

Preface

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics asked our task force to compile a resource for classroom teachers that focuses on formative assessment and classroom practices aligned with *Curriculum Focal Points: A Quest for Coherence, Principles and Standards for School Mathematics*, and the *Common Core State Standards*. The National Mathematics Advisory Panel in 2008 cited scientific research linking improvement in student performance to effective implementation of formative assessment. The underlying premise was that national and state standards are the basis of the mathematics curriculum. Selecting rich problems, activities, and tasks that align with standards and frameworks is possibly one of the most challenging aspects of teaching mathematics. Assessing student understanding of the mathematics content involved in those tasks is another challenge that teachers face daily.

Linking assessment to everyday classroom instruction requires a shift in both thinking and practice. For many—educators, parents, students, politicians, and the media—the term *assessment* often means *score* or *grade*. The assessment they are thinking about is best described as *assessment of learning*, which traditionally does result in a grade or score. When thinking about assessment, many need to shift away from the ideas of tests, letter or numerical grades, or passing or failing as a means to flesh out a student’s thinking and reasoning. When assessment focuses on evidence of student learning, teachers must work differently. Including anticipated student responses must become part of the planning for each lesson. To accommodate the various levels of understanding, you can examine the problem or task and revise it to furnish the necessary scaffolding that struggling students might need, as well as revising it to offer the challenges that students who demonstrate proficiency require.

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We hope that you find our suggestions helpful as you move toward embedding formative assessment—assessment for learning—in your classrooms.

—The Writing Team