EXAMINING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION AND PRESERVICE TEACHER FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT PLANNING

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Teacher education is an essential time for preservice teachers to learn effective assessment practices, particularly formative assessment. If used effectively, formative assessment is a planned process wherein students and teachers reciprocally share and use information generated through instructional and assessment activities to improve and develop agency in their learning. The importance of preparing teachers for effective formative assessment practice is heightened by reports that teachers are underprepared to use it when entering the field and may be under supported in their professional development. In two studies, I examine how teacher education prepares teachers for formative assessment, and how preservice teachers would use assessment with their students.

In the first study, using systematic research methodology, we reviewed 70 studies investigating teacher education for formative assessment. Within a theory of action for formative assessment, we categorized approaches, processes, and outcomes of efforts in teacher preparation to prepare teachers for formative assessment. Results from this synthesis provide insight into the features of successful approaches to building skills and mindsets for using
formative assessment with students and signify a need for innovations and research on how to better prepare teachers for effective assessment practice.

In a second study, a nationwide U.S. sample of elementary preservice teachers (N = 112) across program stages were situated in dilemmas of assessment practice within elementary classrooms as the teacher making planning decisions. We presented information about students and context around their English, science, and math units, then elicited assessment actions they would take with students in the next three lessons, the next lesson, and within a task using a series of prompts. Following analysis of responses, a nested sample of participants (n = 40) were invited to return for a 45-minute semi-structured interview to further probe assessment conceptions, intuitions, and rationales for assessment in their future classrooms. Combining these sources of evidence, we provide teacher educators, program stakeholders, and researchers a nuanced description of how preservice teachers may approach assessment in their own classrooms. This information can be used to adjust how programs guide preservice teachers’ development as quality and equitable assessors.