**What is Formative Assessment**? Introduce and discuss the concept of formative assessment. Then ask students to find their state’s definition of formative assessment online. For example, the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education defines formative assessment as “systematic ongoing procedure to document, monitor and evaluate children’s progress, and plan appropriate learning experiences by:

1. Observing, documenting and evaluating all children’s development, knowledge, skills, behaviors, strengths, needs and interests in all areas defined in *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development*;
2. Providing opportunity for communication and collaboration with families, teachers, and service providers regarding children’s interests, development, and learning; and
3. Providing data that teachers can use to systematically plan and evaluate learning experiences and teaching practices based on documentation of the learning and development of a diverse group of children.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Read and Discuss.** Ask students to read an article about formative assessment (here’s one example: [**http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/ceelo\_policy\_report\_formative\_assessment.pdf**](http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/ceelo_policy_report_formative_assessment.pdf)). Follow up with a forum discussion of the ways in which the formative assessment process differs from taking tests.

**Yea, Nay, and What**. Create a list of activities commonly engaged in by early childhood teachers and other professionals. Ask students to indicate whether each activity might be considered part of formative assessment, or not. For activities that **are** part of formative assessment, ask students to indicate what they could learn from each activity they identified as part of formative assessment.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Part of Formative Assessment?** | | **If Yes,**  **What Could You Learn About a Child From This Aspect of Formative Assessment?** |
| **YES** | **NO** |
| Family-teacher conference |  |  |  |
| Watching children eat a snack |  |  |  |
| Putting up a bulletin board |  |  |  |

**Personal Philosophy**. Students in an Introduction to Early Childhood Education course are often given the assignment of writing their personal philosophy of early childhood education. As part of this assignment, ask students to describe how their personal philosophy incorporates formative assessment. NOTE: Consider asking students to create a personal philosophy in their first early childhood course, and then update their personal philosophy in a course at the end of their program, using track changes. This can be an interesting way to see what students have learned over the course of their program.

1. NC Curriculum and Assessment Review Committee Working Title, Definition and Criteria for Assessments

   [**http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/pdf\_forms/definition\_and\_criteria\_for\_formative\_assessments.pdf**](http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/pdf_forms/definition_and_criteria_for_formative_assessments.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)