1 shows the total number of indicators where teachers demonstrated proficient practice (a rating of 3 or 4) which ranged from 0 indicators (15 teachers) to all 22 indicators (1 teacher). Seven of the 58 teachers (12%) demonstrated proficient practice on more than half the indicators. Thirteen teachers (22%) demonstrated proficiency in 5–10 of the indicators, while 38 teachers (65%) demonstrated proficiency on 0–5 indicators. The median number of indicators that teachers demonstrated proficient practice on was 4 of the 22 (about 18% of indicators).

Figure 1. Total Number of Indicators Where Teachers Demonstrated Proficient Practice
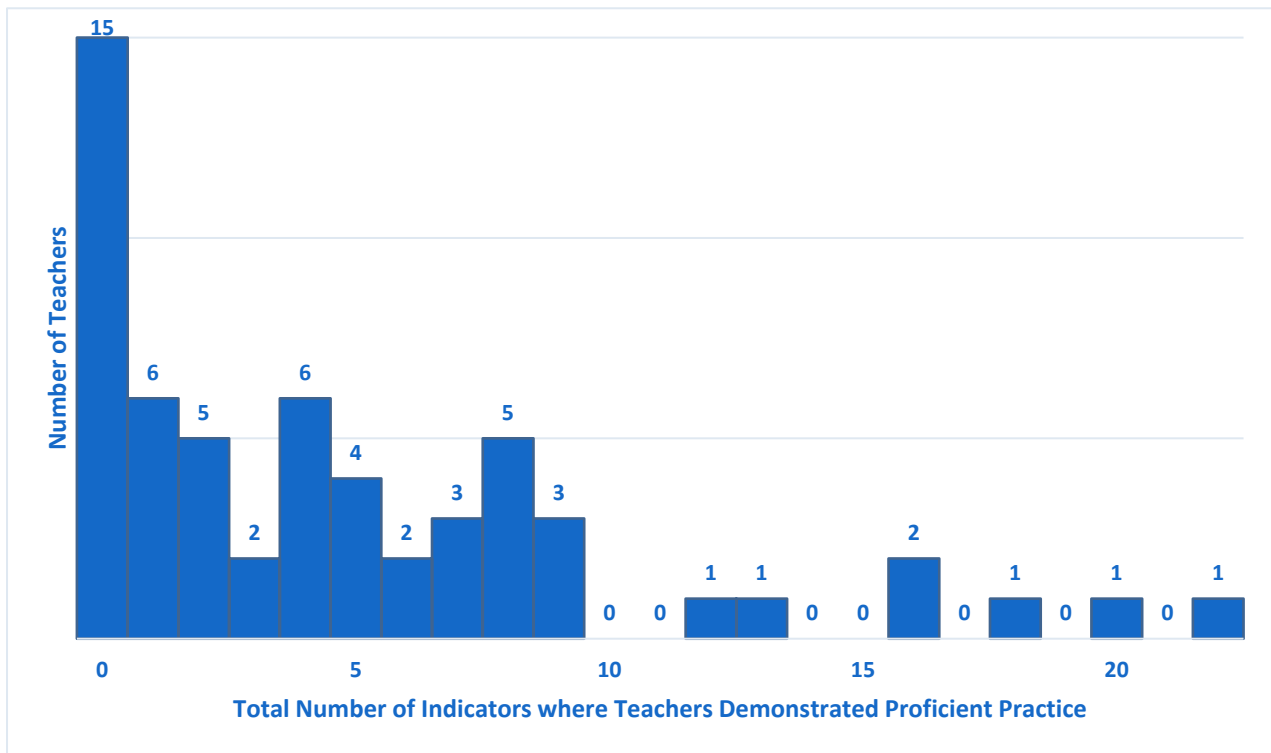
When aggregating the indicators within the six dimensions into an average score and looking across the dimensions

- three teachers demonstrated proficient practice on four or more dimensions,
- four teachers demonstrated proficient practice on three dimensions,
- two teachers demonstrated proficient practice on two dimensions,
- eight teachers demonstrated proficient practice on one dimension, and
- forty-one teachers did not demonstrate proficient practice on any of the dimensions.

Overall, these results suggest that the majority of teachers demonstrated proficient practice on some aspects of formative assessment, as evidenced through the indicator ratings. However, there are opportunities to further support teachers in implementing formative assessment more holistically at the dimension level.

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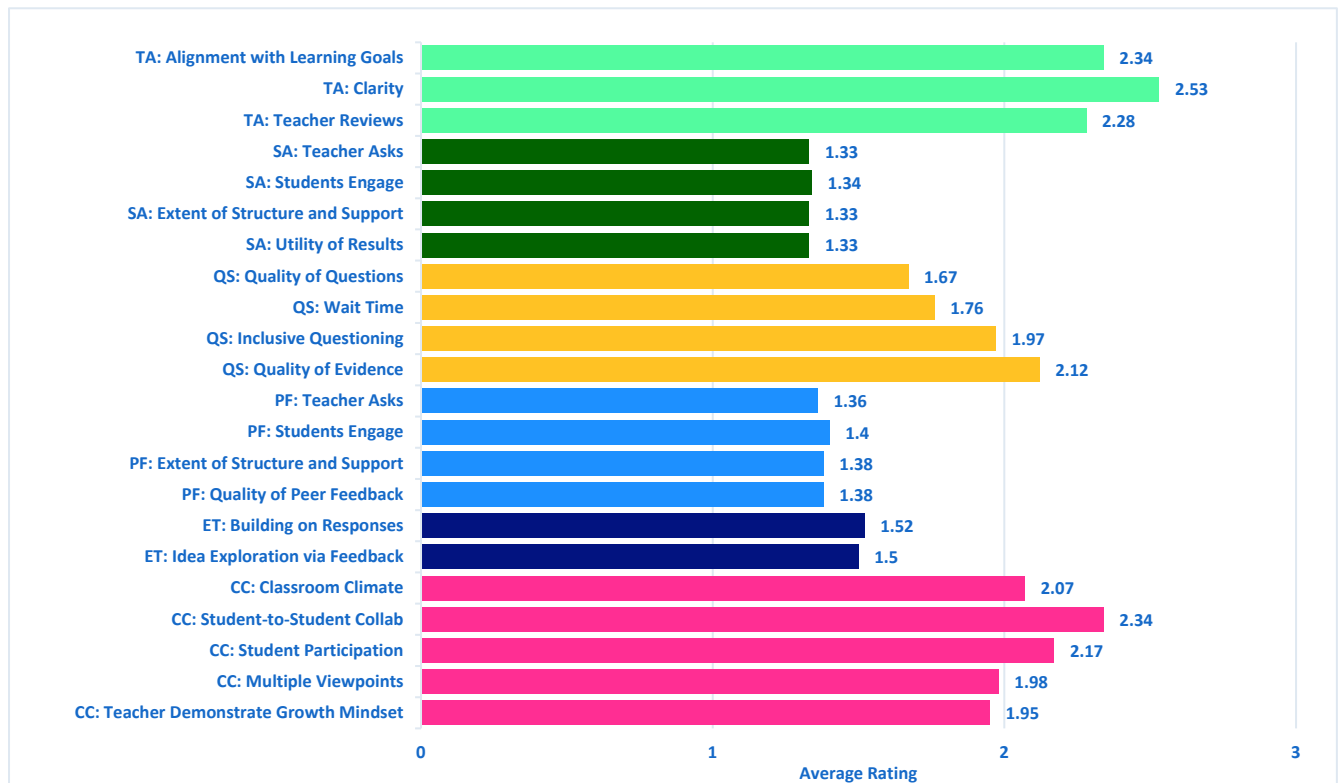REGION 15
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Research Question 2: Are there some formative assessment indicators or dimensions that teachers implemented at higher levels than others?

To answer this question, the average indicator rating was considered across all teachers for each individual FARROP indicator. Table 2 shows the indicator descriptors organized by dimension. Bolded text for each indicator corresponds to the label for each indicator in Figure 2.

Table 2. Indicator Descriptors

Tasks and Activities that Elicit Evidence of Student Learning (TA)	Student Self-Assessment (SA)	Questioning Strategies that Elicit Evidence of Student Learning (QS)
• **Teacher reviews** student work products during lesson. • Students have **clarity** for how to approach the task. • Teacher uses tasks or activities that are in **alignment with learning goals**.	• Teacher provides appropriate **structure and support** in self-assessment task. • **Students engage** in self-assessment task. • **Teacher asks** students to assess their own learning in a complex, quality task. • Self-assessment results **have utility** for students' learning.	• Teacher uses questioning strategies that result in **quality evidence** of student learning. • Teacher uses questioning strategies that are **inclusive of students.** • Teacher employs sufficient **wait time**. • Teacher asks **quality questions** designed to elicit evidence of learning goals and encourage discourse.
Student Peer Feedback (PF)	**Extended Thinking through Discourse (ET)**	**Collaborative Culture of Learning (CC)**
• Peer feedback is **high quality**. • Peer feedback task has **structure and support**. • **Students engage** in peer feedback tasks meaningfully. • **Teacher asks** students to assess peers' work and provide feedback on quality tasks.	• There are continuous feedback opportunities that engage students in **idea exploration via feedback**. • Teachers and students frequently are **building on and from student responses**.	• Teacher demonstrates a **growth mindset**. • Teacher seeks **multiple viewpoints** or approaches. • **Student participation** is spontaneous and respectful. • **Student-to-student collaboration** is evident. • **Classroom climate** is characterized by the perception that students and teachers are responsible for learning.

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## Figure 2. Average Indicator Scores for All Teachers

On average, teachers rated higher on some indicators over others. Specifically, the highest average rating was for the Tasks and Activities: Clarity of Task indicator (Average = 2.53), which measured the extent to which students were clear about the tasks and activities designed to elicit evidence of student learning. This was followed by the indicators Collaborative Culture of Learning: Student-to-Student Collaboration (Average = 2.34), which measured the extent to which students participated in collaborative activities, and Tasks and Activities: Alignment with Learning Goals (Average = 2.34). Other indicators where teachers' average ratings were higher included Tasks and Activities: Teacher Reviews Student Work (Average = 2.28), and Collaborative Culture of Learning: Student Participation (Average = 2.17).

Comparatively lower ratings were observed for the Student Self-Assessment indicators. The indicators measuring (a) if teachers asked students to assess their learning through tasks (Teacher Asks), (b) if the self-assessment task was structured and supported students in completing the self-assessment task (Extent of Structure and Support), and (c) if student self-assessment results had utility for student learning (Utility of Results) all had an average rating of 1.33. The indicator measuring if students were engaged in self-assessment (Students Engage) had a very similar average rating of 1.34.

When indicators were averaged within the six dimensions, there was evidence that teachers rated higher on some dimensions of formative assessment over others. As seen in Figure 3,

teachers rated higher on the dimension of Tasks and Activities that Elicit Evidence of Student Learning, Collaborative Culture of Learning, and Questioning Strategies that Elicit Evidence of Student Learning. In contrast, teachers rated lower on the dimensions of Student Self-Assessment, Student Peer Feedback, and Extended Thinking During Discourse. This indicates that teachers rated higher on dimensions that measure teacher-centered actions verses those that are student centered.

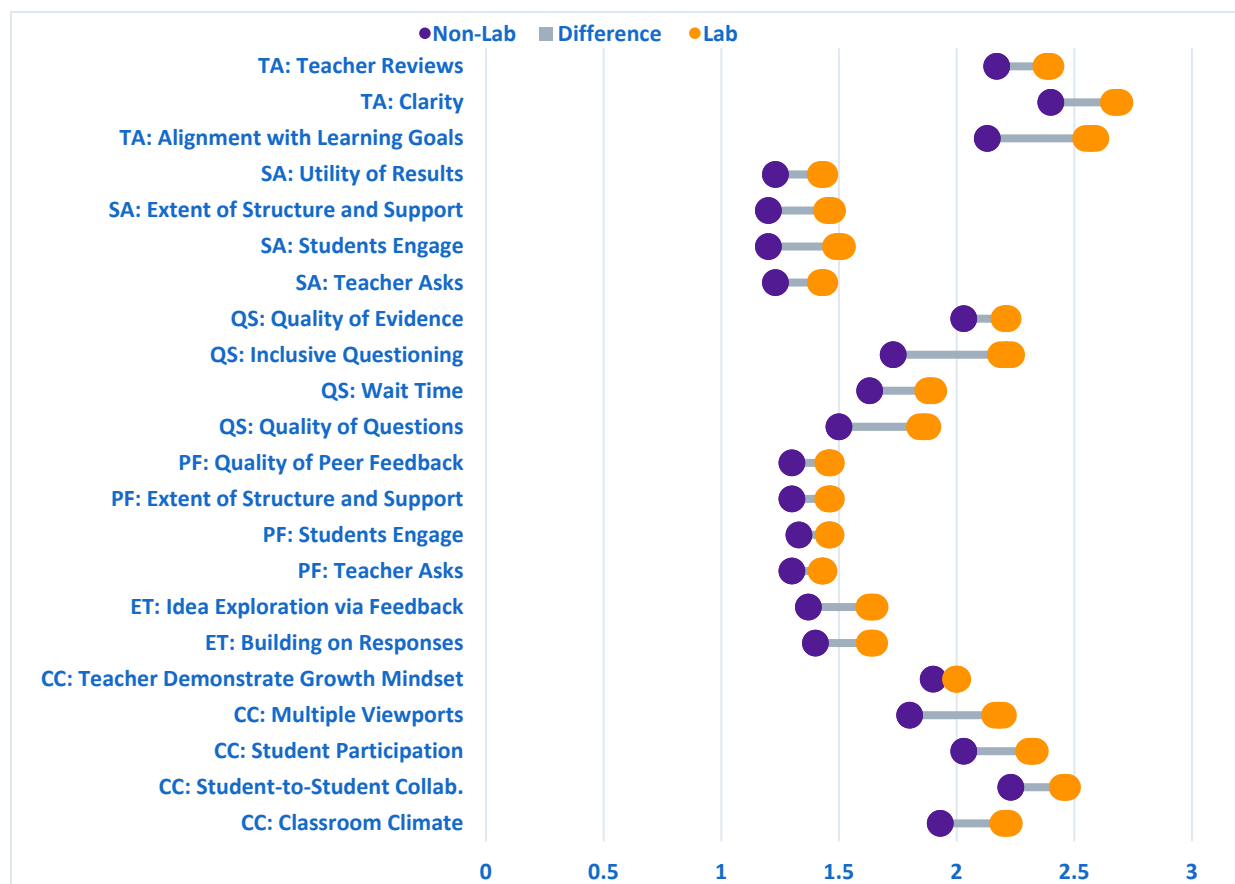### Figure 3. Average Dimension Scores for All Teachers Observed
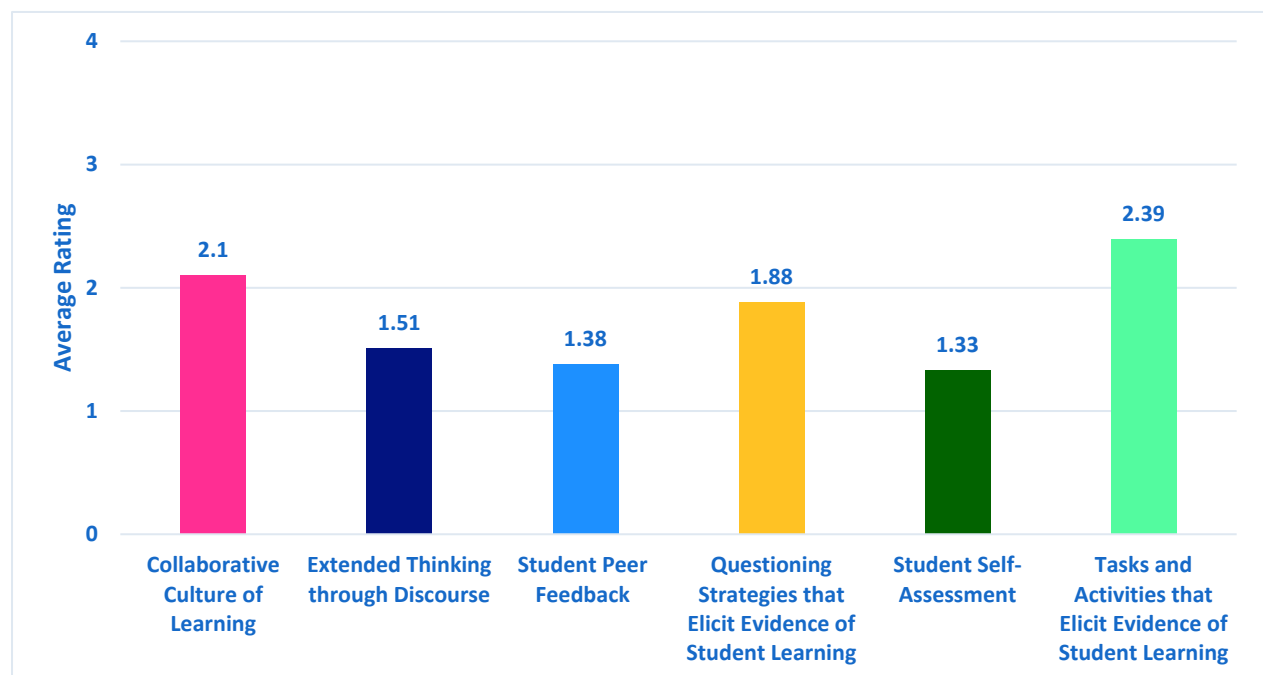
Research Question 3: To what extent are there differences in formative assessment ratings for lab classroom teachers in comparison with nonlab classroom teachers?

The results for research Questions 1 and 2 represent ratings across lab classroom teachers and nonlab classroom teachers. Given that lab classroom teachers received targeted support for formative assessment practice development in 2020–2021, it is of interest to explore the extent to which lab classroom teachers' formative assessment practice ratings differed from nonlab classroom teachers during the observations. Figure 4 presents average indicator-level ratings for lab classroom teachers (represented by gold points in the figure) and nonlab classroom teachers (represented by purple points in the figure). Across all formative assessment indicators, lab classroom teachers rated higher. The largest differences were for
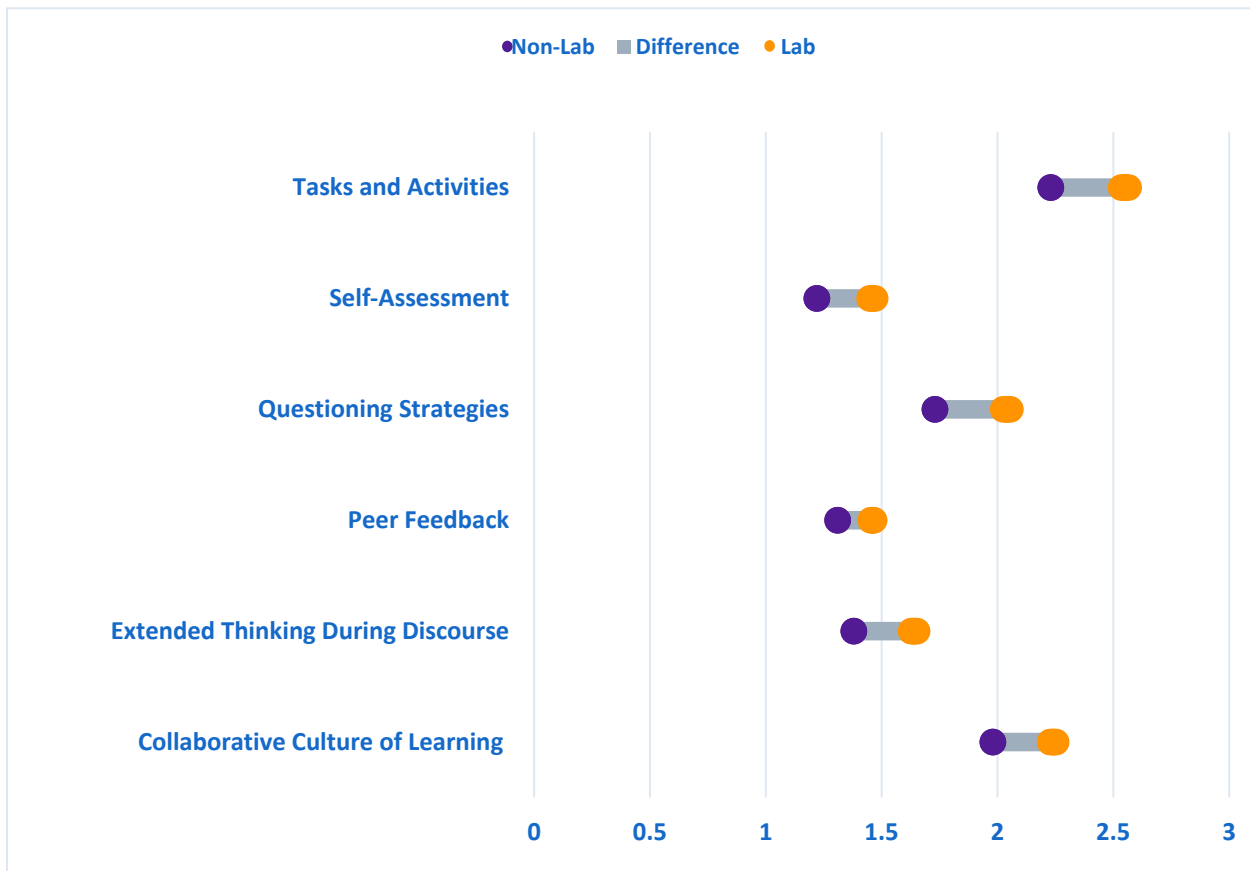
- Tasks and Activities that Elicit Evidence of Student Learning: Alignment with Learning Goals,

- Questioning Strategies that Elicit Evidence of Student Learning: Inclusive Questioning,

- Questioning Strategies that Elicit Evidence of Student Learning: Quality of Questions, and

- Collaborative Culture of Learning: Multiple Viewpoints.

Figure 4. Average Indicator Scores for Lab and Nonlab Classroom Teachers

When looking at the six overarching dimensions, similar trends emerged. Average dimension scores are plotted in Figure 5, again separately for lab classroom teachers (gold points) and nonlab classroom teachers (purple points). The differences were largely consistent across dimensions, with lab classroom teachers rating about 0.20 to 0.30 levels higher across almost all dimensions than nonlab classroom teachers. The smallest differences were between teachers' ratings on the Student Peer Feedback dimension and the Student Self-Assessment dimension, both were dimensions where both lab classroom and nonlab classroom teachers had lower average ratings.

Figure 5. Average Dimension Scores for Lab and Nonlab Classroom Teachers

Summary and Reflection Questions

Across both lab and nonlab classroom teachers, some teachers demonstrated consistent proficient practice on the formative assessment elements, while others were proficient on specific dimensions or demonstrated proficiency on select indicators.

When analyzing the formative assessment ratings more deeply, some key areas of strong formative assessment practices emerge, as well as some opportunities to support teachers in implementing these practices. An area of strength across all teachers was formative assessment

practices focused on Tasks and Activities that Elicit Evidence of Student Learning, where all average indicator scores were above 2 (the only dimension for which this was the case). Another area of strength was teachers' formative assessment practices related to Collaborative Culture of Learning, where almost all indicator scores were at or above 2. Evidence indicated that there are opportunities to support teachers to implement higher-quality or more frequent formative assessment practices in Student Self-Assessment and Student Peer Feedback. This finding spoke to the challenge of shifting the student role in the classroom toward greater agency.

There was evidence that lab classroom teachers, who received support focused on formative assessment during the 2020–2021 academic year, implemented elements of formative assessment at higher rates than teachers who did not receive the same supports. This was consistent across indicators and dimensions, demonstrating that the intervention may have led to stronger awareness, interest, and ability around formative assessment for lab classroom teachers in comparison with their peer teachers who did not receive the training and support.

There are some limitations to this work. Observations were conducted at the end of the academic year, which can be a time where teachers' typical or normal educational practices or structures are disrupted by the end-of-year activities. Additionally, this particular school year was marked by students and teachers moving between virtual, hybrid, and in-person instruction due to the pandemic. Lastly, a singular observation is a snapshot, not a full-length film, of teachers' practice and should be considered alongside other evidence. However, even with these limitations, this report can provide a picture of practice useful in understanding formative assessment implementation trends, inform reflection questions, and support the development of next steps.

Some **reflection questions** to consider:

- Why might some formative assessment dimensions be implemented at lower rates than others? Are there reasons related to teacher training, curriculum requirements, mindsets about students, accountability structures, or other factors that can be addressed?

- Specifically, what challenges and barriers might constrict teachers' ability to engage students in high-quality, inclusive self-assessment opportunities? What supports or resources may address these challenges?

- Specifically, what challenges and barriers might constrict teachers' ability to engage students in providing high-quality, inclusive peer feedback opportunities? What supports or resources may address these challenges?

- What formative assessment support that lab classroom teachers received can be integrated into staff professional learning to support all teachers?

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- What are some ways to provide effective, efficient professional learning to support all teachers in developing their formative assessment practice skill sets?

Discussion

This study was conducted during the larger context of the COVID-19 pandemic which necessarily changed teacher practice. At SUSD, because there was no pre-pandemic observation data, it is unclear if the trend during that time was to strengthen or weaken formative assessment practices, or if this varied widely between teachers. While many teachers expressed interest in exploring what student agency looks and sounds like in virtual learning through formative assessment, it's reasonable to expect that not all teachers were able to enact this in their classrooms given all the other demands placed on them during this period.

The following discussion explores patterns in teacher practice as found in this study. It also speculates about ways districts, and SUSD in particular, can further support teacher formative assessment implementation.

Two Interconnected Patterns

This study demonstrates two interconnected patterns common among schools and districts working to integrate formative assessment practices into their daily instructional routines.[2] One pattern consists of a few teachers fully integrating formative assessment into their daily instructional practice, becoming "bright spots" and models for others. This pattern is reflected in the data in so far that only a few teachers demonstrated proficient practice across multiple dimensions. Overall, 70 percent of teachers did not exhibit proficient practice on any of the dimensions (recall that dimension scores were calculated as an average of the indicator ratings for each dimension). Teachers on average also rated proficient on only 18 percent of the indicators across all dimensions.

For those teachers who *are* centering formative assessment in their instructional practice and rated proficient on various indicators, another common pattern emerges—they attend to their own use of evidence (their formative assessment practice) before they support students to do the same. The data from this study shows, for example, that teachers were much more likely to design tasks and ask questions that facilitated their own evidence gathering rather than incorporate opportunities for students to engage in self-assessment, peer feedback, or

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[2] This assertion is based on our takeaways from working with a variety of schools and districts over the last decade.

discourse during lessons to examine evidence themselves. This is consistent with the findings from the Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) study conducted in 2019 on formative assessment that gathered self-report data extensively from SUSD (one of three Arizona districts in the study). The study found that only 39 percent of responding students reported getting feedback from peers on a regular basis.[3] Two areas that may impact these trends are the training and supports provided to teachers and potential barriers to practice.

Training and Support

Regarding training and support, formative assessment represents a paradigm shift in teachers' ways of working and thinking in so far as it centers daily evidence use in decision-making and creates more student-centered classrooms. As such, the intention of formative assessment training is often to create systemic and sustainable change in classroom dynamics founded on formative assessment principles.

With this in mind, it is important that formative assessment training programs place adequate attention on building teachers' capacity to support students' own formative assessment routines. Many professional learning experiences in formative assessment across different training programs focus on the teacher role and only much later, if at all, address the student role. This may result in teachers shifting their own lesson planning and responsiveness before attending to student engagement in formative assessment. Ensuring that teachers receive appropriate training that enables them to pivot to supporting students in this work is critical to achieve more holistic success in formative assessment.

Based on the model put forth by Mary Scheetz in the article, *Systemic Change and Equity*, to do this work well, teachers need the opportunity to participate in training, have ongoing coaching, engage in supportive peer networks, and be part of an accountability system to monitor progress.[4]

In SUSD, prior to this study, the majority of teachers participated in one or more online formative assessment courses over a period of several years and the lab classroom teachers participated in one semester of facilitated training sessions with additional peer network support. Leaders also engaged in learning formative assessment through various trainings and used its principles to guide their cadre walks (group classroom observations). Some schools also used a video study group structure whereby teachers shared videos of their classroom lessons and got feedback from peers.

[3] Makkonen, R., & Jaquet, K. (2020). *The association between teachers' use of formative assessment practices and students' use of self-regulated learning strategies (REL 2021–041)*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory West. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/pdf/REL_2021041.pdf

[4] Scheetz, M. (2018). Systemic change and equity. *Equity-Centered Capacity Building: Essential Approaches for Excellence & Sustainable School System Transformation*. https://capacitybuildingnetwork.org/article3/

Districts interested in implementing formative assessment may consider using similar supports as employed by SUSD as well as consider adding the following structures to advance formative assessment implementation and shift the student role:

- one-on-one coaching in formative assessment,

- long-term peer network opportunities for all teachers,

- an accountability system where expectations are clearly defined and utilized to monitor progress, and finally,

- leaders alike becoming knowledgeable about formative assessment and participating in these support systems.

In follow up conversations with SUSD district leaders, they indicated that since the 2020–2021 school year, they have also

- added additional support for leaders to provide quality feedback for teachers and develop a clearer understanding of what teacher learning progressions in formative assessment can look like,

- integrated the Susan Brookhart assessment model designed to clarify the balance of different assessment types in schools and classrooms to create coherence, and

- guided coaches, leaders, and teachers to intentionally support the student role in formative assessment.

Barriers to Practice

In terms of considering barriers to practice, it is not uncommon that teachers in this country often have requirements placed on their instructional practice that are incongruous with formative assessment. These may include, for example, prescriptions for curriculum use that make it more difficult to collect evidence during lessons and to adjust upcoming learning strategies based on formative assessment information. Often if teaches are granted flexibility in how they teach the curriculum, they still require targeted training to understand how to modify lesson plans to integrate formative assessment routines including those that center students, i.e., self-assessment, peer feedback, and discourse. Districts implementing formative assessment could benefit from reviewing curriculum and assessment requirements and messaging from leadership. Additionally, districts could provide targeted training in how to modify existing lesson plans to incorporate formative assessment and shift the student role.

Another unintentional barrier to formative assessment implementation may be the demands of the larger assessment system. Many schools and districts struggle with meeting certain student performance requirements, which if not met, can negatively impact district resource

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allocations, policy decisions, and governance structures.[5] While this does not necessarily apply to SUSD, districts can sometimes experience pressure to "teach to the test" in order to attain positive results in this high-stakes environment. In these districts, teachers are frequently required to adhere to pacing plans and administer frequent shorter cycle assessments to be maximally prepared for the end-of-year summative assessment. This reduces teachers' ability to effectively use formative assessment, specifically, to be responsive to students and to slow down enough to build student capacity to monitor their own learning.

An additional factor that may also affect teachers' integration of formative assessment (for themselves and their students) is that site leaders across schools and districts vary to the degree to which they support teachers in implementing formative assessment. This may be due to various reasons, including that site leaders may not all be comfortable with the fact that formative assessment promotes both teacher and student agency, specifically it de-centers decision-making and supports all classroom members to formulate next steps in response to evidence of learning. This philosophical approach may or may not be consistent with leaders' management styles. Districts can support site leaders to be more open to formative assessments' distributed leadership approach through intentional messaging of district values and expectations and providing models and mentors to support this mindset shift.

Related to this are the mindsets of teachers informing what they believe is possible for student learning. Teachers (like leaders) may not see the value, or believe in the possibility, of successfully sharing control over learning processes with others, particularly students. If they do believe in promoting this model of student agency, they still may not know how to build students' capacity to make informed decisions about their learning. Members of the SUSD leadership team have shared that they believe some educators in their district hold limiting beliefs about their students. More specifically, the leadership team reports that some teachers believe that because their students face hardships outside of school due to issues of poverty (81 percent of students were eligible for the national lunch program in 2019[6]), they feel they need to keep demands low on students in the classroom.

While many districts work hard to shift this type of thinking to support high expectations for all students through intentional messaging and the provision of a rigorous curriculum, it is possible that this sentiment still lingers. To combat low expectations, site leaders may communicate to teachers that they need to implement the curriculum without modifications to keep its rigor intact. This could inadvertently result in teachers' not incorporating formative assessment routines into their lesson plans.

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[5] Shepard, L. A., Diaz-Bilello, E., Penuel, W. R., & Marion, S. F. (2020). *Classroom assessment principles to support teaching and learning*. Center for Assessment, Design, Research and Evaluation, University of Colorado, Boulder.

[6] Arizona Department of Education, Accountability & Research Data. (2019). http://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/data/

That said, this study demonstrated that in SUSD there were standout teachers who are extraordinary models for others attempting to follow their path. SUSD continues to make strides in formative assessment through addressing challenges at the systems level and following the mantra, "there is no hierarchy in learning." Through this, they demonstrate the possibilities that exist for centering evidence use in daily learning and including students as equal partners. Teachers who are more advanced in their formative assessment practice can be supported to share their work and the impact it has on student learning in their classrooms. This can sustain momentum and build capacity for formative assessment among teachers and leaders who are at more emergent stages in their own implementation of formative assessment.