Leadership support of formative assessment implementation
Module 1: Exploring the Foundations of Classroom Formative Assessment

	Learning focus	Potential issues	Leadership response
Module 1	Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students	Differing definitions of formative assessment are widely used, so teachers may be accustomed to definitions that do not fully align to the research. These may include understanding formative assessment as: • a set of student engagement strategies • common formative assessments • summative assessments "used formatively" • benchmark assessments	☐ If a different definition is currently in use in your building, help teachers think critically about how their existing definition is different from the research-based definition developed by CCSSO. ☐ Support all faculty (those in the Formative Assessment online course and those not in the course) to develop a shared understanding of the CCSSO definition and its five attributes.
	Formative assessment is an instructional process, not a program.	Formative assessment is not a program that can be "adopted". Formative assessment is a process that teachers learn through practice, reflection, and revision. Compared to a wholesale program adoption, where teachers are provided with materials to use and procedures to employ, formative assessment can feel messy, uneven, or unclear.	☐ Assure teachers that if they are doing what is outlined in the online course, and if they are reflecting on their own teaching practice in light of the course frameworks, then they are doing the right thing. Learning to implement formative assessment can be, at times, quite messy. ☐ Support teachers to understand that formative assessment will look different in each classroom or grade level, based on classroom context, content area focus, and teacher pedagogy. ☐ Reflection is a critical part of the learning process. The more opportunities teachers have to reflect on their emerging classroom formative assessment practices, the more quickly these early-stage change issues can be resolved.

	Learning focus	Potential issues	Leadership response
Module 1	Formative Assessment is part of a Comprehensive Assessment System	Teachers may see formative assessment as "one more assessment" to be added on top of the existing assessments used in the school or district. If formative assessment is seen as an add-on, it can harm the implementation process because it will be one more thing squeeze into an already-full instructional calendar.	☐ Building leadership teams can use the information in Module 1 to clarify expectations for teacher use of different types of assessment, including the range of classroom assessments (formative and summative), benchmark assessments, and district and state assessments. ☐ Building leadership teams will benefit from looking at how the information on comprehensive assessment aligns with the Response to Intervention model. Formative assessment is part of Tier I instruction, and the data from classroom formative assessment is primarily for the use of classroom teachers to inform instruction. Formative assessment data, in this model, does not feed in to the RtI decision-tree, though it can inform a teacher's understanding of the skills and knowledge each child must work on.
	Formative assessment practice is strongly aligned with standards-based instruction	Formative assessment draws from a similar research base as standards-based instruction and has many similar elements. As a result, some aspects of this work will feel very "familiar" or "known". In this first module, many teachers may say "this is just good instruction" or "we know this already".	☐ Leaders should make connections between formative assessment practice and the work that has already been done in their school. Teachers will benefit from making explicit connections to standards-based instruction, inquiry learning, using short-cycle data, or similar practices that are related to formative assessment. ☐ Clarify that formative assessment is more than "just good teaching". Formative assessment involves teachers AND students working together to collect and review evidence of learning that help clarify instructional next steps for each student. ☐ Research points to the fact that educators "know" far more than they "do". Leaders can help by clarifying that a familiar idea is worth learning how to apply and integrate into instructional practice.

Leadership considerations for formative assessment implementation
Module 2: Planning for classroom formative assessment

	Learning focus	Potential issues	Leadership response
Module 2	Formative assessment unit design	The formative assessment unit design template is intensive. It can feel overwhelming to teachers. Many teachers were taught to focus on the inputs of teaching (curriculum, resources, and instructional materials) rather than the outputs of teaching (skills and understandings we will observe in our students, the growth students will attain). Teachers are not expected to use these templates for every unit.	☐ The ONLY way that teachers can implement effective "on the fly" formative assessment practices is by participating in the kind of unit planning that is outlined in this course. In order for teachers to have a quick response to in-the-moment evidence of learning, they must be clear about what mastery looks like and the typical progression students take within the unit. Most importantly, they must have a response in mind as to how the evidence will influence instruction. This is best completed through collaborative unit planning.
	Learning goals and success criteria	Learning goals may also be called learning objectives, learning targets, learning intentions, learning outcomes, learning aims, performance objectives and instructional objectives. Success criteria are primarily for the student to understand what the learning goals "look like". Success criteria should be shared with students so that they better understand the learning goal.	☐ If there is confusion about terminology, an effective first step is to work with teachers or a leadership team to look at what you call learning goals in your school, and align the vocabulary. ☐ There are dozens of approaches to writing learning goals. Encourage teachers to let go of habit and attempt to craft learning goals in the manner in which they're used in this model. ☐ Impress upon teachers that students must also internalize the learning goal and success criteria if they are to take their own next steps in learning. Student understanding of the learning goal and success criteria is a pre-requisite for students to monitor their own learning through self and peer-assessment. ☐ Using success criteria with students is a change teachers can make immediately. It is an excellent starting point to begin formative assessment implementation.

	Learning focus	Potential issues	Leadership response
Module 2	Learning progressions	Learning progressions depict a sequence of successively more complex ways of reasoning about a set of standards or ideas. They provide an overview of what is to be learned, support instructional planning, and provide guidance about how to use formative assessment data. Learning progressions are always strengths-based – they document learning and show what students CAN DO at different points along the progression. In this way, they are different from a rubric. While some learning progressions have been developed by the research community, teachers are best-equipped to develop learning progressions. Learning progressions are not the same as a scope and sequence or a curriculum map.	☐ As learning progressions are being developed, leaders should try to ensure that there is at least one educator involved who is an expert in the content knowledge under review. ☐ Help teachers think about learning progressions as tool that can and should be revised based on evidence from their classrooms. In this way, developing, using, and revising learning progressions can function like an action research model, where teachers apply new ideas and revise based on implementation results. ☐ The best source for developing the progressions is the teachers themselves, as they have knowledge about their curricula and students and experience with sequencing and scaffolding learning. Leaders can support the development of learning progressions by carving out professional learning time devoted to this task.

	The importance of collaborative practice	During Module 2 teachers will be offered the opportunity to work collaboratively to design a unit plan. Working in collaboration can help teachers think about the different expressions of mastery embedded within a standard, and to explore a range of instructional strategies that support learning throughout a unit. Teacher dialogue promotes shared understanding of standards, deepens strategies for differentiating instruction based on evidence, and promotes personal accountability to implement new classroom formative assessment routines.	☐ Leaders can assist by:
			  • Providing opportunities for teachers who teach similar content to collaborate on formative assessment unit planning
			  • Ensuring that teachers who do not have colleagues who teach in the same discipline/grade level (single grade level teachers, specialists) are included
			  • Providing instructional resources (coaches, content experts) for teams when needed
			☐ Encourage teachers to complete the unit planning process using units they have previously taught.

Leadership considerations for formative assessment implementation
Module 3: Eliciting and using evidence of learning

	Learning focus	Potential issues	Leadership response
Module 3	Formative Assessment Planning Framework	Research indicates that teachers have many strategies to collect evidence, but they don't know how to immediately use evidence to inform instruction. This tool helps shift that dynamic, by encouraging teachers to talk about and plan for how they will USE the evidence prior to collecting it. Many teachers report that this template offers them a helpful way to plan for instruction and a frame for "putting it all together". Some teachers, however, may feel overwhelmed by the amount of planning done in this model.	☐ The Formative Assessment Planning Framework is primarily a graphic organizer and it intended to guide teacher thinking about the link between learning goals, success criteria, evidence collection, and evidence use. Leaders can help teachers by emphasizing that this framework is simply a tool to help guide their thinking. ☐ Assure teachers that once they learn skills to use the evidence of learning during instruction, this template may no longer be necessary. ☐ Encourage teachers to complete the Formative Assessment Planning Framework for 3-4 units per year. This will provide several opportunities to deepen understanding of this new way of planning.
	Routines for eliciting evidence of learning	This step of the process helps students and teachers clarify where each student is on the learning progression, and what next steps in learning should be. Teachers sometimes focus on *how* they are collecting data (strategies), rather than what they will do with it. As a result, it can feel like an "add on" of strategies, without any meaningful changes in student learning. Evidence that is collected and not used wastes instructional time.	☐ Teachers need to consider their existing classroom routines and determine how formative assessment builds from current practice. Rather than "adding strategies", encourage teachers to formalize the assessment strategies they already use and think through how they will use the data before it is collected. ☐ As teachers deepen their implementation of formative assessment, leaders can expect to see shifts in how teachers pre-assess, gather data through classroom discussion, attend to questioning practices, and analyze student work.

	Learning focus	Potential issues	Leadership considerations
Module 3	Using descriptive feedback	Feedback is a necessary step in formative assessment, but *feedback is only formative* if it is used by the learner to improve. If students are not given time and support to act on the feedback, it will not impact learning. Grading is not an effective form of descriptive feedback, as it does not help the learner take next steps in learning.	☐ When working with teachers on their feedback practices, ask teachers to describe how their feedback to students aligns to the learning goal and success criteria. ☐ Support teachers to develop effective mechanisms to offer feedback – through the use of small group work, student conferencing, student journals and portfolios. Teachers need to develop routines where time for student feedback becomes an integral aspect of instructional practice. ☐ Examine school-wide grading practices, and consider working with the building leadership team to refine grading practices so that they report only on student learning.
	Using evidence of learning to revise instructional practices	A common misconception is that for teachers to be in charge of learning, they are the primary elicitors and users of assessment evidence. In the formative assessment process, students are partners in eliciting and using evidence of learning. Additionally, current research points to a significant challenge in US classrooms – many teachers find it difficult to use evidence they have collected through formative assessment.	☐ Reinforce the practice of involving students in the review of formative data and the decision-making regarding next steps. ☐ Encourage teacher dialogue about how they are using evidence to shift instruction. This might be by re-teaching in a different way, providing feedback, or differentiating instruction. This dialogue can help to build understanding of the range of ways in which using evidence can be used. ☐ Recognize success. Using assessment evidence "on the fly" is challenging, and worth noting and celebrating as teachers develop new strategies and techniques for formative data use.

Leadership considerations for formative assessment implementation
Module 4: Engaging students to take next steps in learning

	Learning focus	Potential issues	Leadership response
Module 4	Support students to give and receive descriptive feedback through modeling.	Eliciting, analyzing, and using evidence of learning is at the heart of formative assessment, and it requires a partnership between student and teacher. This may represent a shift in the traditional roles of the teacher and student. At first, both may be uncomfortable with students taking on a more active role in analyzing their work and the work of peers. Based on past experiences, teachers may not believe that peer assessment is a valuable use of class time. Students may not have strong examples of what it looks like to offer descriptive feedback to peers.	☐ Encourage teachers to explicitly teach how to give, receive, and use feedback aligned to learning goals and success criteria. This will greatly contribute to peer assessment that is more useful for both the giver and receiver of the feedback. ☐ For students to learn to provide descriptive feedback it must be *modeled and taught* by the teacher. Anecdotal teacher reports suggest that teachers who use skills for peer-assessment in their school-level work feel more confident implementing classroom strategies of student peer assessment. Teachers who have participated in cognitive coaching, peer mentoring, or who regularly practice the use of protocols (for example, the Critical Friends model) report more comfort with implementing peer assessment. Helping teachers develop their own skills in peer dialogue and providing feedback to their peers may make it easier for them to model and teach those skills in the classroom. Leaders can look for teacher modeling during walk-throughs or observations.
	Establish routines for self and peer assessment	Teachers and students must understand that self and peer assessment is not about grading. Evaluating and grading student work is done by the teacher. Peer-assessment is designed to support students to act as instructional resources for each other and to build skills that will enable accurate self-assessment.	☐ School leaders can model opportunities for adults to engage in self and peer assessment. Modeling these activities at the school level might include classroom visits from peers or peer coaching. If these practices are well-established in the building, school leaders can discuss how adults in the building serve as "instructional resources for each other" and how this is similar to developing routines for classroom peer-assessment. When these practices become normative for both adults and students, it supports all learners.

Module 4	The role of classroom climate	Students must feel safe to take risks and make mistakes in order for formative assessment to fully take root in a classroom. The environment of the classroom should evidence what students are currently working on as well as examples of student work. Mistakes will not be seen as sources of new learning unless they take place in a climate that treats errors as entry points for future learning.	☐ Encourage teachers to develop room arrangements that are designed to support different types of learning. Rooms should accommodate individual, small group, and whole group instruction. Space should be set aside for individual conferences and peer assessment. ☐ Work with teachers to ensure that classrooms display current big ideas, learning goal, and success criteria. ☐ Establish building norms for displaying examples of recent student work as well as work in progress. Clarify display techniques that allow for easy viewing by both teachers and parents. ☐ Consider using the classroom environment walk-through form to collect evidence of key elements of classroom climate over time.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT PILOT

Leadership considerations for formative assessment implementation
Module 5: Developing and sustaining formative assessment practice

	Learning focus	Potential issues	Leadership response

Module 5	Formative assessment is an instructional process that involves a partnership between teachers and students	The clarity of this work increases when it moves from abstract to concrete. In other words, teachers come to value this work only after they begin to see changes in student learning.
		
		Students are at the center of formative assessment work. Both planning and revised instructional practices will involve shifting practices related to the students' role in learning.
		
		Teachers and students mut have the right amount and the right kind of evidence to understand where each student is on the learning progression and what comes next in learning.
			☐ Work with teachers to clarify their emerging vision of classroom formative assessment.
			☐ Monitor the results of using formative assessment by asking students two simple questions: "What are you learning right now? " and, "What comes next?". A student's reasoned response to this highlights the formative assessment process in action.
			☐ Check in with teachers about their learning. As a result of this work, a teacher should be able to describe:
			  • the purpose of a given assessment
			  • Who will use the results
			  • The criteria for evaluating student work
			  • When and how descriptive feedback will be applied
			  • How students will be using evidence during the instructional cycle

	Sustaining the work	Developing schoolwide practice in classroom formative assessment takes years. Alignment between formative assessment and other building-wide initiatives is critical to long-term success. The vision of this work shifts over time as teachers and leaders come to understand the cycle of work and the new role of students.	☐ The amount of time required for professional learning is significant. Make time for teacher dialogue. The templates and tools outlined in this course deepen teachers' practices in large part due to the dialogue that is generated when teachers do this work together. ☐ Formative assessment must align with existing building initiatives in order to be sustained. Principals can take a lead on creating alignment to this work through use of existing school planning documents. ☐ Know that teachers will be at all different points in their learning, and that there is no short cut to learning and integrating these practices.