Formative Assessment Strategies

The purpose of assessment tasks and activities is to provide the teacher with a window into students' cognitive processes. Formative assessments allow students to show their thinking and allow teachers a way to see and gauge students' understanding and adjust instruction accordingly. As James Popham states, "Formative assessment looks at *ends* (or outcomes) as a way of deciding whether *means* (inputs) need to be changed." [From "Formative Assessment: Its Aristotelian Essence": http://www.amplify.com/assets/regional/Popham_FA_Essence.pdf]

Formative assessment can take the form of checklists, written or oral responses, graphic organizers, Socratic questioning, etc. They can also be more informal, such as teacher observations of student performance or collaborative conversations. The list below is a small sampling of strategies.

➢ **Small group close reading and collaborative conversations**: Students work in small groups to identify key understandings and academic vocabulary from short text selections. Teacher observation of group work informs next steps of instruction (extend, mitigate, reteach...)

➢ **Graphic Organizers:** Students complete word/idea webs or concept maps, flowcharts, cause/effect charts, sequence charts, Venn diagrams…to show their understanding of ideas and concepts. Teacher review of these determines adjustments to instruction.

➢ **Think-Pair-Share or Write-Pair-Share:** Students considers their own response to a prompt, text, lecture, etc., followed by sharing their reflections with a partner. Teacher circulates and listens in to gauge student understanding.

➢ **Entry/Exit Cards:** As students enter or exit class, they respond to a prompt displayed on the board related to the topic of that day's lesson. For example, after a lesson on tone and word choice, sample prompts might be: "Identify details that reveal the tone of the text that you are reading. Explain your ideas." Or "Identify words or phrases that stood out to you while you were reading. How does the author's word choice add to the text?" Low-tech – sticky notes; high-tech – cell phone responses (e.g. www.padlet.com)

➢ **3-Minute Papers:** Students complete 1- to3-minute quick writes on a topic or big idea. This provides the teacher with insights into the reasoning processes that students are using to inform next steps of instruction.

As you collaborate with your colleagues to determine the best formative assessments to use on a weekly/daily basis, please consider sharing your ideas and materials you create for the modules with other teachers across the district. Send to Cherie Noland at cnoland@wccusd.net .