**What is Formative Assessment**? Introduce and discuss the concept of formative assessment, underscoring how it relates to the development of young children. 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)

**Observing and Documenting Development.** The assignment of observing a child over time and documenting what is observed can be a powerful way to develop foundational understanding of formative assessment. Students can be asked to observe a child at several points in time across the semester, documenting what they see each time. (NOTE: This might also be an opportunity to introduce students to several different methods of observation/documentation. For ideas see [**http://www.heartland.edu/documents/heip/faculty2/CHLD101/Handouts/CommonObservationStrategies.pdf**](http://www.heartland.edu/documents/heip/faculty2/CHLD101/Handouts/CommonObservationStrategies.pdf)**).** Incorporate an expectation that students will check to determine how the child’s development aligns with *Foundations*.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What to Document | Documentation |
| Development (across all domains of *Foundations*) |  |
| Behaviors |  |
| Strengths |  |
| Needs |  |
| Interests |  |

This assignment can be extended in variety of ways to increase the complexity (e.g., hold a conversation with family to gain additional insights about development, cultural/linguistic considerations, etc.; ask students to use the information they have been collecting in their observations to draw some conclusions from the data).

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)