Title:	**Formative Assessment Techniques List**
Created by:	New York Comprehensive Center and Syracuse Instructional Support Teachers

Audience: **Teachers, instructional coaches, principals,** district leaders, state education employees, **professional development providers,** local/state board members, higher education faculty, comprehensive centers and education agencies

Description: This document represents a list of classroom formative assessment techniques drawn partly from ideas in the book *Checking for Understanding*, partly generated by Syracuse math coaches (called ISTs or instructional support teachers.) The document provides a chart with descriptions of each technique, an example or two, and a column to record notes about how the reader would use the technique in his/her instruction.

How it was used: This document was presented to Syracuse ISTs in the early part of the first year of work to begin to develop a repertoire of techniques they could model for teachers. The ISTs and NYCC project staff worked together to add to the existing ideas, drawn from *Checking for Understanding*.

Key lessons: Initially, ISTs tended to confuse formative assessment techniques with "good" or "fun" activities that they might use to differentiate instruction. When identifying potential formative assessment techniques, it was important to emphasize the purposeful use of the techniques. For example, NYCC project staff emphasized the questions:

- *How does this technique/activity give you information about student learning?*
- *Is this important information that you want to gather to inform your instruction of this particular lesson?*

Recommendations: When discussing formative assessment classroom techniques, be sure to emphasize the purposeful use of the techniques; be clear on what information the teacher wants to gather about student learning, and then be sure the technique will indeed provide that information.

Develop a set of guiding or framing questions to accompany the use of formative assessment techniques that can help ensure their purposeful use. Questions might include:

- *What do I want to learn about my students' thinking and learning?*
- *Will this technique provide this information to me?*
- *What might I do differently as a result of what I find out?*

Formative Assessment Techniques List

Using Oral Language

Strategy	Description & Examples	How I Can Use It
Think/Pair/Share	Description: Students spend 1-2 minutes individually thinking about a response (may write something down); then discuss response with a partner; then share responses with the whole class.	
Whole class response	Description: Teacher uses some method to hear responses from whole class. Example: ▪ Whisper the answer to teacher as whole class. ▪ "I Have, Who Has?" activity - students each hold one card with a piece of information about a topic and a question (such as "18 - Who has 6 x 5?"). Teacher starts by reading his/her card ("Who has 6 x 2?") Student who has the answer will respond, reading his/her card: "I have 12; who has 6 x 9?" Different student who has 54 will respond, reading his/her card: "I have 54; who has 6 x 3?" etc. Can be adapted for different topics.	

Using Questions

Strategy	Description & Examples	How I Can Use It
Response boards/cards	Description: Teacher uses a response board or set of cards for individual students to hold up in response to a question. Teacher can quickly scan the class for alignment / misalignment with correct understanding. Examples: ▪ Individual student white boards ▪ Answer cards - give each student 2 stacks of 1-digit numeral cards with numeral written on both sides - student can hold up a pair of cards to indicate 2-digit numerical answer. Teacher can scan quickly for differences in responses.	
Using Technology to Gather Student Responses (a.k.a. "Audience Response Systems")	Description: Teacher uses some kind of technology to gather (and display) student responses. Example: ▪ Using Navigator with students to send responses to teacher "audience poll."	

Using Writing

Strategy	Description & Examples	How I Can Use It
Exit tickets	Description: Teacher gives students a final question to answer or problem to complete before they can leave class - hand it to teacher on the way out of class. Examples: ▪ "Do Now" - at start or end of lesson ▪ Ticket out the door using a writing prompt that asks students to explain or reflect on a key idea from the lesson	
Graphic organizers	Description: Graphic organizers can be used as a visual template for students to record thoughts about a particular topic and show connections between ideas.	
Use of rubrics	Description: Rubrics shared with students can guide students' writing to draw out particular aspects of students' understanding that a teacher wants to learn more about. Examples: ▪ Using specific rubrics for writing ▪ Put up examples of quality work and discuss why they are high-quality - also analyzing work according to a class rubric	

Using Projects or Performance

Strategy	Description & Examples	How I Can Use It
Classroom math tasks or activities that draw out students' thinking.	Description: Characteristics of these tasks include: ▪ Multi-step ▪ Questions are posed at all levels of Bloom's taxonomy AND/OR Students must draw on all levels of thinking from Bloom's taxonomy ▪ Students are prompted to communicate their mathematical thinking in speaking or writing	

Using Tests

Strategy	Description & Examples	How I Can Use It
Student self-evaluation or reflection on own performance	Description: Students use returned tests or quizzes to identify mistakes and areas where they need further work. Examples: ▪ "Find the errors" - return quiz or test to students without identifying incorrect responses, telling them only how many incorrect responses are there. Students then work alone or with a partner to discuss, identify and correct errors and resubmit.	

Strategies for Recording Information about Students' Understanding

- **Flip-up index cards**

  Starting at the bottom of a file folder, tape an index card. Then moving up slightly, tape another card etc, until you reach the top of the folder. There should be enough of each index card showing so you can write a child's name on the bottom of each card. Then you can flip up the cards so you can access the one you need and write something on it.

- **"Clipboard Cruising"**

  Carry a clipboard with a page of labels with students' names preprinted on the labels. Quickly note observation about a student on his/her label. Later, add label to appropriate student page in a notebook that has 1 page devoted to each student. This provides an easy way to scan student trends over time.

- **Tracking participation**

  Print out generic name lists for a class. Add date at the top, and record notes about each student next to his/her name, or checkmarks that track student participation.