

# Taking Pedagogical Action *in the* Formative Assessment Process

In the formative assessment process, students and teachers interpret meaningful evidence of student learning to get a clear picture of the current status of learning in relationship to the Learning Goals and Success Criteria. This information and a strong understanding of a student's progression of learning is used to inform teacher actions that will help students take the next step in their learning.

The following pedagogical actions are strategies that many teachers use regularly, but teachers can strengthen their formative assessment practice by deploying these strategies intentionally, based on evidence of student learning, in order to help students move forward in their learning.

## Telling

**What it is:** providing students what they need in the moment (e.g., an unknown word or the steps to complete a task) to help them maintain momentum in the learning process.

**Use it when:** students need specific information that will remove temporary obstacles to learning. Use professional judgement to ensure that *telling* supports learning and does not get in the way of productive struggle.

## Directing

**What it is:** giving a specific instruction to let learners know what they are supposed to do.

**Use it when:** students need to know specifically what to do so they can move forward.

## Explaining

**What it is:** providing a verbal explanation, tailored to individual student needs and intended to help students develop their own understanding.

**Use it when:** students need to develop an understanding of something so they can apply it to their own learning.

## Prompting

**What it is:** providing students with a verbal cue that helps them draw on prior knowledge. Prompting sometimes takes the form of a reminder, a strong hint, a clue, or a question, and it should always be followed by adequate wait time.

**Use it when:** students need help to access and apply prior learning as a bridge to new learning.

## Modeling

**What it is:** making learning "visible" by verbalizing (i.e., explicitly narrating their thinking) or showing reasoning (i.e., writing or demonstrating).

**Use it when:** students need to see what a process, strategy, or a specific skill can look like in practice so they understand how they can apply it in their own learning.

## Questioning

**What it is:** asking well-designed and deliberate questions, including follow-up questions, to probe answers to provide information about current understanding and to help students uncover answers for themselves about their own learning and next steps.

**Use it when:** students need an opportunity to share and develop their understanding through discussion and exploration.

## Feedback

**What it is:** providing students with information about their learning that allows them to reflect on and plan next steps. Feedback should not be focused on whether students are right or wrong, but instead should offer information about what students did well and suggestions to improve in order to assist students in building a repertoire of learning strategies.

**Use it when:** students need specific information about what they did well and what they can do to improve, in order to help them move their learning forward toward their Learning Goals.

