

The Association between Teachers' Use of Formative Assessment Practices and Students' Use of Self-Regulated Learning Strategies

Formative assessment is a set of practices that enable teachers and students to examine how learning is progressing, so that teaching and learning activities can be adjusted as needed. If students notice a discrepancy between where they are in understanding a lesson and where they need to be, formative assessment encourages them to take corrective action through self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning is a proactive process in which students select an appropriate learning strategy, such as getting feedback from the teacher or from peers, reorganizing information, or trying to make new connections to prior learning. Having prioritized these classroom strategies, three Arizona school districts (Chandler Unified School District in Phoenix, Flagstaff Unified School District, and Sunnyside Unified School District in Tucson) surveyed teachers and students in grades 3–12 in spring 2019 to take stock.¹ The purpose of the surveys was to better understand the associations between teachers' formative assessment practices and training and students' use of self-regulated learning strategies and to inform teacher development efforts moving forward. Because fewer than half of the districts' teachers and students responded to the surveys, the results may not be fully representative. However, the findings are still relevant to policy because they reflect the perceptions of more than 1,200 teachers and more than 24,000 students on an important learning topic.

Key findings

- **Two-thirds of responding students frequently tracked their own progress, but fewer than 40 percent frequently solicited feedback from their teacher or peers.** Meanwhile, nearly 90 percent of responding teachers frequently gave students feedback, but only half frequently provided occasions for students to give feedback to one another.
- **Responding teachers who participated in formative assessment training used slightly more formative assessment practices weekly than teachers with no training.** Responding students in classrooms with teachers who participated in formative assessment training used self-regulated learning strategies more frequently than students whose teachers had no training.
- **There was only a small positive association between the frequency of teachers' formative assessment practices and the average number of self-regulated learning strategies that their students used.** The association was stronger in elementary school classrooms and in science, technology, engineering, and math classrooms.
- **Some of teachers' least frequently used formative assessment practices—facilitating student peer feedback and self-assessment—had stronger positive associations with the average number of student self-regulated learning strategies.** The more frequently that teachers reported using these practices, the more self-regulated learning strategies their students reported using.

1. The response rate was 38 percent for teachers and 47 percent for students, and it could not be determined how representative the responses of this sample are of the participating districts. However, given the wide interest in formative assessment and self-regulated learning in Arizona and across the United States, findings from surveys of such large numbers of students and teachers are still of interest. Additional research, perhaps with a representative sample, is recommended to more deeply understand the issues raised in this study.