



# Formative Assessment

Assess your TK students' academic and social-emotional development

Formative assessment helps you determine your students' academic and social-emotional development on an ongoing basis and is well-aligned with developmentally appropriate Transitional Kindergarten (TK) instruction. As a TK teacher, you plan activities to stimulate exploration and learning that provide multiple opportunities each day to observe emerging learning. TK provides a unique opportunity to embed assessment in daily instruction in a playful, low-stress setting, which will, in turn, help you sequence future instruction to provide the next instructional step for each child.

### **A Suggested Process:**

- 1.** Identify an assessment goal. Decide which students you need to assess and what you want to know about their progress.
- 2.** Identify an opportunity within your daily instruction to gather the information.
- 3.** Reflect on the evidence. Identify gaps between your students' current performance and expected goals. Also, note students who are performing well above and/or beyond expectations.
- 4.** Consider next steps. Decide how you will use this information to adjust your instruction.
- 5.** Encourage student involvement in recognizing and celebrating their learning. Promote your students' engagement in and reflection about what they are learning by asking them to share what they learn each day and encouraging them to take pride in

their accomplishments. Consider how you might provide productive feedback to build confidence.





## Examples of Lesson Embedded Formative Assessment Opportunities

Any activity or lesson component can become an assessment opportunity if we change the lens through which we view the activity. The following information demonstrates how teachers might shift from instruction to formative assessment in the course of a short, focused lesson. Note that many of the shifts to a formative assessment lens promote active engagement.

### Instructional Lens:

- To introduce a lesson focused on Number Sense, the teacher reads a story or does a finger play about counting and engages in a discussion about why learning to count is important. Teacher modifies language and uses **Total Physical Response** (TPR) to facilitate participation as necessary.
- Teacher counts several sets of leaves (gathered earlier from a nature walk) with the students, touches each leaf as they count and then says, “There are \_\_ leaves. I know that because \_\_ was the last number I said when I counted.”
- Uses a variety of objects to continue modeling rote counting, one-to-one correspondence, and stating the total number of objects without recounting and encourages children to join in.
- Has students work in pairs to practice counting and stating the total number of objects without recounting.
- Closes the lesson with an engaging counting song that incorporates movement.
- At the end of the lesson, the teacher decides that most students met expectations, but they have identified several students for an additional “counting game” later in the day to individually assess their need for additional instruction.

### **Assessment Lens:**

- Teacher notes students who contribute to counting discussion and who demonstrate conceptual understanding of why counting is important.
- Teacher asks students to signal how many leaves there are with their fingers.
- Observes and mentally notes who is with them, who is not keeping up, and who is way ahead.

- Tunes into student conversations and observes to determine which students they might call on next.
- Uses random or targeted calling to play a counting game to check for understanding.
- At the end of the lesson, the teacher decides that most students met expectations, but they have identified several students for an additional “counting game” later in the day to individually assess their need for additional instruction.

## Using Key Early Learning Documents to Plan Formative Assessment

The State of California provides two documents, **California Preschool Learning Foundations, Vols. 1-3** and **The Alignment of the California Preschool Learning Foundations with Key Early Education Resources**, that provide support for teachers as they use formative assessment. Several specific examples are cited below.

### Examples from Preschool Learning Foundations

When embedded in instruction, each behavior in the examples below can present opportunities for formative assessment observations or interactions and provide information to inform instruction.

*Note: All examples below refer to 60 month **Preschool Learning Foundations**.*

## **Self 2.1** | *Self-Regulation*

- Anticipates clean-up
- Focuses attention in busy classroom
- Suggests sharing
- Explains reasons for rules

**Formative Assessment:** You make a note that a student who often struggles with self-regulation during clean-up sees that you are preparing to signal a transition, and alerts their peers that it is time to clean up.

---

## **Vocabulary 2.3** | *Understand and use simple and complex words to describe relationships*

- Identifies things that are smaller, larger, etc. than a \_\_\_
- Is able to follow command(s) to sit next to, behind, in front of, etc.
- Labels things as being bigger/heavier/faster than other things

**Formative Assessment:** After a lesson on conceptual relationships, you assess students' knowledge of relationships by asking them to identify classroom objects that are larger than another selected object.

---

## **Algebra and Functions 2.1** | *Recognize and duplicate simple repeating patterns*

- Fills in an item missing from a pattern (e.g., apple, pear, apple, pear) with guidance
- Copies simple repeating patterns, using the same kind of objects as the original pattern
- Attempts to sing, sign, move, or clap through a pattern song, trying to maintain the pattern

**Formative Assessment:** After whole or small group patterning instruction, use counters/markers of three different colors to check a student's ability to pattern. Lay out two repetitions of a simple pattern (red, blue, green, red, blue, green, \_\_) and see if they are able to identify the next color from the three choices.



## Example from the Alignment of the Preschool Learning Foundations with Key Early Learning Resources

**The Alignment of the California Preschool Learning Foundations with Key Early Learning Resources** may also provide guidance as you identify possible formative assessment opportunities. The Preschool Learning Foundations lead to the acquisition of Kindergarten Common Core State Standards (see example below). The “Related Activity” section provides a sample activity designed to bridge the Preschool Learning Foundations and the Kindergarten Common Core State Standards.

### Preschool Learning Foundation

- Group Participation 3.1 — *Participate in group activities and are beginning to understand and cooperate with social expectations, group rules, and roles.*

### Kindergarten Common Core State Standard

- Interpersonal Communication 4.2 — *Cooperate and share with others.*

**Related Activity:** During group time, the teacher reads a story about cooperation and leads a short, but engaging discussion about “What If” situations related to cooperation and sharing.

### Possible Actions:

- Later, during recess, the teacher observes two students resolving a sharing situation independently and makes a note about it to add to their records.
- During centers, the teacher notices a child playing independently. At the end of the day, they make a note to monitor the student. They want to honor their independence while ensuring that they feel confident and have not been rejected by other students.

- During snack time the teacher engages a few students in additional “What If” discussions. They had noted that they were distracted during group time and wants to assess their understanding.
  - To assess the growing social skill of a group of students, the teacher asks them to cooperate to draw a picture about one of the “What If” situations to share with the class and post on the wall.
- 

## Formative Assessment in the TK/K Combination Classroom

In your teaching toolbox, formative assessment is a powerful instrument for planning differentiated instruction for children spanning various learning levels in a combination classroom. Combination class teachers prepare TK children for successfully meeting or exceeding challenging Kindergarten standards, while simultaneously preparing their Kindergarten students for success in 1st grade. Formative assessment provides the information you need to monitor progress, adjust daily instruction to meet ongoing needs, and differentiate instruction to ensure that all children meet or exceed their grade level expectations.

## Formative Assessment and Dual Language Learners

Culturally and linguistically responsive assessment and instruction is critical to the success of all your students, especially **Dual Language Learners (DLLs)**. There are important steps you can take as a TK teacher to ensure that your assessment materials, prompts, and questions are appropriate for each child given their linguistic and cultural background. When you work to ensure that instruction and assessments are responsive to each student's background, formative assessment will play a critical role in supporting content learning and language development in your young DLLs.<sup>1</sup>

For more information on culturally and linguistically formative assessment of DLLs, visit the **Assessment page** on the **Multilingual Learning Toolkit** website.

## Formative Assessment and Response to Intervention/Special Needs Children

*“Effective behavior management is not separate from academic instruction, but rather, is an essential skill set taught during tier one core instruction.”*

**Source: RtI<sup>2</sup>'s Implementation and Technical Assistance Guide for Districts and Schools**

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tier process that guides both general and special education staff as they identify and provide appropriate support for students who may need instructional and/or behavioral support. The RTI process begins with

high-quality instruction, universal screening, and differentiated instruction within the general education classroom. At all tiers or levels, student progress is closely monitored to assess the student's individual response to intervention.

**California's RtI<sup>2</sup>** is well aligned with the general goals of TK.

- California's RtI<sup>2</sup> pyramid recognizes the importance of academic and behavioral support at all levels by including both terms on their graphic. The goal of RtI<sup>2</sup> in California is to create the conditions for closing the achievement gap and improving problem behaviors. This aligns well with the TK emphasis on social-emotional development.
- Tier 1 of the three-tiered approach to intervention emphasizes strong "first teaching" including differentiated instruction based on ongoing formative assessment.
- The RtI<sup>2</sup> model recognizes the critical role that families play in supporting the achievement of children.

---

<sup>1</sup> Espinosa, Curriculum and Assessment Considerations for Young Children from Culturally, Linguistically, and Economically Diverse Backgrounds, 2005; Where We Stand on Assessing Young English Language Learners, NAEYC 2009; Abedi, Jamal. Linguistic factors in the assessment of English Language Learners. In The Sage Handbook of Measurement. (2010) Sage Publishing, Thousand Oaks, CA, p. 129-157.



---

## Stay connected! Sign up for the Early Edge California newsletter.

By signing up you agree to receive occasional communications from **Early Edge California**. You can unsubscribe at any time. Please review our **Privacy Policy**.

**SUBMIT**



# TKCalifornia



About TK

[Administrators](#)

[Teachers](#)

[Parents](#)

[Resources](#)

[TK in the News](#)

[Contact Us](#)

The information on this site is for general information purposes only. More information and the latest guidelines for Transitional Kindergarten can be found at the **California Department of Education's TK Page**.

©2023 Early Edge California. All rights reserved. [Privacy Policy](#)