

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT, PRIMARY

Formative assessment: strongly valued, used in many forms

New survey evidence from Australian primary schools, translated for primary practice.

How much of your own formative assessment is planned in advance, and how much is a read of the room?

In one line

A signal about belief and habit, not a tested method: in one Australian survey, 141 primary teachers described formative assessment in positive terms, occurring in both formal and informal, and both planned and unplanned forms, and the study's own authors call for strengthening more deliberate practice.



Teachers describe formative assessment in positive terms

A survey of 141 teachers across nine suburban Australian primary schools asked what formative assessment meant to them and how they used it, analysed using exploratory factor analysis and descriptive statistics. Teachers described it in positive terms, which the study reports as six positive views, and said it happens before, during and after teaching, in both formal and informal, and both planned and unplanned forms.

How teachers described using it

Listed in the order the study presents them, not ranked by strength; the abstract gives no figure for how widely each view was held.

- ✓ **An ongoing, integrated part of everyday teaching** · in the study's words, "an ongoing, integrated process within teaching practice"
- ✓ **A way to work out where each learner is right now** · and a valid, reliable way to track progress and inform teaching
- ✓ **Useful for improving teaching practice** · and for feedback that runs both ways, to learners and to teachers themselves
- ✓ **Rated valuable and useful** · one of the six positive views the study reports

The survey, in numbers

What we know about who was asked, and how.

141
teachers surveyed

9
suburban primary schools

How teachers said they use it

Teachers said it occurs before, during and after teaching, in both formal and informal moments, and in both planned and unplanned forms.

FACTORS TESTED AGAINST PERCEPTIONS

- ✗ Years of teaching experience: no significant difference
- ✗ Year group taught: no significant difference
- ✗ Participation in professional learning: no significant difference

Professional learning was linked to how often teachers used formative assessment, not to their perceptions of it; an association, not a tested cause.

Adapt these forms across your subjects and classes

Worth trying, not proven: the study surveyed teacher perceptions and self-reported practice across nine Australian primary schools. What follows are sensible ways the same forms of formative assessment could work across your subjects and classes, our reading, not the study's claim.

Three moves worth adapting

MOVE	LITERACY / ENGLISH	MATHS	WIDER CURRICULUM
Weave a check into the task itself	"I'll read one sentence with each of you as I circulate."	"Show me your working on question three as I go round."	"Explain one new fact to your partner before we move on."
Get a fast, no-prep read of where learners are	"Thumbs up if confident, sideways unsure, down if stuck."	"Whiteboards up: more or less than fifty?"	"Traffic-light your grasp of today's key term."
Add one planned check alongside your instinctive reads	"One exit-ticket sentence at the end of the lesson."	"One question near the end to test today's method."	"One question for your least-confident group before the plenary."

Adapt it by class

Quiet or reluctant-talk classes	Lean on the fast, no-prep read (thumbs or whiteboards) so no one has to speak up to be seen.
Confident, fast-finishing classes	Lean on the planned check, so pace does not outrun understanding.
Mixed-attainment or foundation groups	Lean on weaving checks into the task itself, so checking happens little and often, not in one high-stakes moment.
EAL or SEND learners	Pair the fast read with a visual or physical signal, such as colour cards, rather than relying on spoken responses alone.

Start with one

If you try just one thing this week, try the fast, no-prep read. It asks nothing extra of your planning and gives you an instant sense of who needs more before you carry on.

How much weight should you put on this?

● Early signal

One exploratory, self-report survey of 141 teachers across nine Australian schools; no classroom observation and no control group.

This is what teachers said about themselves, not what an observer saw in their lessons: a promising signal, not a proven method.

We could only access the published abstract, not the full paper, so we don't have the exact numbers behind each finding, and none have been invented to fill the gap.

It comes from suburban Australian schools, so how far this travels to UK or international classrooms is untested; see the previous page for sensible ways to adapt it.

What this means for you: treat the moves on the previous page as worth testing and watching in your own classroom, not as a method to adopt wholesale.

Pick one lesson, plan one deliberate check

Pick one lesson this week and add a single planned check alongside your usual in-the-moment reads: an exit ticket, a specific cold-call question, or a quick written response near the end. You don't need to change everything you already do well; you're adding one deliberate moment to what's often instinct.

Try it and watch: notice which learners' understanding that planned check reveals to you that you might otherwise have missed. That's your own evidence, not the study's, so give it a few lessons, not just one.

Go deeper: planning a deliberate check into your next lesson is easier with a framework to build against. Open a free account to plan it at app.structural-learning.com.

Structural Learning: evidence without the hype.