

# PREFACE

The Elementary Mathematics Specialists and Teacher Leaders Project (<http://www.mathspecialists.org>) endeavors to both identify and address challenges and concerns expressed by the mathematics specialists/instructional leaders and classroom teachers with whom we work, both regionally and nationally. One of those challenges that has been regularly expressed is related to assessment. What we were hearing were comments, like those above, that appeared to be clearly seeking to understand the role of assessment generally, but, in particular, how it could and should impact classroom instruction.

Our efforts for the past few years have been dedicated to addressing the important role of formative assessment and its everyday connection to planning and instruction. Our analysis revealed, as others have noted, that we actually do know a lot about formative assessment, and one of the things we know is that it can and does make a difference. We also found that when we asked teachers and mathematics specialists/leaders about formative assessment, we received many different responses and definitions. Additionally, far too many of our respondents indicated that assessment, to them, was a “special moment” often defined by others, as in end-of-year external assessments, rather than regularly connected to their planning and teaching. Finally, we recognized an overload of publications, actual published formative assessments, worksheets, and services advertised as the formative assessment “fix” for the classroom or school level.

This book has been guided by the research of Wiliam and Thompson (2007) and focuses on the importance of minute-by-minute and day-by-day or short-cycle formative assessment and particular strategies for effective formative assessment. It’s all about assessment to inform teaching and learning—every day. *The Formative 5* represents a distillation and validation of classroom-based formative assessment techniques that teachers can use on a regular basis. We think of the Formative 5 techniques as a palette of five “colors” that teachers can use, sometimes mixing the colors to find the best way to formatively assess as well as guide planning, teaching, and learning every day.

The book’s chapters include an introductory chapter that discusses issue and opportunities related to assessment in general, and formative assessment in particular, and also prepares readers for the following specific chapters dedicated to each of the Formative 5

assessment techniques: Observations (Chapter 1), Interviews (Chapter 2), Show Me (Chapter 3), Hinge Questions (Chapter 4), and Exit Tasks (Chapter 5). The Formative 5 chapters each include suggestions for use of that particular technique in the classroom as well as accompanying tools that can be used to guide planning and teaching and record student responses. You will find blank versions of the tools that you may download and adapt for your own use at the book's companion website, <http://resources.corwin.com/Formative5>. In Chapters 2 and 3, you'll also find QR codes that link to audio and video samples we have captured of students engaged in interviews and Show Me moments so that you can see their work and hear their thinking. These are meant to demonstrate what these techniques look and sound like as captured in the classroom. Chapter 6, the book's final chapter, summarizes and addresses frequently asked questions related to the previous chapters and provides comments designed to encourage and support YOUR implementation of the Formative 5. Finally, the book's appendix can be used to guide a book study that directs reading and related discussion of each of the Formative 5 techniques as well as their integration within an everyday classroom implementation plan for formative assessment.