

# "Modernizing Assessment Techniques: Enhancing Student Participation and Success in Telangana's Formative Assessment Cycles"

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## **What you will learn?**

1. Introduction
2. Background of the Study
3. Data collection and Analysis
4. Analysis of Teachers' and Experts' Responses
5. Teachers' Innovations in Formative Cycles
6. Suggested Measures to change teacher's attitude and belief system
7. Recommendations to Improve Formative Assessment Tools
8. Conclusions

## **Objectives:**

1. To identify and document the current practices of secondary school teachers during formative assessment cycles.
2. To analyze the challenges faced by teachers in assessing students' progress and participation during formative assessment.
3. To propose strategies to address the identified problems faced by teachers and students during formative assessment cycles.
4. To explore and document best practices of effective teachers in conducting formative assessment.
5. To investigate methods for incorporating best assessment practices such as self-assessment, peer assessment, use of rubrics, maintaining portfolios, and providing constructive feedback into formative assessment cycles.

## **1. Introduction:**

In Telangana state there are four formative cycles every year at the secondary level which are assigned 20 percent weight in the overall grade. In English Language, there are four components: Read and Reflect, Written Works, Projects and Slip Test with 5% weightage each. Most of the teachers are struggling to track and assess students' performance and participation during formative cycles due to various reasons such as lack of time, lack of understanding of formative tools and lack of formative assessment concepts. Even administrators are also concentrating much on quantitative data obtained through paper-pencil tests instead of qualitative data to

assess students' performance during the course of study. Teachers are spending much time recording their marks and grades in different formats which are not at all useful and in no-way connected to students' performance on language use or helpful to support students' language development. . But some teachers are doing well by practicing innovative strategies of assessment and are getting good results by maintaining students' portfolios and use of rubrics to assess their students' performance. This research aims to conduct surveys, personal interviews and opinion polls of different stakeholders such as policy makers and practitioners and collate their perceptions as a first step towards finding appropriate ways forward.

This research study therefore attempts to understand present practices of secondary school teachers during their formative assessment cycles and also elicits the best practices of effective teachers to address the problems of teachers and students during formative assessment. This paper thus documents effective practices so that policy makers, administrators and teachers, particularly those who worked as resource persons will understand how to track and assess students' performance and participation.

### **During our research we address the following exploration questions:**

What are the present practices of teachers who innovate and experiment during their formative assessment cycles?

1. What are the challenges of teachers while assessing students' progress and participation?
2. How to address the problems of teachers and students during formative assessment cycles?
3. What are some of the best practices of teachers during formative assessment cycles?
4. How to incorporate best assessment practices like self-assessment, peer assessment, use of rubrics, maintaining portfolios and constructive feedback techniques in formative assessment cycles?

## **2. Background of study:**

I am employed in a government secondary school in Telangana, where the majority of institutions are situated in rural India. The students attending these schools are typically first-generation learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In most of these schools, the medium of instruction is in the regional language, Telugu. However, there has been a recent government decision to establish English

medium schools. As a consequence, teachers initially appointed for Telugu medium instruction are now compelled to teach in English medium sections as well.

In the past decade, the Telangana government introduced Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE). This initiative included the implementation of formative assessments to gauge the students' learning progress. Unfortunately, many teachers struggled to comprehend the concept of formative assessment and its role in enhancing student learning. This lack of understanding has resulted in confusion among educators.

My research aims to address the gaps that teachers encounter during the four formative assessment cycles, though it is mainly focused on language assessment but most of my findings are applicable to non-language subjects also. Additionally, it seeks to identify and share best practices employed by teachers to benefit the broader community.

Formative assessment plays a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape, providing educators with insights into students' progress and areas of improvement. In Telangana, the implementation of four formative assessment cycles each year at the secondary level reflects a commitment to holistic evaluation. This literature review explores existing knowledge on formative assessment practices, challenges faced by teachers, and effective strategies employed globally.

### **3. Data collection and Analysis:**

I have conducted informal interviews with practicing teachers, specifically those who have served as resource persons during in-service teacher training sessions across different districts. It's important to note that the data gathered is solely based on the perspectives of actively engaged teachers and may not necessarily reflect the opinions of the majority.

### **4. Analysis of Teachers' and Experts' Responses:**

#### **4.1. Difference between Unit Test and Formative Assessment**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Unit Test</b>	<b>Formative Assessment</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Measures what students have learned at the end of a unit	Ongoing evaluation during the Teaching-Learning Process (TLP)

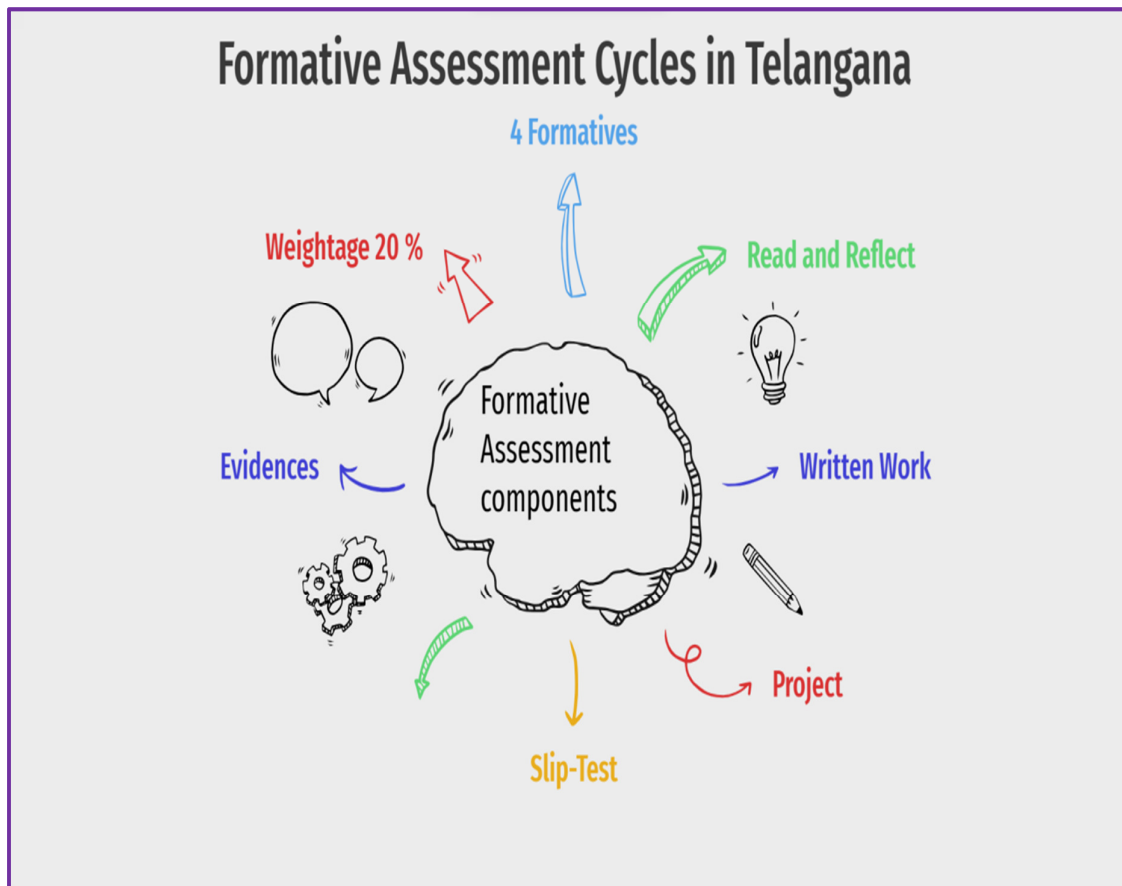
Aspect	Unit Test	Formative Assessment
<b>Feedback</b>	Feedback is often absent	Continuous feedback is provided, aiding in understanding strengths and weaknesses
<b>Focus</b>	Emphasis on completing syllabus and conducting tests	Focus on student learning and understanding
<b>Teachers' Role</b>	Predominantly active role of the teacher	Teacher acts as a facilitator, creating a conducive learning environment
<b>Opportunities for Improvement</b>	Limited emphasis on improvement	Provides opportunities for teachers to modify instruction based on performance evidence
<b>Evidence Collection</b>	Performance evidence collected at the end of a unit	Ongoing collection of evidence during the TLP
<b>Students Involvement in Feedback</b>	Limited engagement with teacher comments	Students actively discuss and learn from teachers' comments
<b>Comments Approach</b>	Often judgmental comments on performance	Constructive comments aimed at improvement
<b>Collaborative Learning</b>	Limited collaborative learning opportunities	Encourages students to discuss and enhance understanding through feedback discussions

#### 4.2. Components of Formative Assessment Tools and their Effectiveness

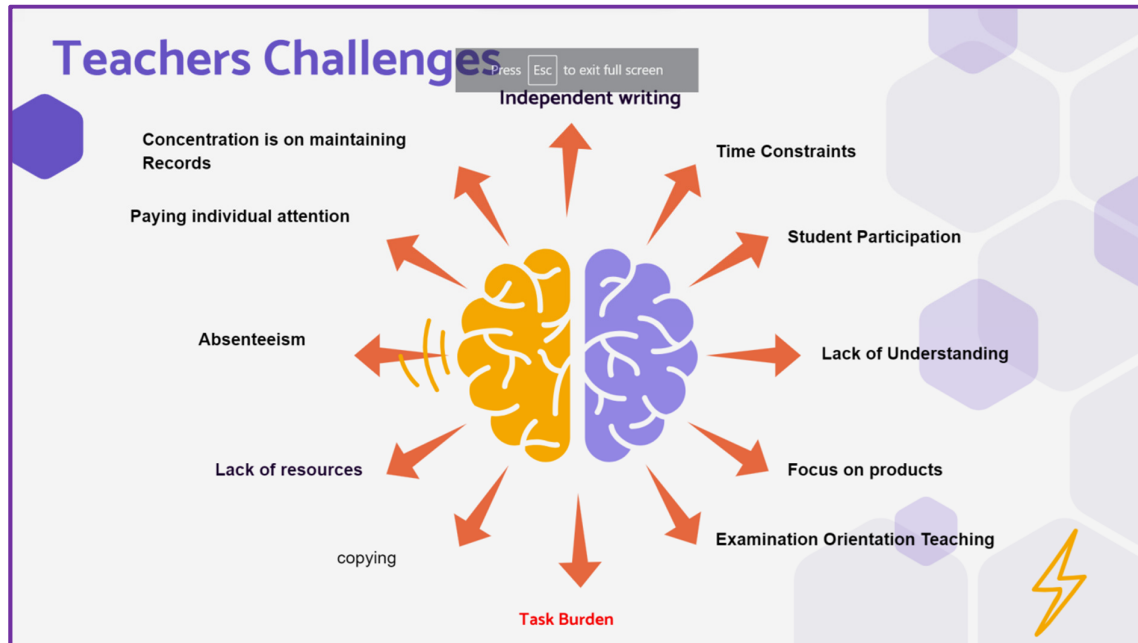
The teachers find various components of Formative Assessment to be highly beneficial in improving students' language performance. **"Read and Reflect"** is praised for its ability to help children express themselves effectively. **"Written Works"** is acknowledged for its role in enhancing writing skills, despite the presence of mistakes, as it provides valuable learning experiences. **"Project Works"** is seen as a valuable tool for facilitating learning, and **"Group Presentation"** is recognized for fostering leadership qualities among students.

The utilization of online resources, such as Googling, is viewed as an effective means for students to explore new aspects of language independently. Formative tools are commended for creating a space for children to actively discuss language items, involving them fully in the learning process. Importantly, these tools are seen as allowing children to make mistakes and learn from them, fostering a positive learning environment.

The **Slip Test** is acknowledged for its role in helping students express what they have learned during formative cycles. Overall, the formative assessment tools are considered instrumental in improving students' language competency, both orally and in written form. They are viewed as not only providing valuable learning experiences but also promoting autonomy among learners by offering opportunities to explore language elements on their own.



### 4.3. Challenges of Formative cycles



### 4.4. Shift from Unit Test to Formative Assessment

The expectations of the Policy makers and Experts who were involved in bringing the reforms in the Evaluation process in Telangana State in switching over from Unit tests to Formative Assessments is as follows:

1. **Integration into Learning:** Expectations was that to make an assessment becomes an integral part of the learning process, occurs during the Teaching-Learning Process (TLP) and will be continuous. The goal is for students to learn during the process of assessment i.e Learning in Assessment.
2. **Avoiding Memorization:** Formative assessment is seen as a departure from the one-day match scenario of unit tests, which tends to promote memorization. The belief is that formative cycles, with the use of assessment tools, provide a more comprehensive evaluation of students' performance.
3. **Stress-Free Learning:** The aim is to alleviate the stress associated with examinations, creating an assessment system that supports further learning rather than inducing anxiety.
4. **Real-World Application:** Formative assessment is expected to address the application of language in real-life situations, encouraging a holistic approach to language teaching.

5. **Tailored Teaching:** Teachers are expected to tailor their classroom transactions based on formative assessment insights. This includes understanding students' strengths and weaknesses and implementing a more personalized and effective teaching approach.
6. **Performance and Fearlessness:** The hope is that students will perform well and approach assessments fearlessly, fostering a positive learning environment.
7. **Feedback and Re-teaching:** Formative assessment is anticipated to provide valuable feedback for teachers, allowing for re-teaching and adjustments in instruction based on the identified strengths and weaknesses of students.
8. **Lack of Tracking System:** There is a recognition of the need for a tracking system to monitor and evaluate the work of teachers, indicating a desire for accountability and improvement in the education system.

The above expectations could be summarized as emphasize the shift towards a more student-centric, continuous, and holistic formative assessment approach, aiming to enhance the learning experience and outcomes in the state's educational system.

#### **4.5. Certain Observations and Suggestions to Improve the Formative Assessment as opined by the Experts**

1. **Adoption Varies:** Some teachers have embraced formative assessment methods effectively, understanding their benefits. However, a portion of educators still adheres to traditional approaches, indicating a variation in adoption levels among teaching professionals.
2. **Positive Impact:** Formative assessment is acknowledged for its significant contribution to both learners and teachers. It is seen as a helpful tool in enhancing the learning experience for students and providing valuable insights for teachers to tailor their instructional strategies.
3. **Change, but Not as Expected:** While there has been a noticeable change in teaching practices, it falls short of the expected transformation. This suggests that the implementation of formative assessment has brought about some improvements but has not fully realized the anticipated level of change.
4. **Persistence of Rote Learning:** Despite the introduction of formative assessment, a considerable number of teachers still rely on rote learning and memorization techniques. This indicates a challenge in shifting away from traditional methods of teaching and evaluation.



5. **Deviation from TLP Process:** The Teaching-Learning Process (TLP) is not consistently adhered to as suggested. Some teachers may not be fully aligning their teaching practices with the intended TLP process, highlighting potential gaps in implementation.
6. **Need for Mentoring:** The observations underscore the necessity for a mentoring-type monitoring system. This implies that a more supportive and guiding approach may be beneficial to ensure that teachers effectively integrate formative assessment practices into their classrooms.

## 5. Teachers' Innovations in Formative Cycles:

During the formative cycles, teachers have experimented with various innovative approaches to enrich the learning experience for students. One novel practice teachers introduced was incorporating a review of news articles or newspapers as part of the formative assessment. This allowed students to engage with real-world language usage and current events, enhancing their comprehension and analytical skills.

To enhance authenticity in language learning, teachers integrated the use of authentic materials, such as articles, advertisements, or excerpts from literature. This approach exposed students to genuine language usage, contributing to a deeper understanding and application of language skills in real-life contexts.

Lastly, teachers experimented with situational teaching during formative cycles. By presenting language in context-specific situations, students were better able to apply their language skills in practical scenarios, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the language.

Overall, these innovative practices were aimed at making formative assessment cycles more dynamic, engaging, and effective in enhancing students' language performance.

**A. Teachers' Engaging Instructions:** Most of the teacher's instructions are general which are not helpful for the students' to understand the task well. So if we give the engaging instructions to them it is easy for the students to perform their activities.

The following table shows the difference between general Instructions and engaging instructions of a teacher for various components of formative assessment cycles.

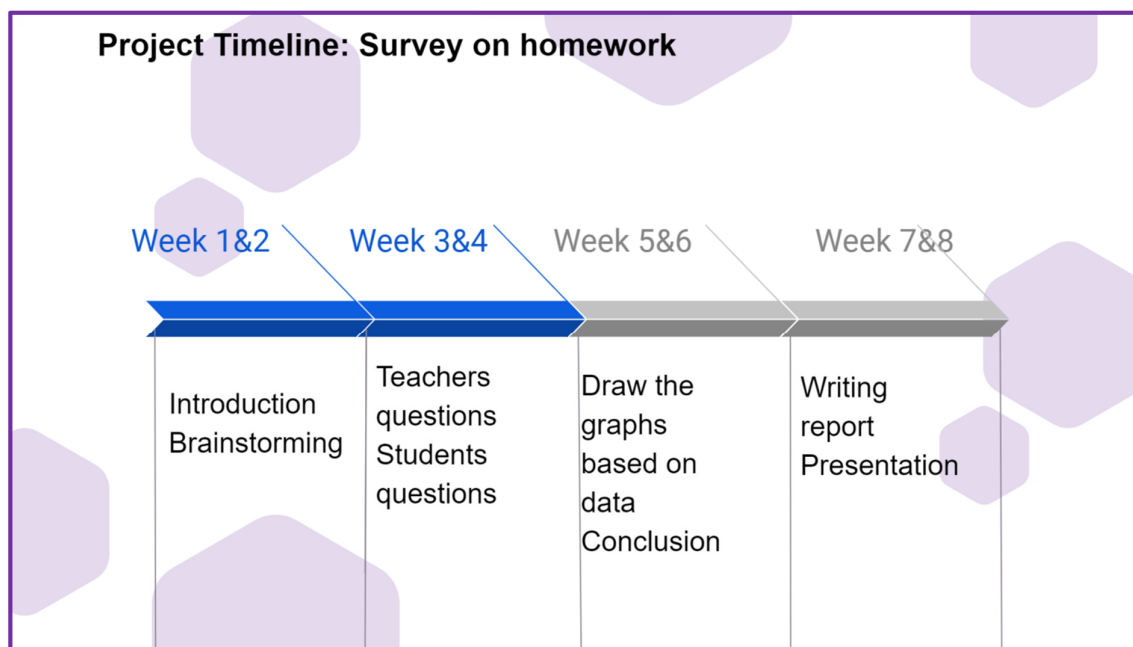
Engaging Instructions	General Instructions
<p>Read the lesson, while reading underline the words which are familiar to you.</p> <p>Read the lesson and Share what you understand with your friend.</p>	<p>Read the lesson</p>
<p>Write the profile of Sachin while writing do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Read Biography of Sachin</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> While reading make note of Important events of his life like Family, Education, Career, Records, Awards etc</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prepare profile of Sachin using the above notes</li> </ul>	<p>Write a profile of Sachin Tendulkar</p>
<p>Read and Reflect the New article given to you, while reading keep the following questions in your mind</p>	<p>Read and reflect the New article Given to you</p>

Engaging Instructions	General Instructions
<p>Read and Reflect the New article given to you, while reading keep the following questions in your mind</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What is the News article?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What is the main Idea?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What interests you most?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How would you react If you were in a similar situation?</li> </ul>	<p>Read and reflect the New article Given to you</p>

Engaging Instructions	General Instructions
<p>Do the project and follow the steps involved in it.</p> <p>TV Program survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Introduction</li> <li>□ Questions to collect data</li> <li>□ Collect information</li> <li>□ Group discussion</li> <li>□ Make some inferences</li> <li>□ Write findings</li> <li>□ Writing conclusion and presentation</li> </ul>	<p>Complete the project given at the end of the textbook</p>

**B. Project Works:** While asking the students to do the project work teachers generally never thought of creating a time-line, most of them consider this as a onetime activity so the students instead of doing projects on their own they copy and paste the information from different sources.

Time-line of the following will help them to do the projects on time without any difficulty.



## 6. Certain Suggested Measures to change teacher's attitude and belief system

1. **Openness to Change:** Teachers are encouraged to be more open and receptive to new ideas, fostering an environment where they can embrace innovative approaches.
2. **Experimentation in Classrooms:** Teachers should conduct more experiments in their classrooms, exploring diverse teaching methods and assessing their effectiveness in enhancing student learning through formative assessment.
3. **Self-Assessment: Teachers** are advised to assess themselves, reflecting on their teaching practices and identifying areas for improvement in the implementation of formative assessment.
4. **Comparison with the Old System:** It is suggested that teachers compare the new system of formative assessment with the old system, facilitating a better understanding of the benefits and areas that need improvement.
5. **Enhanced Awareness:** Recognizing a lack of awareness among teachers, there is a suggestion for educators to enhance their knowledge by reading teachers' modules and staying informed about the latest educational practices.
6. **Readiness for Change:** While formative assessment is perceived as easier than traditional methods, teachers are encouraged to be ready to embrace this change in their teaching methodologies.
7. **Shift in Focus for Students and Parents:** Students and parents are urged to shift their focus from merely chasing marks to applying what has been learned in the classroom, emphasizing the practical application of knowledge.
8. **Focus on process rather than a product:** Teachers, parents and administrators should shift their focus from product to process of learning.
9. **Engaging Instructions:** Teachers instructions must be clear to focus on learning steps/process instead general instructions like do the project.

## 7. Recommendations to Improve Formative Assessment Tools:

### Read and Reflection:

Teachers employ various innovative practices to enhance the Read and Reflection component of formative assessment. Students are exposed to a diverse range of materials, including stories, picture stories, and animated stories with subtitles. To further enrich their comprehension, teachers incorporate newspaper

reflections and explore higher or class lessons from other subjects. The use of authentic materials is emphasised, providing real-world context for lower classes. Graphic organisers, such as preparing comparison charts of characters in a story, and the implementation of tools like the Question Meter contribute to a more engaging and insightful learning experience.

### **Written Works:**

In the domain of Written Works, teachers focus on extracting discourses from textbook lessons, fostering an understanding that goes beyond rote memorization. Authentic materials, such as newspapers, are integrated to provide a real-world context for students. Teachers encourage the development of student portfolios, including journals or magazines, reflecting a personalized and continuous learning journey. Reflective diaries, whether online or offline, further promote self-expression and metacognition through avenues like kids' blogs.

### **Project Work:**

Teachers engage students in meaningful Project Work that transcends conventional boundaries. This involves activities such as interviewing local celebrities or leaders, conducting surveys on the effectiveness of homework linked with textual lessons, and contextualised grammar teaching. Peer teaching and connecting classrooms contribute to collaborative learning experiences. Projects addressing environmental issues, such as creating a kitchen garden, or focusing on problem-solving skills, like organising a school backpack, bring real-world relevance to the curriculum. Students may also engage in documentary preparation, exploring topics like the evolution of hairstyles and dressing styles. Additionally, projects like crafting e-commerce mobile descriptions and involvement in the preparation of question papers enhance students' critical thinking and creativity.

### **Slip Test:**

In the Slip Test component, teachers introduce innovative approaches to assess students' understanding. This includes open-book tests, immediate input tests, and time-lapsed tests, each providing a unique perspective on students' knowledge retention and application. Framing questions instead of writing answers allows for a more dynamic assessment. Furthermore, the end products and outcomes are diversified through the use of e-portfolios, recordings of student presentations, reflective journals, blog posts, info graphics, posters, role plays, and skits.



## Variety, Experiment and Innovate

### Read and Reflect

- Stories
- Pictures Stories
- Animated Stories with subtitles
- News paper reflections
- Higher or Class Lessons of Other Subjects
- Use of Authentic material for lower classes
- Graphic Organisers Ex: Preparing a comparison charts of Characters in the story

### Written Works

- Extracting Discourses from Textbook lessons
- Use of Authentic Material news papers
- Student Portfolios Ex: Student Journals or Magazines
- Reflective Diaries of students online or offline Ex: Kids Blogs

### Project Works

- Interviewing local celebrities or leaders
- Survey on effectiveness of Homework ( Liked with Textual Lesson)
- Contextualised Grammar Teaching
- Peer Teaching
- Connecting Classrooms
- Project on environment Ex: Kitchen Garden
- Project on Problem Solving Ex: School Backpack
- Preparing Documentary Ex: How hair-styles and dressing styles change
- E-commerce Mobile Description
- Preparation of Question paper



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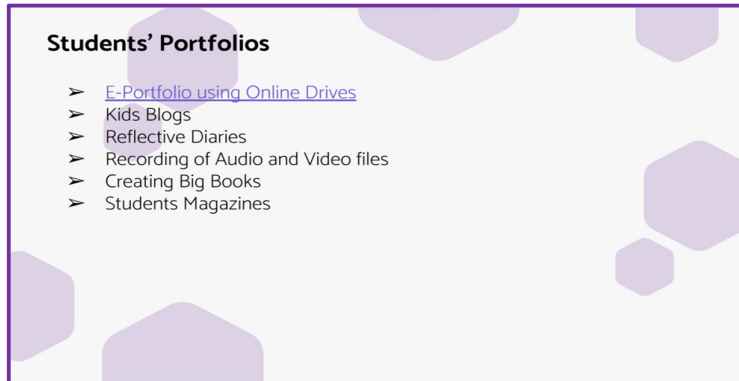


Open Book Test



**Port-Folios Based Assessment:** Collect the evidence of the students work regularly using technology support. This can be used for assessing the students’ performance not merely depending upon the marks.

The following are alternatives to create students Port-Folios.



## 8. Conclusion:

In conclusion, the implementation of effective formative assessment practices in the educational landscape plays a pivotal role in fostering a dynamic and enriching learning environment. Through the exploration of best practices in each component—Read and Reflection, Written Works, Project Work, Slip Test, and Assessment—teachers demonstrate a commitment to innovative and student-centered pedagogies.

In the realm of Read and Reflection, teachers employ diverse strategies, incorporating engaging materials and tools such as stories, animated content, and authentic materials. This not only enhances students' comprehension skills but also encourages independent and autonomous learning. The Written Works component is enriched through the extraction of discourses from textbooks, the integration of authentic materials, and the development of student portfolios, reflecting a shift towards process-oriented writing and a deeper understanding of content.

Project Work emerges as a transformative element, connecting students with real-world scenarios and promoting skills such as interviewing, surveying, and contextualised grammar teaching. The Slip Test component witnesses innovation through various testing approaches, ensuring a more dynamic and comprehensive evaluation of students' knowledge.

The assessment practices, encompassing self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment, demonstrate a holistic and inclusive approach to evaluating student performance. The use of diverse tools, from checklists to e-portfolios and recorded presentations, reflects a commitment to capturing the multifaceted nature of student learning.



In publishing this paper, the aim is to share these best practices with the wider educational community. By embracing these innovative approaches to formative assessment, educators can contribute to a more meaningful and student-centric educational experience. This paper serves as a testament to the dedication of teachers in evolving their instructional practices to meet the diverse needs of learners, ultimately enhancing the quality and effectiveness of education in our schools.

## **9. Self-Assessment**

1. Have I understood the concept of formative assessment cycles and their components as described in the paper?
2. Can I identify the challenges faced by teachers and students' during formative assessment cycles?
3. Do I comprehend the reasons for teachers' struggles in tracking and assessing students' performance during formative cycles?
4. Can I recognize the effective assessment strategies used by certain teachers and the results they are achieving? If so what are they?
5. How do certain teachers incorporate self-assessment, peer assessment, use of rubrics, maintaining portfolios, and constructive feedback techniques into their formative assessment cycles?

## **Appendix:**

### **Teachers' Interview questions and their responses:**

1. What is formative assessment and How would you differentiate it with age old unit tests?
2. What are the different components of Formative Assessment? What do you think about them? Are they useful to improve your students Language performance? If so How? If not, why?
3. Have you ever tried anything new during Formative cycles? If so, describe briefly? If not, why?
4. What are the challenges you face during formative cycles?
5. How would you take up a project in your classroom? Give one example
6. How do you take up Read and Reflection activity in your classroom? Give one example
7. How do you take up Projects in your class? (Project process)

8. What are the things you will do under the written works?
9. How would you conduct a slip test?  
What are its components?
10. How would you connect your classroom practices with formative assessment components? Give one or two concrete examples.
11. Anything you want to share from your experience.
12. How would you collect evidence of learning?

### **Students' Questionnaires:**

1. What is the most difficult part of Formative assessment cycles? Why? How do you manage?
2. What kind of projects do you like? Why? If possible, give one example
3. What are the activities you have done under the read and reflect component? How did you feel? What benefit do you get from it?
4. Have you ever written an open book test? If so How do you differentiate it with regular slip text?
5. What are the things you will do under written works? Is there any connection with your regular classroom activities? If so, how?

### **Administers' Questionnaires or SCERT People**

1. What are your expectations after changing the unit test into a formative test?
2. What do you really expect from teachers after shifting from unit tests to formative assessment? What is your observation? Any suggestions for improvement.
3. What is the purpose of introducing each component in Formative cycles?
  - a. Read and Reflect
  - b. Written works
  - c. Projects
  - d. Slip-Test
4. Any future plans to make it successful
5. Any plans to Linking with classroom teaching.
6. Do you suggest any changes in the School Time-table?
7. Rate Success of formative assessment on scale of 1 to 10.